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Whiteness in Higher Education:
Using Autoethnography to Develop Critical Race Cognizant Leadership

by

Hallie Kelly Star

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in the Department of School Psychology and Educational Leadership
Idaho State University
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Committee Approval

To the Graduate Faculty:

The members of the committee appointed to examine the dissertation of Hallie Kelly Star find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Name,
Major Advisor

Name,
Committee Member

Name,
Committee Member

Name,
Committee Member

Name,
Graduate Faculty Representative

Human Subjects

May 22, 2019

Hallie Star
Educ Leadership
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RE: Regarding study number IRB-FY2019-256: Whiteness in Higher Education: An Autoethnography

Dear Ms. Star:

This message is your official notification that your project/survey IRB-FY2019-256: Whiteness in Higher Education: An Autoethnography does not meet the definition of research under the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46.102(d); therefore is not subject to review by the Institutional Review Board. You are free to conduct your study as submitted.

Sincerely,

Ralph Baergen, PhD, MPH, CIP
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Dedication

I dedicate this to the Aztec and Pueblo women I discovered in my ancestral past that were stolen from their families, their homes, their cultures and from history in what is now Mexico and New Mexico. Existing records only list your baptismal names that were assigned by your Spanish enslavers, who were also my ancestors. I will keep searching for the names that you were given by the people who knew you and loved you. I am humbled by your incredible strength and resilience, and the strength and resilience of your daughter's and your son's.

I dedicate this to the women, men and children that were taken from their ancestral homes in Africa and enslaved for generations by my family in the American South. I can never undo or make amends for the pain and suffering that was inflicted upon you by my ancestors, but I can ensure that from here on out, I take responsibility for the harm that has been done. I will keep searching for the names that you were given by the people who knew you and loved you.

Lastly, I dedicate this to my children. We now know who we are and where we came from. And now that we know, we must never again allow our history to be erased for our own benefit or the benefit of others. We must stand in the truth, even when it is hard. We must always critically examine how and why we have so much, and why others have so little. And, we must always take responsibility for what was done to others for our benefit, and work to remake a world that is truly founded on racial, economic and social justice.

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This work would not have been possible without the support of many people. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my major advisor, Dr. Rick Wagoner for his unwavering encouragement and support on this journey. Because of his guidance, vision and help, this autoethnographic work has become more than a multiyear research project. I am profoundly changed and have discovered a field a study that is deeply meaningful to me and will engage me for the rest of my life. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee. The insight and expertise of Dr. Jennifer Blaney, Dr. Lyn Redington, Dr. Melika Shirmohammadi and Laura Ahola-Young propelled me forward and was incredibly helpful.

Next, I would like to express my gratitude to the College of Southern Idaho for providing me with the opportunity to engage in doctoral study and complete my degree. I have achieved a goal that I set 20 years ago, and I will forever be indebted to CSI. Further, I would like to thank and acknowledge the College of Southern Idaho Foundation for the professional development grants awarded to me to attend the National Conference for Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) in 2018 and 2019. It is because of the financial support from the CSI Foundation that this work was born.

Last, but not least, I must express my profound love and eternal gratitude to my husband and three children. You have all endured hundreds of hours of my absence, read and re-read countless drafts, and listened to me as I unraveled and rebuilt my understanding of the world, and you have all done it with grace, love and kindness. Thank you for being here for me, motivating me and never quitting on me. I will love you always and forever. It is the four of you that inspire me daily to become a better person and make the world a better place.

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Whiteness in Higher Education:
Using Autoethnography to Develop Critical Race Cognizant Leadership
Dissertation Abstract--Idaho State University (2020)

The purpose of this research was to provide insight into how the discourses of Whiteness influence the behaviors of White leaders to maintain systems of oppression and dominance that exacerbate racism and inequity in higher education. Using critical Whiteness theory as a framework and critical autoethnography as the methodology, I used my lived experience as a White, upper-middle class woman working in higher education leadership as the source of data collection and analysis to better understand how to effectively model anti-racist leadership that builds equity and inclusion.

This study developed using foundational concepts of autoethnography including an emergent design, the documentation of an epiphany and the use of reflexive writing to collect and analyze data. Specifically, this research focused on my experiences at NCORE 2018 and NCORE 2019, and the process I went through learning the truth about my family history, which is directly tied to White supremacy. The key findings of my research suggest that the discourses that uphold White supremacy are maintained by epistemological ignorance, which frames national, as well as family level discourse. At the national and family level, discourses tied to settler-colonialism, individualism, manifest destiny, moral goodness and work-ethic provide a framework for how we understand the world, justify privilege and view our relationship to power. In this context, Whiteness becomes a form of property, which has deep connections to higher education. I have also identified that in this framework, Whiteness is about the protection of opportunity, which most White people view as meritocracy; also, relevant to higher education.

White people cannot begin to see the systems we uphold until we understand that we are the system. Autoethnography can be used to build critical race cognizance through the deconstruction of self and family history. By making past connections to White supremacy visible, White people can begin to see how we uphold systemic racism in the present. I have determined that as a White leader in higher education, the first step towards anti-racist leadership is understanding that it is impossible to separate being a White person from White supremacy. We must learn to see and take responsibility.

Key Words: Higher education, Whiteness, White supremacy, racism, autoethnography, leadership, anti-racism, anti-racist leadership, critical race cognizance, equity, inclusion, Students of Color, family history.

Chapter 1

The purpose of this research was to provide insight into the ways in which the discourses of Whiteness operate and influence the behaviors of White leaders to maintain systems of oppression and dominance that exacerbate racism and inequity in higher education. Using critical Whiteness theory as theoretical framework and critical autoethnography as the research method, I used my lived experience as a White, upper-middle class woman working in higher education leadership as the source of data collection and data analysis to try and identify how to effectively model anti-racist leadership that builds authentic equity and inclusion.

Whiteness in higher education and in larger American society is pervasive, systemic and ingrained in the culture (Cabrera, 2009). Yet, Whiteness and systemic racism are under addressed in contemporary higher education research and professional practice. The study of Whiteness is necessary in higher education because without understanding and addressing how Whiteness operates, we continue to focus the issues of race and racism on People of Color (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016). If we don't examine Whiteness, we are looking at the effect of racism, not the cause. Racial inequity in higher education has been extensively documented in the research. However, there is a remarkable lack of extant theorizing and research that critically examines how Whiteness and systemic racism affect leadership, institutional practice, policy, pedagogy and discourse, which are all ultimately tied to student experiences and outcomes (Anderson, 2012; Bensimon & Bishop, 2012).

Whiteness in higher education is everywhere; from the meritocracy race to the relentless quest for merit aid (Putman, 2017); from the demographics of the student body, faculty, staff and leadership (Rankin & Reason, 2005), to the processes, procedures and expectations (Anderson, 2012; Gusa, 2010); from pedagogical methods and curricular choices to the research agenda and

research focus (Harper, 2012; Bondi, 2012); from the cultural expectations of what defines a "strong student" and "weak student" to the perceptions of practical versus "love of learning" degree options (Bensimon & Bishop, 2012); from the physical space of campus and who does and does not belong to the holidays celebrated and the holidays ignored (Sullivan, 2006); from the statues and building names of those remembered to the leaders and their leadership styles (Wilder, 2013; Harper & Cole, 2017); from the response and, all too often, the lack of response to racist incidents (Harper & Cole, 2017), Whiteness is everywhere. Because Whiteness is everywhere in higher education, it must be better understood if we are to address issues of race, racism, inclusion and equity on college campuses (Cabrera, et al., 2016; Bensimon & Bishop, 2012; Cabrera, 2009).

White Supremacy and Whiteness

White supremacy and the racialized phenomena it creates, Whiteness, exist because of past and present conferred racial dominance, which in turn confers racial privilege. For the purposes of this research, I used Applebaum's definition of White supremacy, which is defined as the "continued pattern of widespread, every day, well-intentioned practices and seemingly neutral policies, which white people, often unwittingly, carry out, and that maintain a system of racial injustice" (Applebaum, 2016, p. 2). Additionally, I used the term *Whiteness*¹ as a synonym for *White supremacy* and used the two terms interchangeably. I did not do this with the intention of discursively dismissing the impact of White supremacy or shifting the tone by using a softer and more palatable euphemism. Instead, I used the term Whiteness because this research uses critical Whiteness studies (CWS) as a theoretical framework and CWS uses Whiteness extensively in the literature to describe the effects of White supremacy. To be clear, this research

¹ I provide my rationale for capitalizing Whiteness in the Language and Writing Conventions section in Chapter 1.

did not focus on the overt racism and White nationalism associated with White power groups such as the Klu Klux Klan or Neo-Nazi's. Further, White supremacy, and as a result, Whiteness, does not equal *all* White people, just as *all* White people are not racist. Similarly, while *all* White people in the United States benefit from Whiteness and participate in perpetuating White supremacy at some level, *most* White people do not identify as White supremacists (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). In fact, most White people in the United States identify as non-racist and often do not see, let alone understand the oppressive dominance that Whiteness confers (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). A particularly challenging social situation arises because White supremacy is typically not understood by most White people and, White supremacy as a system is confused with the individual actions of White supremacists (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). White people in higher education are no different. This is because Whiteness is ubiquitous, it is normative and for many White people in the United States, it is invisible.

Racism and Racist

The words *racism* and *racist* run into the same discursive difficulty as White supremacy. Racism in the context of critical Whiteness scholarship is defined as encompassing economic, ideological, political, social, and cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that systematize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power among White people and People of Color (Hillard, 1992). I used this definition to describe how racism is part of a structured, social system in higher education. Like White supremacy, looking at racism from a structural standpoint allows researchers to investigate racialized society, rather than racist individuals. In this framework an alternate view emerges, and race and racism can be examined through the lens of racial social hierarchy and domination (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). This does not mean that individual racists, like individual White supremacists do not exist. They do. But, by

framing racism through the lens of racial, social hierarchy and domination, the individual experience of being White no longer consumes center stage and the systems that uphold Whiteness become more visible. Leonardo highlights the importance of clearly defining racism within a framework of power and dominance to make clear that Whiteness is a system and process, not an individual person by explaining domination as a:

relation of power that subjects enter into and is forged through the historical process. It does not form out of random acts of hatred, though these are condemnable, but rather out of a patterned and enduring treatment of social groups. Ultimately, it is secured through a series of actions, the ontological meaning of which is not always transparent to its subjects and objects. (2004, p. 139)

Discourse

Whiteness is embedded in the fabric of higher education because the culture of the United States supports a racial image of Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2011). The racial image of Whiteness is an actual idealized image framed as purity, but it is also part of larger discourse that includes ideological principles like manifest destiny, meritocracy, and cultural, as well as intellectual, superiority. Discourse, as defined by Foucault (1972), constitutes the body of knowledge and meaning. To Foucault, discourses were historical constructs that define and maintain particular versions of reality, the social world and the people, ideas, and things that inhabit it. However, discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning and knowledge. Power and dominance are maintained through discourse. A discourse has systematicity or recurring patterns. These recurring patterns function in an established, institutionalized way to generate "regimes of truth," which Foucault saw as power constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and 'truth' (Foucault, 1972). Discourses operates as regimes of truth by actively

constructing what can and cannot be known, what can and cannot be said, and what is and is not legitimized. Thus, discourses are often hidden, and part of the unconscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they govern.

The discourse of Whiteness includes a complicated structure of historical rationalizations, language, knowledge, behaviors, perceptions, practices, laws, policies, norms and attitudes that marginalize People of Color and privilege White people. The discourse of Whiteness also designs and affects the experiences of students, faculty, staff, administrators and leaders in higher education through a normative process that appears so natural that many do not see (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Whiteness is everywhere, but it remains unseen, unspoken and uninterrogated because to scrutinize Whiteness is to understand and confront that racism and racial inequity are part of a deeply rooted system of racial hierarchy in the United States designed to benefit some and not others.

Statement of Need

Racial inequity in terms of access, representation, experience and outcomes in higher education is not limited to students. Faculty, staff and Leaders of Color are significantly underrepresented (Gasman,² Abiola & Travers, 2015). The homogeneity, or put differently, the Whiteness of faculty and administrators in higher education is problematic. Whiteness is still the culture of most higher education institutions even though students in higher education are no longer predominantly White. Students of Color currently represent forty-five percent of the national undergraduate population, which is a positive and significant increase compared to twenty years ago when Students of Color only represented fifteen percent of the undergraduate

² It is necessary to recognize that former Students of Color have made accusations of sexual harassment against Gasman, which led to an investigation at the University of Pennsylvania. I have chosen to include the scholarship of Gasman, Abiola and Travers (2015) because it is relevant.

population (American Council on Education, 2017). Correspondingly, White student enrollment has declined. However, Whiteness is still the cultural norm in most institutions, especially at Predominately White Institutions (PWI's). It is often believed that representation alone will create equity and eliminate racism in educational settings. To be clear, representation matters. But representation alone will not fix a system of historically and culturally ingrained Whiteness (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013).

A growing body of research identifies that Students of Color continue to experience negative and sometimes hostile campus climates including racial discrimination, negative cross-racial interactions, bias and harassment (Arellano & Vue, 2019, Moore & Bell, 2017; Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013; Gusa, 2010; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Yet, the research also shows that many racial incidents go unreported (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013, Gusa, 2010). With racism and racist acts becoming increasingly visible on campuses across the country, Students of Color are organizing to raise awareness about institutional neglect, institutional racism, marginalization, isolation, discrimination, violence, tokenism and underrepresentation (Arellano & Vue, 2019). As awareness about racism on campus is raised and movements gain momentum, pressure is mounting from students calling for change, and increasingly policy makers at the state and national level are publicly engaging in conversations about race and racism on campus. As a result, leaders in higher education, specifically White leaders, must become more aware, more knowledgeable and more skilled when confronted with racism and Whiteness (Arellano & Vue, 2019; Cole & Harper, 2017). In short, White leaders must become White, anti-racist leaders.

It is important to address that White leaders in higher education could have and should have been building anti-racist awareness and skills to transform institutional practices and

policies for decades. And some have, but most have not. The largely White composition of higher education leadership at most institutions, combined with decades of well-intentioned color-blind and race-blind policies that sought to diminish racial inequity in education, have ultimately led to a lack of critical race consciousness in higher education research, policy and leaders (Bensimon & Bishop, 2011; Cole & Harper, 2017, Harper, 2007). This has created a lack of racial awareness and critical race consciousness in many White faculty and administrative leaders (Bensimon & Bishop, 2011). Without a critical awareness of race, it becomes difficult to see systemic racism and as a result, the effects of Whiteness and corresponding White supremacy within institutions and within professional practice (Bensimon & Bishop, 2011). This leads to a troubling and somewhat confusing paradox because, while it is generally understood within the academy that race is operative in how students experience their post-secondary education, there is limited extant research that truly dives deep into how race and structural racism operate and influence organizational behavior and leadership (Bensimon & Bishop, 2011, Harper, 2007).

Having critical race consciousness has been shown to be an important attribute of leadership, specifically as it relates to institutional action (Arellano & Vue, 2019). Thus, developing racial awareness is critical for White leaders if we mean to truly foster genuine equity and inclusion in higher education. How higher education leaders construct policy and respond to racially motivated incidents occurring on campus is critical if we are to truly work towards the authentic inclusion of People of Color (Cole & Harper, 2017). Institutional and individual responses to racially charged incidents set the tone for how institutions are perceived, how People of Color experience the campus climate, and how White people understand their privilege (Cole & Harper, 2017). Anti-racist discourse around racially motivated incidents can build a sense of trust that works to support organizational efforts to foster authentic inclusion for People

of Color and other groups of people who have been historically oppressed. Conversely, non-racist, or whitewashed discourse can perpetuate, and often unintentionally support a hostile and systemically racist environment. To counter individual and systemic racism, higher education leaders must gain a better understanding of how Whiteness influences discourse and action on campus.

Background

I began this research with a much broader question. Initially, my intent was to examine how efforts to increase equity and inclusion are perceived by minority students in American higher education. However, as my initial research progressed, I began to identify that much of the existing research on equity and inclusion in higher education focused on the effect of race (for example the achievement gap), but failed to examine why there is an achievement gap (Leonardo, 2004; Bensimon & Bishop, 2011). I also noticed that when race was mentioned in the research, the focus was on racializing Students of Color. While White students are mentioned in extant equity and inclusion scholarship, it is typically to create a reference point of what is considered normative, or as a baseline to measure Students of Color against (Bensimon & Bishop, 2011). As a result, White students are seen as race-neutral, or put differently, lacking race. Rarely is structural racism discussed, let alone attributed as a cause of racial inequity (Leonardo, 2004; Bensimon & Bishop, 2011). Instead of using language that directly confronts race and creates a lens through which to view institutional racism, existing higher education research tends to employ euphemisms such as *minority*, *marginalized* and *low-income* when describing Students of Color (Bensimon & Bishop, 2011; Leonardo, 2004). Ultimately, the use of euphemisms decreases racial awareness by lessening the extent of the problem (Bensimon & Bishop, 2011; Leonardo, 2004).

As I started to process the implications of my initial research, I realized that I too was stuck in a loop of using language like marginalized and underserved instead of using words like *Black* or *Brown* or *Student of Color*. I also found that when the need arose to use the word *White*, I was even more uncomfortable and sought to find other descriptive means. Why was I, and seemingly most of academia resistant to using descriptive language to discuss race and racism? Because it is racist? Because we believe ourselves and our institutions to have the best of intentions and act in non-racial, color-blind, or at least racially neutral ways? Or is it because many of us in academia are White and live in a non-racialized world where we are immune to the necessity of understanding race in a meaningful way (Brooks-Immel & Murray, 2017; DiAngelo, 2011) and are thus ill equipped to talk about it, research it and address it in a systematic way? Was I lacking race consciousness? Was I perpetuating inequity through my lack of racial awareness? As I struggled with these questions and familiarized myself with work from critical Whiteness scholars, I found myself staring directly at the problem. The problem was me. The problem was systemic racism. The problem was Whiteness.

Research Questions

1. How have the discourses of Whiteness shaped my racial identity and lived experience as a White woman in the United States?
2. Do existing critical theories of Whiteness account for my observations and lived experiences as a White woman working in a leadership position in American higher education?
3. What, if any, methods have I identified that helped to develop my own racial cognizance through this process?

4. What questions, insights and implications for professional practice have emerged through my process of researching and writing a critical autoethnography on Whiteness, racism and leadership in higher education?

Significance of Study

Racism, especially from the perspective of White people is typically seen as an isolated, individual behavior, which some people may or may not exhibit, rather than a “historic, traditional, normalized, and deeply embedded in the fabric of U.S. society” (DiAngelo, 2011). As the majority, dominant racial discourse in the United States and in higher education, Whiteness often goes unseen and unchallenged by those who benefit the most from its dominance and invisibility. Further complicating the matter, most White people in the United States view themselves as color-blind and as a result, not racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Additionally, White people typically fail to see the effects of structural racism and therefore see racism and racist acts as individual, isolated, and not the behavior of *good, non-racists*.

This same color-blind or color neutral, individualist attitude is reflected and perpetuated on campuses across the country and has negative consequences for People of Color because it allows structural racism to remain unseen and unchallenged by well-intentioned White people. It also has negative consequences for White people because it hinders the development of racial cognizance, which reduces the possibility for authentic relationships with People of Color and does not move White people from non-racist to anti-racist action. I suggest that by identifying and naming specific discourses of Whiteness operative in higher education, White leaders, faculty and staff can learn to see and understand how Whiteness contributes to and perpetuates structural racism.

Ultimately, if White leaders in higher education can develop more racial awareness from the perspective of critical Whiteness, we can then disrupt, interrogate and dismantle systems of racism and White supremacy on campus. If we are serious about reducing racism and improving equity and inclusion for People of Color on campus, it is essential that White leaders learn to see and identify what White supremacy is, take responsibility for it, and understand how to challenge it. To address the pervasiveness of Whiteness, DiAngelo (2011) suggests that all white people need to build the skills and the “stamina to sustain conscious and explicit engagement with race” (p. 66). This is no different for White people in leadership positions in higher education.

Delimitations, Limitations and Assumptions

The more I have sought to learn about Whiteness, the more complex and difficult it became to tease out the endless ways in which Whiteness operates. For these reasons, I chose critical autoethnography as the method for conducting this research because centering myself in the research, and as a result in the problem, was essential. This decision was made after a lengthy investigation confirmed that centering myself within the research was a critical component of this study and its design. My aim was to examine my lived experience as a White woman working in higher education and connect my personal experiences with the larger social context and discourse of Whiteness in higher education. Examining my lived experience within the context of Whiteness in higher education was necessary to connect my experience to theory, and ultimately connect theory to practice. However, because autoethnography was my research method, the boundaries and scope of this research are limited to my own perceptions, understanding and experience.

My identity and my cultural location allowed me to examine my own personal experience as a White woman through the "lens of culture" (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015). In this case, the

lens of culture was my own Whiteness. By centering myself as a point of reflexive data collection and analysis, my aim was to "connect empirical knowledge generated through the observation and analysis of others with personal knowledge grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection" (Adams, et al., 2015, p. 22). As a White, upper-middle class woman in higher education, I am an insider in a culture of Whiteness, yet because of the normative nature of Whiteness, identifying cultural norms is problematic, even for someone within the system. Because of the power inherent in my own position, employing a critical lens in this research was essential. Through a critical lens, I openly addressed my power, privilege and status as a White, upper-middle class woman already working in academia. By acknowledging these important factors from the beginning of this process, I could discuss that it is because of my identity and my social position that I am afforded the opportunity to undertake this research. I am all too aware that without my status, power and the privilege it provides, engaging in research of this nature would have been impossible. For these reasons and because of the importance of personal first-person reflection in autoethnography, I used standard APA format, but I assumed a narrative and sometimes conversational writing style to maximize reflexivity throughout this research process.

Language and Writing Conventions

It is important to address key language and writing issues in this research. As explained comprehensively in Chapter 2, the existing language used to discuss race, racism and Whiteness is problematic for many reasons. I attempted throughout this research to use anti-racist language that acknowledges patterns of oppression, violence and historical dominance over People of Color. I also used language that acknowledges that oppression and racism in the United States cannot exist without White supremacy. The language we use shapes discourse and discourse

shapes perception and understanding; our discourses help us make meaning of the world. Thus, the language I used in this research was intentional.

Since there is not a singular anti-racist convention for how words that describe race and racism should be written, and because of the importance of language choices when discussing race, I choose to follow the Conscious Style Guide (2017), recommendations from the Columbia Journalism Review (2015) and Tharps (2014). Tharps (2014) argues that “When speaking of a culture, ethnicity or group of people, the name should be capitalized.” Thus, I capitalize *White*, *Black* and *Brown* when referring to people and choose to not use words like *Whites* and *Blacks*. I do not use *Whites* or *Blacks* because it creates a distancing effect and fosters objectification. I choose to not capitalize *people*, so I can talk about all people equally and remove any perception of hierarchy through typographic inequality. I made the decision to capitalize *Whiteness*, but many other researchers do not. I choose to capitalize *Whiteness* because it is my attempt to signify the power, scope and dominance of *Whiteness* as a thing, which exists. Capitalizing *Whiteness* creates typographic impact. However, when using the word *supremacy*, I do not capitalize the *s*. This decision was made because I wanted to show that we can begin to discursively take power from, and delegitimize White supremacy as a concept. Conversely, I capitalized *People of Color* to discursively redistribute power and signify the importance of recognizing that White supremacy oppresses People of Color. My aim throughout this study, was to use people first language and attempt to humanize all people I am discussing and remind us that while much of this is discussed in the abstract, ultimately this is about individual people acting within the parameters established by social, economic and political systems that have been designed to maintain power. However, when citing text by another author, I followed APA citation rules and used the author’s capitalization and writing conventions.

Using language, even when it is uncomfortable and at times controversial, is an important step for White people like me to take if we are serious about taking responsibility for White supremacy and racism. Using the appropriate language to correctly describe a problem is an essential step in this process. For example, I use *Whiteness* and *White supremacy* interchangeably as described above. Until I began this journey, I did not understand, nor was I comfortable with the concept or the language of White supremacy. I knew White supremacy was systemic and connected to oppression and power, but I lived in a world where White supremacy was restricted to White power and groups like the KKK and neo-Nazi's. I understood that racism was systemic, and a result of historic dominance conferred upon White people, but I was unable to comprehend that Whiteness was in fact White supremacy. I think this was because I did not want to take responsibility for my complicity in the system, nor did I understand the depth and the complexity of the system. It was much easier to continue believing that I was personally a good, non-racist, White person and that White supremacy was not only uncomfortable to acknowledge, but something that I believed was limited to a few extremists, whom I, of course, would never know. Leonardo (2004) explains the importance of discomfort and the power it can have over discourse stating:

Insofar as white feelings of safety perpetuate a legacy of white refusal to engage in racial domination, or acts of terror towards people of color, such discourses rearticulate the privilege that whites already enjoy when they are able to evade confronting white supremacy. As long as whites ultimately feel a sense of comfort with racial analysis, they will not sympathize with the pain and discomfort they have unleashed on racial minorities for centuries. (Leonardo, 2004, p. 150)

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The body of extant research on equity and inclusion in higher education is focused on the effect of race (achievement gap), but fails to attribute the effects to racism (White supremacy) (Leonardo, 2004). Like many of the researchers in this chapter, I take the view that Whiteness and its synonym, White supremacy, are structural and systemic and as a result, a form of conferred racial dominance. This means that White supremacy and racism have been socially constructed and manufactured for the purpose of creating power, dominance and oppression, which are maintained through social, economic and political structures that are largely unseen. I argue, as do other critical Whiteness scholars, that these structures are in part maintained through discourse and epistemic ignorance, which works to obfuscate the ways in which we understand race, racism and Whiteness in the United States (DiAngelo, 2011; Mills, 2007). Simply put, we cannot talk about the effects of race (achievement gap), without talking about the cause (racism), and we cannot talk about racism (effect) without talking about White supremacy (cause). While at first this cycle appears to be loop, it is not. When thought of as a cycle of effect then cause, we can become caught in circular logic. However, if we look from cause (White supremacy to the effect, racism and the achievement gap), we are in a different position; in this position we are able to see and address the cause. Frankenberg (1993) explains the importance of understanding the construction and manufacture of Whiteness in her work on race and White women:

In order to think about white women and race, then, it is critical to reflect on the meaning and history in the United States, of the category “race” itself, and similarly that of the idea of “racism.” I have found most useful those analyses that view race as a socially constructed rather than an inherently meaningful category, one linked to relations of power and process of struggle, and one whose meaning changes over time. Race, like

gender, is “real” in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impact on individuals’ sense of self, experiences and life chances. In asserting that race and racial difference are socially constructed, I do not minimize their social and political reality, but rather insist that their reality is, precisely, social and political rather than inherent or static. (p. 11)

Because of the social power held by White people in the United States, White people, particularly those in positions of leadership are in a unique position to legitimize claims that acknowledge racism and take anti-racist action (DiAngelo, 2011). This is no different in higher education. However, there is a lack of critical Whiteness theory and research on Whiteness and racism in the field of higher education (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016). Taken a step deeper, there is an even greater lack of research pertaining to academic leadership and Whiteness. What does currently exist, is largely focused on the student experience and campus climate. However, it is not a stretch to suggest that leaders in higher education should be using the documented experiences of students and campus climate to further their own professional learning, guidance and, ultimately, decision making and action. Thus, I include existing scholarship as it pertains to Whiteness, campus climate and student experience.

To demonstrate the need for research in the field of critical Whiteness studies in higher education leadership, this review of extant literature provides an overview of scholarship on theories of Whiteness and Whiteness in higher education. None of the theories presented here work or exist in isolation. Instead, there is constant overlap. Whiteness is generative, meaning that it is in a constant state of evolution and movement. I organize this chapter in the following way: first I provide background on the development of Whiteness as a field of study by explaining what critical Whiteness studies (CWS) are and how CWS differs from critical race

theory (CRT). I follow this with a brief overview of the history of higher education in the United States as it pertains to racialization and Whiteness. This section is limited to identifying the racialized roots of the founding of higher education in the United States. My goal with this section is to provide a historical framework and reference point, not a comprehensive analysis of the history of higher education. I then proceed by discussing key theories of Whiteness including; White privilege (McIntosh, 1989), Whiteness as societal standpoint (Frankenberg, 1993), Whiteness as discursive space (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995), Color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), epistemological ignorance (Mills, 2007), silent racism (Trepagnier, 2010) and White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011). Lastly, I cover extant research as it relates to Whiteness in higher education organized by academic discourse and language practices, research frames, campus climate, and faculty and student's perceptions of race and racism.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Whiteness as a unique field of study is necessary because without understanding and addressing how Whiteness operates, we continue to focus on the issue of race, and as a result, the issue of racism on People of Color (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016). The study of Whiteness, referred to as critical Whiteness studies (CWS) is a standalone field of critical inquiry (Cabrera, et al., 2016). As a relatively new field of formalized study, CWS is often mistakenly assumed to be a sub-area of critical race theory (CRT). CRT and CWS overlap because both areas examine racism, dominance and oppression. However, CRT's roots developed out of critical legal studies in the 1970's, which emerged from the frustration felt by many People of Color with the legal system due to the lack of focus on racism and race in the legal process following the Civil Rights movement. CRT is a form of race-based oppositional scholarship, which challenges Eurocentric values such as the normalization of Whiteness in the United States (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

CRT uses a theoretical framework that examines the distribution of power and resources along racial, economic, political and gendered lines (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). First introduced to the study of education by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), CRT has since found a place interrogating educational policy and practice (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015).

The primary theoretical difference between CRT and CWS is that CWS centers the critique of racism from the standpoint of Whiteness. Essentially, critical Whiteness scholars seek to dismantle the cause of racism through the lens of Whiteness and White responsibility. Cabrera, et al., (2016) argue that it is important to distinguish CRT from CWS to ensure that CRT scholarship continues unhindered and uninterrupted by Whiteness. It is important to clarify that it is not the intent of critical Whiteness scholars to invade and occupy the academic space of People of Color with discussions and research surrounding Whiteness. Instead, the goal of critical Whiteness scholars is to work alongside critical race scholars to eradicate systems of racism and White supremacy.

Critical Whiteness Studies is a relatively new and distinct field of study; however, the critique of Whiteness is not. Du Bois critiqued Whiteness in 1920 in "The Souls of White Folk," where he presented the idea of a "new religion of Whiteness," stating that the, "new discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing—a nineteenth and twentieth century matter, indeed" (Du Bois, 2003). Du Bois continued with what can only be described as a scathing, and at the time a bold critique of White supremacy given that Whiteness was not only perceived as the epitome of moral, intellectual and physical perfection, but also as a direct edict from God. Du Bois argued that Whiteness and European culture are false ideals created to oppress, subjugate and profiteer off the backs of People of Color (Du Bois, 2003). Du Bois (2003) formulated his theory of Whiteness as a religion by connecting the imperialistic principles

of capitalist colonization and exploitation, and the response of the United States in World War I.

He raised the question:

How many of us today fully realize the current theory of colonial expansion, of the relationship to Europe, which is white, to the world which is black and brown and yellow? Bluntly put, that theory is this: It is the duty of white Europe to divide up the darker world and administer it for Europe's good. (Du Bois, 2003, p. 52)

By framing the domination of People of Color as a White, European imperative, Du Bois identified that "Slowly but surely white culture is evolving a theory that 'darkies' are born beasts of burden for white folk" (Du Bois, 2003, p. 52). Du Bois continued by summarizing the justification and the conceptual rise of modern White supremacy by describing how the "religion of Whiteness" creates and maintains dominance by equating all that is "good" with Whiteness and all that is "bad" with Color:

Everything great, good, efficient, fair, and honorable is 'white'; everything mean, bad, blundering, cheating, and dishonorable is 'yellow'; a bad taste is 'brown'; and the devil is 'black.' (Du Bois, 2003, p. 53)

Similarly, Baldwin's, "The White Man's Guilt" (1965) serves as another example of an early formal critique well before the academy acknowledged Whiteness as a legitimate field of study. Baldwin (1965) described what McIntosh (1990) later identified as White privilege and what DiAngelo (2011) has identified as White fragility. Baldwin (1965) asserted that the vast record of racist historical violence in the United States is documented and still, White Americans believe they can choose not to see it, choose not to understand it, or even acknowledge its existence, thereby freeing themselves of addressing their complicity and ultimately their guilt:

This is utterly futile, of course, since they do see what they see. And what they see is an appallingly oppressive and bloody history, known all over the world. What they see is a disastrous, continuing, present, condition which menaces them, and for which they bear an inescapable responsibility. But since, in the main, they seem to lack the energy to change this condition, they would rather not be reminded of it. (Baldwin, 1965, p. 47)

It has been over one hundred years since the passages above were written by Du Bois and over fifty years since Baldwin's critique, and Whiteness is still not only difficult to discuss, it is seldom researched, and it is often unseen by those who benefit from its privilege the most. I believe this is due in part because culturally, White people do not see or feel the effects of racism in their daily lives and therefore do not understand that racism is an effect of Whiteness. Using CWS as a theoretical framework allows White people, like myself, to interrogate the hegemonic power of Whiteness and begin to disrupt and dismantle White supremacy and racism. Applied to a critical analysis of higher education, CWS offers the potential to identify how Whiteness perpetuates racism and Eurocentric norms which continue to marginalize and oppress People of Color on campus.

Theories of Whiteness

The theories of Whiteness that I discuss in this section are not the only extant theories of Whiteness. However, I believe they offer a purposeful way of deconstructing and understanding Whiteness and White supremacy. Also, not all theories that I discuss use discourse as a framework. Some refer to ideologies Bonilla-Silva (2013), or epistemologies (Mills, 2007) and knowledge/social construction (Frankenberg, 1993), which are all operative in discourse.

White Privilege

White privilege within the context of McIntosh's (1989) work is defined as unearned power conferred systematically based on skin color. As conferred dominance, privilege is not earned through a system of meritocracy and effort. According to McIntosh (1989), White people in the United States are taught to see "racism as something which puts others at a disadvantage," but are not "taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, and the advantage," that it confers (McIntosh, 1989, p. 1). As a result, McIntosh (1989) determined that the privilege of Whiteness was similarly denied and protected, much like male privilege, thus rendering it almost invisible and unconscious.

The theory of White privilege has come under fire in recent years and is frequently wielded on cable news programs as method of discursively resisting any kind of White responsibility for systemic racism. A typical argument comes from White people who may have been raised in, and may still be living in poverty. Or, a White person may have been raised poor, but through hard work has made a middle-class life. In these scenarios, many White people fail to see the corollary of Whiteness and privilege. As a result, discussions around White privilege tend to individualize racism, or focus on individual behaviors instead of connecting racism to systemic inequity.

Leonardo argues that the study of White privilege has been important to critical pedagogy because it accounts for the "experiences of the oppressor" (Leonardo, 2004, p. 137). However, Leonardo (2004) also argues that the study of White privilege must be accompanied by "an equally rigorous examination of white supremacy or the analysis of white racial domination" (p. 137). This is necessary because White supremacy secures the process of privilege and failing to address the connection of privilege to White supremacy allows the true cause of privilege to

remain unaddressed. Leonardo (2004) states "A critical pedagogy of white racial supremacy revolves less around the issue of unearned advantages, to the state of being dominant, and more around the processes that secure domination and the processes associated with it" (p. 137).

Leonardo makes a compelling argument that using privilege as a means for describing oppression is problematic because it allows White people to assuage guilt and minimize that we are presently complicit in structural and social racism (Mills, 2007; Baldwin, 1965). Essentially, it allows us to separate ourselves from our history, which we believe has no direct connection to the present because our racial privileges are a result of something we cannot control. This removes any sense of White responsibility.

While the theory of White privilege is helpful in terms of describing behaviors associated with Whiteness and pushing the conversation and research forward, it also serves to discursively redirect conversations to maintain Whiteness. This is not due to any lack of theoretical rigor. Instead, I believe it is due to the enduring power and pervasiveness of the discourse of Whiteness and the lengths that those who benefit most from White supremacy will go to to maintain its dominance and privilege. That being said, White privilege is mentioned extensively in the literature and as a result needs to be considered as a grounding theory within CWS.

Whiteness as Social Construction and Colonial Discourse

Race is socially constructed, however; it has real life implications. Frankenberg (1993) locates Whiteness as a socially constructed process. As a socially constructed process Whiteness "refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 7). Frankenberg (1993) used Omi and Winant's (1986) three stage chronology to explain the ongoing development of discourse on race in the United States. According to Frankenberg

(1993), the first stage of dominant discourse was the biological inferiority of People of Color, or what she refers to “essentialist racism.” “Within this discourse, race was constructed as a biological category, and the assertion of white biological superiority was used to justify economic and political inequities ranging from settler colonialism to slavery” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 13). The second stage of discourse began in the 1920s and “race came to be named in cultural and social terms instead of, or simultaneously with biological ones” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 13). Within this discourse, named “sameness,” “color evasiveness” and “power evasiveness” by Frankenberg, or color-blindness by Bonilla-Silva (2013), ethnicity began to be used to explain or describe racial differences, which fostered ideas of assimilation. It is within this discourse of ethnicity and assimilation that the false promise of meritocracy was born based on the United States as the ideal democracy. According to Frankenberg (1993), “ethnicity theorists believed, a meritocracy would be achieved. Vital to this perspective was the belief that racial inequality was incompatible with American society, which within this view, was understood to be fundamentally adequate as a democracy” (p. 13). The third stage, described as “class-and nation-based paradigms for understanding race and racism,” re-routed racial discourse back to difference, but instead of difference being framed by the dominant, White group, it was framed by People of Color as method of reclaiming identity (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 14). It is important to note that Frankenberg did not see these stages as distinct and separate, or as one ending and another beginning. Instead she saw all three as elements that were continually operative in racial discourse.

Frankenberg (1993) also identified another operative discourse, which I find perhaps the most compelling; colonial discourses and the legacy of imperialism. This discourse includes colonial expansion and exploration; it is about westernness, taming the wilderness and its savages,

and taking what is rightfully due to create civilization. It is about Whiteness and how Whiteness became Americanness. But, it strategically omits genocide, enslavement and exploitation, and rationalizes colonial domination. It is about:

epistemic violence...the idea that associated with West European expansion is the production of modes of knowing that enabled and rationalized colonial domination from the standpoint of the West, and produced ways of conceiving "Other" societies and cultures whose legacies endure to the present. (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 16)

Frankenberg argues that because of the power of the above discourses, to see and challenge Whiteness, we must name it because "Naming whiteness displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed, status that is itself an effect of its dominance" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 7). Naming and defining Whiteness connects White people to White history and challenges epistemological ignorance (Mills, 2007; Baldwin, 1965). Further, naming Whiteness allows us to "generate or work toward antiracist forms of whiteness, or at least toward antiracist strategies for reworking the terrain of Whiteness" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 7).

Through her research on White women, Frankenberg (1993) identified that although White people, like People of Color, live "raced" lives, White people don't identify themselves racially. Frankenberg (1993), explains this stating:

Any system of differentiation shapes those on whom it bestows privileges as well as those it oppresses. White people are 'raced,' just as men are 'gendered.' And in a social context where white people have too often viewed themselves as nonracial or racially neutral, it is crucial to look at the socialness of the white experience. (p. 1)

Frankenberg (1993) identified three linked dimensions that combine to create the social construction of Whiteness. The first dimension is Whiteness as structural advantage or race

based privilege (Frankenberg, 1993). Simply put, structural advantage is having access to the most basic kinds of resources, i.e. "privileges," such as reduced chances of living in poverty, access to healthcare, a dependable living wage, a longer and healthier life, fair treatment in employment and the criminal justice system, access to quality education and housing, etc.

Frankenberg's view of privilege differs from McIntosh's (1989) in that Frankenberg stresses that "privilege" is a misnomer in this context because the "privileges" being referred to, are in fact, "basic social rights," which should be automatic for all people (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 54).

Defining privilege as basic social right is also reflected in Cabrera's theory of White immunity (2017).

The second dimension Frankenberg (1993) identified was Whiteness as a societal standpoint. Societal standpoint is the location or manner by which White people view themselves and others. This can be understood as the White viewpoint, or how White people see and understand the world. Whiteness as societal standpoint also includes how White people locate themselves in relation to People of Color. While Frankenberg does not directly connect societal standpoint with epistemological ignorance (Mills, 2007), the relevance is clear; White people understand the world through knowledge creation and create discourses that support their views. The third and last dimension is Whiteness as unmarked and unnamed cultural practices (Frankenberg, 1993). This dimension describes Whiteness as normative. Whiteness is "normal," "typical," or "a set of ways of being in the world, a set of cultural practices, often not named as 'white' by white folks, but looked on instead as 'American' or 'normal'" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 54; McIntosh, 1989; Nakayama and Krizek, 1995).

The Discursive Space of Whiteness

In an essay from 1995 titled, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," Nakayama and Krizek, deconstruct Whiteness as discursive space. Nakayama and Krizek (1995) describe the discursive space of Whiteness as an invisible space of power, which "continues to influence the identity of those both within and without its domain" (p. 291). Nakayama and Krizek (1995) stress that the discursive space of Whiteness "affects the everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours. It wields power, yet endures as a largely unarticulated position (p. 291). Like Frankenberg (1993), Nakayama and Krizek (1995) argue that Whiteness must be named and defined to reveal its power and position. Using Foucault's theory of discourse in their research, Nakayama and Krizek's (1995) identified five strategic discourses of Whiteness frequently employed by White people:

1. Whiteness is tied to power and status and is perceived as the majority position, but it is hidden from view. Essentially, it is normative, but unnamed.
2. Whiteness is attributed in the negative to describe someone who is lacking "other racial and ethnic features." In this discourse White, has no-color, so if you are White, you cannot be a "colored person."
3. Whiteness is "naturalized" with a scientific definition, which makes it a biological issue, not a cultural issue.
4. Whiteness is confused with nationality; thus, "real" Americans are White people.
5. Whiteness is a rejection of labels, or put differently through the employment of color-blindness, Whiteness does not see difference. However, this ultimately ends up

circling back to "I'm just White" and is a tactical use of labels—those who have them and those who do not. (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 299-300)

These five discourses are loaded with contradictions, yet they have maintained use in White society and continue to assert power because the:

dynamic element of whiteness is a crucial aspect of the persuasive power of this strategic rhetoric. It garners its representational power through its ability to be many things at once, to be universal and, to be a source of identity and difference.

(Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 302)

Nakayama and Krizek (1995) call attention to Whiteness in the academy and urge scholars to examine their own locations to Whiteness when engaging in research. Further, they add the importance and relevance of ethnographic reflexivity as an important direction for further study when attempting to deconstruct Whiteness. Of significance, Nakayama and Krizek's (1995) essay was written almost twenty-five years ago, however; the call to action for further research is still as relevant today as it was in 1995:

What is required is an ongoing discussion of the effects of whiteness on our research and on our personal and academic pursuits...What is required are more sophisticated maps of the discursive field of whiteness. (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 305)

Color-blindness

First published in 2003, Bonilla-Silva's book "Racism without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America," identified color-blindness as an ideology that finds virtue or goodness in being color-blind, or not seeing race. Bonilla-Silva (2013) argues that in the Post-Civil Rights era, most White Americans see racism as something that exists within White supremacy groups and as a result does not exist within "regular,"

“good,” White people. Instead, "Most whites assert they 'don't see color, just people" (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 1). However, as Bonilla-Silva (2013) clarifies, this does not mean that racism in the United States is no longer an issue. Instead, Bonilla-Silva (2013) argues, "a new powerful ideology has emerged to defend the contemporary racial order: the ideology of color-blind racism" (p. 53). While Bonilla-Silva is credited in the literature for identifying color-blindness as a theory, it should be noted that Frankenberg also discussed color-blindness a decade earlier in the 1993 article, "Growing up White: Feminism, Racism and the Social Geography of Childhood."

By its very nature, the term color-blindness seeks to remove all recognition of skin color from discourse. If one cannot see something, it must not exist. Therefore, being color-blind is a way of interpreting information that attempts to remove all recognition of race, and as a result any connection to racism. By removing race through color-blindness, the problems of Whiteness or Blackness or Brownness, cease to exist making the cause of any problem about something other than race (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Cabrera, et al., 2016; Harper, 2013). As a discourse, or a social epistemology (Mills, 2007), color-blindness creates a worldview for White people that makes the discussion of race and color not only uncomfortable, but inappropriate (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

Bonilla-Silva's research on color-blindness is based on two studies. The findings of both studies suggest that color-blindness is pervasive in the United States. Bonilla-Silva (2013) argued that data collected through the two studies suggests that color-blindness can best be identified as four central frames; (a) abstract liberalism, (b) naturalization, (c) cultural racism and (d) minimization. According to Bonilla-Silva (2013) abstract liberalism is the most important of the four frames because "it constitutes the foundation of the new racial ideology" (p. 54).

Abstract liberalism is built off the tenets of liberal humanism, which Bonilla-Silva (2013) describes as "individualism, universalism, egalitarianism and meliorism (the idea that people and institutions can be improved)" (p. 54). At first glance, this description of liberal humanism appears reasonable and fair. However, Bonilla-Silva (2013) reminds us that ideologies of liberal humanism were created in Europe at a time when liberalism meant that "only White people were human" (p. 55). Recognizing exclusion is an important component of abstract liberalism because it identifies that "modernity, liberalism, and racial exclusion were all part of the same historical movement" (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 55).

Abstract liberalism as a framework, purports racial equality through the veil of color-blindness, but simultaneously opposes policies that address racial inequity. For example, when racial equity is called for in college admission practices and policies such as Affirmative Action are put in place, there is opposition because a change at the policy level is seen as giving preferential treatment to some and not others. In the case of Affirmative Action, issues of fairness and meritocracy are raised because advantage is given to some (Students of Color), while other students (White students) are seen as being disadvantaged due to changes in policy. In a post-Civil Rights, color-blind era, the abstract liberalism argument is highly persuasive, albeit simplistic, especially when used by White people to maintain preferential access. When race and ethnicity based issues are framed in this manner, White people "can appear 'reasonable' and even 'moral,' while opposing almost all practical approaches to deal with de facto racial inequality" (Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p. 56).

Bonilla-Silva's (2013) naturalization framework argues that issues of racial segregation are a "natural" choice made from personal preference, not a result of systemic issues such as housing, educational or employment discrimination. Naturalization places the responsibility of

segregation on People of Color by allowing White people to believe that segregation is a natural choice because people gravitate towards likeness. Naturalization explains and drives conversations about the proverbial high school cafeteria when justifications are made to explain why all the White kids sit at one end and all the Students of Color sit at the other end. The naturalization framework results in removing any recognition or understanding by White people that segregation is a result of political, economic and social mandates, and not driven by personal preferences and individualism.

The cultural framework interprets racial inequality based on perceived Eurocentric cultural norms and highlights cultural or ethnic differences instead of using racial differences to explain social, political and economic inequity (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). The cultural frame has a history of rationalizing exclusion based on perceptions of biological inferiority (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Put differently, the cultural framework identifies non-European values and practices as inferior. For example, the cultural frame is at work when Latinx achievement differences are equated with a failure of parenting or a lack of cultural appreciation for education, instead of looking at the lack of access and opportunity produced by racism and White supremacy.

Lastly, the minimization frame seeks to diminish the role that racism plays in society by making it invisible (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Minimization occurs whenever racism is diminished or denied, maintaining the perception that differences in social outcomes like education, housing, employment, salary, wealth, health and criminal justice are an individual or a personal problem, instead of a racial problem. Bonilla-Silva's four frames identify how the discourse created by color-blind ideology creates a powerful belief system for White people that removes any sense of responsibility for racism and racial inequality. In fact, it is so powerful that many White people virulently defend the importance of a color-blind ideology and world view and see any challenge

to color-blindness as racism. Color-blindness is strategy that provides protection for white people on two fronts; first as a way of individually excusing complicity in racism because “I don’t see race, so I can’t be racist,” and second; as a way of “not seeing” structural racism because all people are treated equally, therefore whatever is happening isn’t racism.

Epistemological Ignorance

In "The Racial Contract," Mills (1997) argues that Whiteness is maintained through a social epistemology of ignorance, whereby, White ignorance is a form of social cognition. This occurs because the individual and collective processes of cognition impact epistemologies of knowledge and ignorance through perception, conception, memory and testimony, which in turn create discourse. Through discourse, we "map," or frame our perceptions, and thus come to understand the world in which we live. However, our maps are not neutral. Instead our maps are inherently biased towards a certain way of knowing or not knowing. Thus, our map may not represent the reality it claims to describe, yet, most people will seek and find confirmation of their map, whether it is accurate or not. Some refer to this bias as an ideology, whereas others, such as Foucault view it as a discourse. The common thread is that the bias of the ruling group dominates the discourse through ideology and narrative. Thus, the dominant discourse frames perception and creates social cognition.

In the case of Whiteness, discourse shapes the perception of facts or what is real, or normative (Mills, 2007; Nakayama and Krizek, 1995; Frankenberg, 1993). According to Mills (2007), the normativity of racism has shifted from the overt, old fashioned racism seen during slavery and Jim Crow to color-blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, Frankenberg, 1993), combined with a strategic refusal to account for the past (Baldwin, 1965). Memory is a key determinant of what becomes a constitutive norm. Managing memory is a key strategy of the dominant group

because it allows for the formation of a group identity through the creation of a social memory and collective amnesia. Social memory becomes the dominant social story, and this is what makes its way into text books, onto movie screens and into the discourse of popular culture. Social memory in the United States is the *whitewashed* version of history. Takaki (2008) refers to this as the "master memory." It is a memory that erases genocide and terrible atrocities committed against Black and Brown people and elevates the memory of White conquest by selective editing. This selective editing is made possible by the repudiation of the alternate memory, which in turn reinforces the established memory as the only truth. Thus, White memory does not require correction. Instead it becomes the narrative, and overtime the enslavement and genocide of millions of people becomes the story of people who have been free for generations, but refuse to do the work necessary to improve their lives. They are not suffering because they are Black or Brown and descendants of former slaves, First Nations People, or immigrants that have never had a chance at equal opportunity or reparations. Instead, they suffer because they have failed to take advantage of a land of meritocracy and rise above their circumstances—they have failed to manifest the White, American dream (Frankenberg, 1993).

An epistemology of ignorance is a *not knowing* that is socially constructed and includes intentional and unintentional *not knowing* (Mills, 2007). Epistemologies of ignorance allow White people to separate themselves from the reality and ugliness of White supremacy by "not knowing" about it, or maintaining ignorance about its existence (Baldwin, 1965; Frankenberg 1993; Nakayama and Krizek; Leonardo, 2004; Mills, 2007, DiAngelo, 2011). This allows White people to remain ignorant and not complicit in racial oppression. White ignorance includes both "straightforward racist motivation and more impersonal social-structural causation, which may be operative even if the cognizer in question is not racist" (Mills, 2007, p. 21). The non-racist

cognizer may be operating under mistaken beliefs and misinformation, much of which became operative after the "transition from de jure to de facto white supremacy (Mills, 2007, p. 21). Mills (2007) argues that it is precisely this kind of White ignorance that is most critical to understand. Importantly, the White in White ignorance is not confined to White people. Instead, it is often shared by People of Color because of "power relations and patterns of ideological hegemony" (Mills, 2007, p. 22). White racial ignorance can "produce a doxastic environment" that can lead other racial ignorance to flourish (Mills, 2007, p. 22). As a result, all people in the United States may exist on some level of epistemological ignorance as it pertains to race and racism, the history of colonization and slavery, and the master narrative (Mills, 2007; Takaki, 2008).

Mills (2007) asserts that the discourse of Whiteness in higher education is ingrained and suggests that to correct a narrative which is part of national identity, requires a counter narrative. In his discussion of the "Jim Crow intellectual practices of the white academy," Mills states that many early and contemporary Black scholars were met with a "deaf ear" when they attempted to bring issues of race to the forefront (2007, p. 33). Quoting Steinberg (1995) Mills argues, "The testimony of the Negro scholars saying the wrong thing (almost an analytic statement!) Would not be registered. The marginalization of black voices in academia was facilitated by an invisible but horribly tangible color line that relegated all but a few black scholars to teach in black colleges far removed from the academic mainstream" (In Mills, 2007, p. 33). Mills uses the example of early Anthropology insisting on the truth of racial hierarchy as fact as an example of such thinking. Thus, even in academia, White interests sustained White ignorance and White interests viewed Black interests as oppositional.

Silence and Good White People

Trepagnier (2010) developed the concept of silent racism through her study of "well-meaning white people." Importantly, silent racism is not the same as White silence (DiAngelo, 2012). Trepagnier (2010) does not connect silent racism to discourse, but the connection is evident given that what Trepagnier is describing is based on knowledge construction and what can and cannot be said (Mills, 2007). Trepagnier (2010) describes silent racism as "the racist thoughts, images, and assumptions in the minds of white people, including those that by most accounts are 'not racist'" (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 1). Silent racism is racism that is frequently employed by White people, but it is "hidden in the 'not racist' category" (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 5). Silent racism is important to understand because it is perceived as "harmless" and typically falls into the category of "everyday racism" (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 1). This makes it dangerous. Further, because silent racism is not seen as an overt threat, it is studied less and therefore, understood less. Trepagnier (2010) suggests that silent racism is closely related to Bonilla-Silva's (2013) concept of color-blind racism and I argue that is also a direct product of epistemological ignorance (Mills, 2007).

Trepagnier (2010) asserts that most White people in American think in oppositional or binary terms about racism. Thus, a person is either racist or not racist. Those who are racist are openly and blatantly racist and can be identified by their statements and actions. Whereas those who are not racist are often attempting to "ignore racial difference" or acting color-blind (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 3; Bonilla-Silva, 2013). This construction of knowledge allows for a White definition of racism that is problematic because "it does not recognize racism unless it is blatant and/or intended; neither does it acknowledge institutional racism" (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 3; Mills, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Racism perceived this way, allows for White people to ignore or not

notice everyday acts of racism. This form of racism includes "routine actions that are often not recognized by the actor as racist but uphold the racist status quo" (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 3). An example of this form of racism can be seen when a White person, says something along the lines of, "He's so well-spoken," when referring to an educated Black man.

Trepagnier's (2010) research on silent racism examined the views of self-identified "non-racist" White women. Trepagnier is one of the few scholars who has looked specifically at racism through the lens of Whiteness and White women who self-identify as good, or "not racist." Trepagnier (2010) concluded that well-meaning White women, those who believe themselves to not be racist, consistently hold negative views of Black people and try to avoid the topic and issues related to race as much as possible. This silent avoidance perpetuates racism and upholds Whiteness because it fails to acknowledge and address White supremacy as a system. As well as something that individual White people participate in.

Trepagnier (2010) identified two aspects that not only support, but also perpetuate silent racism: stereotypical images and paternalistic assumptions. Stereotypical images refer to images, often in popular culture that set Black people apart from White people. These images are usually derived from misinformation, but serve an important function making White people believe that they, as a group, are different and separate from Black people (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 25).

Paternalistic assumptions are based on a perceived sense of superiority in relationships held by White people, which leads them to believe that Black people "are inferior to themselves and need protection" (Trepagnier, 2010, p. 24). This false sense of responsibility towards Black people results in a condescending, or paternalistic attitude (Trepagnier, 2010). Both discourses are predicated on the notion that People of Color people are somehow different, or less than White people, and both are primary aspects of silent racism that "good" White people engage in.

White Fragility

DiAngelo (2011) explains White fragility as a need that North American White people have for racial comfort and insulation from race-based stress. White fragility is a result of a social environment that triggers a defensive response when even the smallest amount of racial discomfort becomes apparent. When triggered defensively, White fragility functions as a way of “reinstating the white racial equilibrium” (DiAngelo, 2011). Defensive responses include “the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence and leaving the stress-inducing situation” (DiAngelo, 2011). These behaviors are reinforced and fueled by the lack of education and discussion about race and the privileges associated with Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2011; Mills, 2007). In the dominant position, White people are made to feel racially comfortable and consequently, expect this same level of comfort to continue.

White fragility is reinforced by factors such as segregation, universalism and individualism, entitlement, racial arrogance and racial belonging, psychic freedom, and messaging (DiAngelo, 2011). Because many White people grow up and then live in segregated environments that remove them from People of Color, their lives are framed in a White dominated society where the lack of representation of People of Color is neither missed nor sought out (DiAngelo, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Frankenberg, 1993; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). Whereas, it is the lack of People of Color that makes neighborhoods and schools appear to be good or desirable to most White people (DiAngelo, 2011). DiAngelo (2011) stresses that this is particularly true for the segregation of White people from Black people, which allows White people to have little to no authentic knowledge or skill development about racism and the lives of Black Americans by virtue of their lack of contact and reference (Di Angelo, 2011). This also

perpetuates the idea that Whiteness is normative (DiAngelo, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Frankenberg, 1993; Mills, 2007; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). Further, it focuses White interests and the White experience as central and universal because it does not even acknowledge that there is another experience to be had (DiAngelo, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Frankenberg, 1993; Mills, 2007; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995).

DiAngelo (2011) address the paradox which exists between White people seeing their perspective and interests as universal and the conflicting value of individualism, which is steadfastly reinforced in American culture. Through individualism, White people see themselves as unique, or individual, and not part of a racially socialized group (DiAngelo, 2011; Frankenberg, 2003; Trepagnier, 2010; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). By not seeing themselves as a racialized group, White people gain a non-racialized identity and therefore are exempt from the larger actions of their racial group (DiAngelo, 2011). Combined, universalism diminishes the benefit of Whiteness, while “Individualism erases history and hides the ways in which wealth has been distributed and accumulated over generations to the benefits of whites today” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59). Being White, essentially means you have no race and as a result, you are un-racialized and see yourself outside of race and racial issues (DiAngelo, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Frankenberg, 1993; Mills, 2007; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). This inability to see Whiteness as a White person is significant as it denies the existence of privilege and further supports a message that race is insignificant (DiAngelo, 2011).

Whiteness in Higher Education

History and social context are important when seeking to understand Whiteness in higher education (Museus, et al, 2015). Higher education in the United States was created to be culturally and demographically White. Thus, it has deeply racialized roots. The earliest three

colleges in what were then the British colonies, Harvard College (1638), the College of William and Mary (1693) and Yale College (1701) were established as adjuncts of their respective churches, which in turn were integrally related to the colonies' civil governments (Geiger, 2016). These institutions were designed to support and expand colonialism by "rais[ing] up a literate and pious clergy," (Lucas, 2006, p. 104) and consequently received financial support from the British throne (Geiger, 2016). The importance of the original intent, which was to educate pious, young, White men so they could ultimately expand the scope of colonization, cannot be overstated when looking to the historic foundation of American higher education to explain the present. Designed with the explicit purpose to serve and prepare young, moderately affluent to wealthy, White men to enter the church and civil society through an education framed in protestant religiosity and order, the intent was also to create a social hierarchy, and quell the growing agitators in the new world. Lucas (2006) cites a passage from a Harvard commencement speech in the 1670s, which is not only telling about the desires of the colonists to create a hierarchical society, but also alludes to the concerns that many colonists had about rebellion.

Had the first Puritan settlers not founded Harvard....the ruling class would have been subjected to mechanics, cobblers, and tailors, the gentry would have been overwhelmed by lewd fellows of the baser sort, the sewage of Rome, the dregs [of society] which judgeth more from emotion, little from truth...nor would we have rights, honors, or magisterial ordinance worthy of preservation, but plebiscites, appeals to base passions, and revolutionary rumblings. (Lucas, 2006, 104-105)

While Lucas (2006) does not connect the two, it is very possible given the timeline that the reference may in part be to the rebellion led by Nathaniel Bacon, which is cited by many historians as the catalyst for first race based laws in Virginia that identified people as either

White or Negro (Zinn, 2003; Takaki, 2008). If not Bacon's rebellion, it is also possible that the reference was to the growing discord in Boston and other early colonial towns, where life for indentured servants, Africans taken as slaves and Indigenous People was becoming increasingly desperate. What is clear, is that from the outset, higher education was about orthodoxy, religiosity, order, a deeply ingrained sense of the superiority of Eurocentric culture, and designed for White men. It was also about maintaining class and racial hierarchy and the superiority of Western European culture.

From the outset, higher education was about exclusion. Even when charters and mission statements professed to be open to non-White men, they were typically not statements that were acted upon. Dartmouth College is often cited as the first colonial college to provide educational opportunities to Indigenous People. The founding charter from 1769 states that the college was created "for the education and instruction of Youth of the Indian Tribes in this Land...and also of English Youth and any others" (Dartmouth, n.d.). However, only 19 Indigenous Peoples graduated from Dartmouth between 1769 and 1970 (Dartmouth, n.d.). That is 19 people in 201 years. In 1970, the Dartmouth Admissions office was directed to begin recruiting Indigenous People for the first time (Dartmouth, n.d.).

The first two Black men to earn bachelor's degrees from White institutions were Edward Jones and John Russworm (Amherst and Bowdoin) in 1826 (Lucas, 2006). Lucas (2006) states that "People of color attending college were a rarity in the antebellum period, as indicated by the fact that no more than twenty-seven others were listed in the roster of all black graduates prior to the Emancipation Proclamation" (p. 164). Comparatively, in 1860, 225,000 "free" Black people lived in the North and 4 million enslaved Black people lived in the South (Takaki, 2008). That means that 27 Black students graduated out of a population estimated at 4,225,000.

The first Black colleges were opened in the North in the late 1840's and Elmira Female College began issuing its own degrees to White women in 1859. With mounting pressure from both White women, and Black men and women, to have access to higher education opportunities, the foundation started to shift following the Civil War. However, while access increased incrementally, the culture did not change and the quality of educational opportunities available to White women and People of Color were typically not equal to the quality available to White men (Lucas, 2006).

Despite the advancements made after the Civil War and the development of HBCU's and Women's Colleges, the student body at institutions of higher learning was largely homogenous and segregated until after World War II and *Brown v. Board*. According to Lucas (2006), just before World War II, it is estimated that:

there were probably no more than 5,000 black students in white colleges outside the South in 1939, representing five-tenths of 1 percent of total enrollments in the North, and about half of these students were concentrated in fewer than two dozen institutions. Similarly, only a handful of blacks were enrolled in southern colleges and universities; and of that handful, only about 1 in 10 was enrolled at a predominantly white college or university. (p. 261)

It is important to recognize that it is only very recently that People of Color have had more access to higher education opportunities, and opportunity does not equate to a change in culture. Following *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* in 1954, the desegregation of White institutions began to accelerate. However, while women, Students of Color and older adults began to enter the classroom in increasingly greater numbers, research pertaining to the student "experience" continued to focus on the traditional student population, or on young, White men.

Over the last fifty years, the research has continued to focus primarily on "traditional" students. However, the definition of "traditional" has changed to be more inclusive of women, and while there has been more interest in recent years in research that focuses on non-traditional populations, comparatively, it is still significantly less. Thus, despite higher education's "racialized roots," most of the dominant theories (Tinto, 1987; Castro, 2015) "have been adopted and utilized by researchers and practitioners to study and understand the experiences of people in college settings have been deracialized and acultural" (Museus, et al., 2015, p. 11). This is no different than the race neutral terminology used in society that has been highly effective in creating color-blind culture supported and framed by White supremacy (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

The Discursive Practices of Whiteness in Higher Education

A growing body of research indicates that Whiteness as a discourse is operative at an individual, as well as institutional level in higher education. As a discourse, Whiteness impacts policy, the way research is conducted and what the focus of research is, what is considered equitable and inclusive, who is hired, how racist acts are discussed and addressed by leaders, how the campus climate is experienced, how faculty teach, who gets admitted, how students learn, and who is successful. For example, while there has been an emphasis on research related to building equity and inclusion through policies and practices designed to create access and support for People of Color on campus, concepts that uphold racial systems such as meritocracy, color-blindness and deficit paradigms have been largely ignored in the research as they specifically relate to racism (Museus, Ledesma & Parker, 2015, p. 26, Harper, 2012). To be clear, research does exist that examines issues like meritocracy and deficit paradigms. However, the research tends to focus on race in relation to these issues, not on racism. Put differently, the

focus has been on addressing the effect of race and inequity in higher education, not the causes of racism. Cabrera (2012) argues the importance of addressing how racism is framed in higher education stating:

There is a tendency to discuss issues of racism in terms of either minority disadvantage or the universalistic, positive impacts related to enacting diverse learning environments. These are both important components of creating diverse and inclusive institutions of higher education, but missing from the equation is a critical examination of how Whiteness mediated through systemic White supremacy continues to re-create racial stratification. (p. 376)

In a 2012 article, “Race Without Racism: How Higher Education Researchers Minimize Racist Institutional Norms,” Harper (2012) argues that we must address racism and "how racist institutional practices undermine equality and diversity," if we want to improve outcomes for Students of Color in postsecondary education. Harper (2012) identified a significant issue that I believe is still hindering our progress; we don't talk about racism in higher education and we don't research racism and racist practices in higher education. Harper (2012) found that there had been "no published analyses of how racism is handled in academic journal articles," in the field of higher education research (p. 10). Harper's (2012) research shows that not only is scholarship that examines racism in higher education not being done at any relevant scale, researchers consistently limit the significance of racism when presenting findings.

Harper (2012) used Bonilla-Silva's theory of color-blind racism as an analytical framework and systematically analyzed 225 articles in seven peer reviewed journals related to higher education research that included articles related to students, faculty and other post-secondary actors. Harper (2012) used the words "racism" and "racist" as search terms and

counted their frequencies throughout each article, including the discussions and implications sections. Next, Harper (2012) searched for any reference to critical race theory within each article to determine whether authors had used CRT as an analytical approach. Harper (2012) organized findings into two categories. First, Harper (2012) states that the title of Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi's article (2001), "'Anything but Racism,' sufficiently characterizes the approach that researchers in our field use to explain various racial phenomenon in post-secondary contexts" (p. 16). According to Harper (2012), "Rarely were racism and racist institutional norms explicitly named among the range of plausible reasons for racial differences," (p. 16). The lack of research and specific language is not limited to higher education. Further, Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi's (2001) research examined how racism is "mishandled," in sociological literature and found that when addressing racial outcomes, researchers typically used language that diminished the connection to racism, or presented racism as one possible explanation.

Harper's (2012) second finding identified that common semantic substitutes were used in lieu of the words "racism" and "racist." For example, "racism" and "racist" only appeared in three article titles and were used in only 21.6% of the publications. When the words were used, Harper (2012) states "in most instances, the words were only used trivially—meaning that they simply appeared once or twice but were not substantially engaged or discussed in detail" (p. 20). Further, Harper (2012) found that "only 16 of 225 articles used either word three or more times" and that "beyond quantifying the frequency of use," he observed, "few authors actually discussed their findings in ways that engage racism as a plausible explanation for racial differences or negative experiences reported by minoritized participants" (p. 20). Of importance, none of the articles used an established theoretical framework, like Bonilla-Silva's (2013) for analyzing

racism. Thereby, once again failing to connect racism to outcomes and existing, established sociological theory.

Harper (2012) found that instead of using "racist" or "racism" researchers commonly used the following semantic substitutes: "alienating," "hostile," "marginalizing," "chilly," "harmful," "isolating," "unfriendly," "negative," "antagonistic," "unwelcoming," "prejudicial," "discriminatory," "exclusionary," and "unsupportive" (p. 20). These examples discursively reframe racism as something other than, or at least as secondary to racism. Harper (2012) argues that "racism in contemporary research continues to be viewed as extreme acts committed by an ignorant or ill-intentioned few" (p. 10), and therefore, is not a focus of scholarship. Consequently, very few studies "take into account structural/institutional racism as an explanatory factor for racial differences in various outcomes" (Harper, 2012, p. 10). This means that we are not addressing the "race effect," as an outcome of racism (Harper, 2012; Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi, 2001).

Harper's research (2012) shows that when racism is addressed in higher education research, is it cloaked in euphemism and semantics. These choices serve to avoid the direct confrontation of racism in the research process, as well as the literature. As a result, our understanding of racism and its impact on People of Color is diminished. Harper refers to this as "racial silence," (Harper, 2012). Racial silence occurs when discussing racism is deemed taboo. However, Harper is moderately hopeful that by pointing out that we are not addressing racism, that we can turn the tide. I believe that to do this, we must first start by addressing how Whiteness in higher education, prevents us from talking about racism and encourages racial silence. Harper (2012) asserts a similar belief and states:

I honestly believe that the overwhelming majority of higher education scholars

whose research I analyzed for this study are authentically interested in narrowing racial gaps, diversifying college and university campuses, and doing research that informs the creation of environments that no longer marginalize persons of color. I am afraid, however, that these aims will not be achieved if we continue to study race without critically examining racism. (p. 25)

Like Harper's (2012) findings, Cabrera (2009) reviewed five edited volumes on critical Whiteness studies and found that eight of the 215 chapters included issues of higher education and only one of these eight examined Whiteness as it pertains to students (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016, p. 37). Museus, et al., (2015) suggest that this is because of the way that Whiteness and White racial frames operate in society and in higher education. "Even when postsecondary policy makers and educators seek to explicitly address issues associated with race, White racial frames work to diminish the significance of racism in their understanding and methods of solving racial problems" (Museus, et al., 2015, p. 11). This is precisely how Whiteness operates; it seems to not exist, and if it is identified, it is never seen as the problem or the cause of racism. Instead of highlighting racism, or even acknowledging it, Whiteness seeks to diminish the impact of it. For example, Iverson's (2008) research identified the use of White racial frames through the analysis of the diversity action plans at 20 land-grant universities. The research identified that despite the good intentions of diversity action plans, the legacy of historical racism and White supremacy undermined pro-diversity policies and practices in postsecondary institutions (Iverson, 2008). Additionally, Iverson found that when there was an effort to promote diversity, many universities failed to understand and recognize how institutional discourse worked to further reinforce minoritized communities as outsiders in higher education (Iverson, 2008).

The findings of the research conducted by Iverson (2008) and Harper (2012) are further reflected in Cole and Harper's 2017 study of statements made by college presidents in response to racial incidents. The incidents occurred over a three-year period from 2012-2015 and were the result of the institutions receiving widespread negative publicity following the events. The authors assert that while racist events like fraternity Blackface parties have been routinely occurring on campuses for decades, the rise of social media and the connectedness of students across campus has increased the visibility of the events. Cole and Harper (2017) analyzed 18 statements that were issued as formal responses from the institutions. Of the statements, 3 failed to mention the racial incident, 11 mentioned it using broad terms without details and 4 offered a detailed account. The findings suggest that semantics and rhetoric matter a great deal and that college presidents and other leaders must become more skilled to effectively craft statements, followed by actions that confront racist policies and practices using specific language that does not try and mask the details in euphemisms. Specifically, the study found:

1. College presidents are often willing to address the racial incident, but racism is rarely mentioned. Lesser still are presidents willing to "situate racial incidents within larger issues of systemic and institutional oppression."
2. There is a need for leaders on college campuses to say the word "racism" and for all people across campuses to have a better understanding of what racism is.
3. College presidents, "knowingly or not, are crafting statements that respond more favorably to positive public relations than they do publicly addressing racism on campus."

4. The perpetrators actions are consistently distanced from the rest of campus as isolated events suggesting that the actions are those of individuals or an individual and not connected to systemic racism.
5. Statements that "do not acknowledge the history of exclusion only further their inability to truly address and redress racial incidents." (Cole & Harper, 2017, p. 326-330)

Cole and Harper (2017) suggest that there is a need for more research that examines the weeks, months and years leading up to racial events on campuses to gain better understanding of structural issues. They also suggest that there is a need to critically examine the connections between top campus administrators' own personal identity and how they construct responses to racial events. Lastly, Cole and Harper (2017) make a strong case for their research to serve as an entry point to rethink how statements are crafted after racist events and argue that it is also necessary to include actions such as creating space for meaningful dialogue around race.

Campus Climate

The research discussed above has significant implications for campus climate. Campus climate has become a well-studied area of higher education research since Hurtado's (1992) longitudinal study on student perceptions of racial conflict and racial climate on college and university campuses. When discussing campus climate and Whiteness, it is instructive to start with an explanation of how White space functions. White people often assume that all spaces are White, including college campuses (Sullivan, 2006). However, since White people see all spaces as White, we often fail to see how lines blur between the physical and the discursive.

Sullivan (2006) calls this ontological expansiveness and frames Whiteness as an issue of space. Ontological expansiveness is about the privilege of physical, as well as metaphorical

access to space experienced by White people. The theory of ontological expansiveness is particularly pertinent to studying Whiteness in higher education as it gets to both the physical and cognitive ways in which White people and People of Color experience space. Thus, ontological expansiveness can be used to organize research and develop theories relating to institutional Whiteness on college campuses, as well as the Whiteness of higher education policy. Given the emphasis in higher education of the experience of the campus, understanding how race interacts with physical as well as metaphorical space, and how the Whiteness of space is normalized, is critical to the field of study.

It is important to understand how White ontological expansiveness is experienced by People of Color to truly grasp its meaning and its application to higher education. White people experience ontological expansiveness as accessibility to all spaces without question, whereas People of Color cannot make the same assumption and must exercise caution when entering spaces that are traditionally White or racially hostile (Sullivan, 2006; Gusa, 2010; Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2016). Whether the reference is to a physical/geographic place, a linguistic “place,” an economic “place,” a cultural “place,” etc., the understanding is that spaces are made for White people and not for People of Color (Sullivan, 2006). This occurs because White people, and in particular White students on campus, have never had the experience of physical spaces not being White. Put differently, White students have never had the experience of being excluded or denied access from space. On college campuses the Whiteness of space is ubiquitous and is embedded in the fabric of higher education, which may be exacerbated in part by White students existing in racially homogeneous environments which are often physically separated from Students of Color (DiAngelo, 2011; Gusa, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Frankenberg, 1993). Further, because the cultural space is also White, White people experience racial and social

comfort (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016; DiAngelo, 2011). This is a particularly pertinent topic given the rise in phone calls to campus police for students *studying while Black, walking while being First Nation, eating while Mexican, or generally breathing while not being White*. Calls of this nature, made by White people have increased across the United States when People of Color are seen on campus and presumed to be trespassing instead of being a member of the student body. Not only do calls of this nature highlight how White people on campus view People of Color through a racist lens, calls of this nature also exacerbate and legitimize concerns that higher education is inherently White, unsafe and unwelcoming for People of Color (Arellano & Vue, 2019; Cabrera, et al., 2016).

Students and Campus Climate

In their 2005 study, Rankin and Reason explored how students in different racial groups experienced their campus climate. Their research showed that Students of Color experience college campuses differently than White students do (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Specifically, Rankin and Reason (2005) found that “students of color experienced harassment, defined as any offensive, hostile, or intimidating behavior that interferes with learning, at higher rates than White students. Further, “students of color perceived the climate as more racist and less accepting than did White students” (p. 43). The primary forms of harassment experienced by Students of Color came from other students in the form of derogatory comments about race (Rankin & Reason, 2005). In addition, Students of Color were more likely to indicate that the campus climate, was racist, hostile and disrespectful. Importantly, the Rankin and Reason (2005) study found that a “significantly greater proportion of students of color disagreed that the university addressed racism as compared to White students” (p. 55). Whereas, White students agreed that the university administration was fostering diversity and were more likely to indicate

that they found the campus climate to be non-racist, respectful and friendly (Rankin & Reason, 2005). These different experiences and perceptions reinforce Whiteness on campus because from a White perspective, there is no "racial" problem. Rankin and Reason (2005) concluded that to address the challenges faced by Students of Color on campus:

There must be a shift of basic assumptions, premises, and beliefs in all areas of the institution. Only then can behavior and structures be changed. In the transformed institution, majority/privileged assumptions are replaced by assumptions of diverse culture and relationships, and these new assumptions govern the design and implementation of any activity, program, or service of the institution. This sort of transformative change demands committed leadership in both policy and goal articulation. (p. 59)

Rankin & Reason's (2005) findings about campus ecology, the different perceptions of experiences between White and Black students, and their recommendations are reflected in Gusa's (2010) conceptual paper titled, "White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate." In this paper, Gusa (2010) scrutinizes the culture of Whiteness in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and suggests a framework for institutions that seek to dismantle White supremacy and racism on campus. Gusa's (2010) White Institutional Presence (WIP) is a framework with four attributes that can help unearth the embedded culture of Whiteness in higher education. The framework calls for identifying whether the following are operative:

1. White ascendancy: thinking and behavior that arises from normative advantage, authority, domination and the power of Whiteness. Interestingly, White ascendancy

also includes White victimization, meaning that Black and Brown progress is seen as White loss through programs like Affirmative Action.

2. Monoculturalism: the expectation and understanding that the world view and knowledge structures of academia are White and Eurocentric.
3. White blindness: a racial ideology based on color-blindness that promotes White identity and privilege.
4. White estrangement: the perpetuation of WIP through physical separation and distancing of White people from People of Color. (Gusa, 2010).

Diverse Learning Environments

The 2016 Diverse Learning Environments study (Hurtado and Guillermo-Wann, 2016) focused on equity, diversity and educational outcomes and found similar results with a large sample of 31,111 students from 30 different institutions. The Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) identified three main themes. First, Students of Color continue to experience discrimination, bias and harassment along multiple social identities. Yet, they rarely report it to campus authorities (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2016). Specifically, the study found that students continue to experience different campus climates based on their race, with Black students "experiencing particularly hostile racial climates, expressing that racial stereotypes and stereotype threat are their greatest barriers to academic success" (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2016, p viii). The study further found that hostile and discriminatory climates impact students psychologically, which leads to negative educational impacts. This is partly due to Students of Color perceiving lower levels of interpersonal, as well as academic validation compared to White students.

The second finding of the DLE was that Students of Color experienced a greater sense of inclusion at institutions where Students of Color are more represented across the population, but representation alone is not enough (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2016). Higher representation allows students to engage with diverse peers, which has been shown to disrupt previous behavior and perceptions about diversity and difference. However, higher levels of actual inclusion were reported to occur where the mission and actions of the institution demonstrated a commitment to specific groups of non-White students (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2016). Lastly, the study found that diversity practices impact multiple learning outcomes; however, specific research on diversity related practices is missing (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2016). This finding led to a call for:

more knowledgeable and well-trained individual's intent on balancing equity with other priorities, and advancing the progress of students from underserved communities, are needed at the policy level to offer rigorous analyses that can adequately address key social and educational gaps. (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2016, p 5)

Institutional Neglect

Research conducted by Arellano and Vue (2019) investigated how the institutional neglect of Students of Color is shaping racial discourse in higher education. Arellano and Vue (2019) analyzed 38 public text messages from student-led speak-out events at a predominantly White, Pacific NW university that occurred following a "racial event." Leading up to the speak-out Students of Color sent an open letter to campus administration stating:

Many students of color have experienced acts of racial violence on our campus that have gone unacknowledged and unaddressed. Furthermore, students of color are not experiencing the sense of security or the space to have their voice be heard on campus

that they are entitled to. We demand that the administrative leadership acknowledge this injustice...You need to make the safety and well-being of all students on this campus a priority by being present and listening. (Arellano and Vue, 2019, p. 10)

The speak-out event was a student-led, live-streamed event (with online, as well as live participation), that was attended by key institutional leaders, including the university president. The event promoted a wide-spread discussion of racism. The findings illustrate that campus racial climate discourses move along a continuum from racist, non-racist and anti-racist, all of which are connected to institutional responsibility and agency, and the experiences of Students of Color. Specifically, the study found that:

1. Students of Color "may be both centered for the intention of dismantling racism (antiracists) and decentered or minimized by focusing on exemplars or racist talk (nonracist)."
2. Specific and ambiguous language is used around race to either highlight or minimize it.
3. "Racism is either understood as both systemic and institutional (antiracist) and as individual (nonracist)."
4. "Responsibility can be both championed (antiracist) and undermined (nonracist) across the campus community." (Arellano and Vue, 2019, p. 11)

Because of these findings, the authors argue that Students of Color are experiencing psychological pain to gain access to higher learning due to the culture and norms of Whiteness in higher education. The authors suggest that campuses are an "important site for the (re)making of racial meaning" and are "poised to maintain or transform the normative centering of whiteness in higher education" (Arellano and Vue, 2019, p. 19). In sum, remaking meaning and transforming

the normative centering of Whiteness is a requirement if leaders want to reduce racial and epistemic violence, and focus on building an anti-racist institution.

The Discursive Practices of White Students

Foster examined the discursive practices of White college students when engaging in race-talk. Foster's (2009) research consisted of 30 White undergraduates enrolled in a sociology course at a PWI. Foster (2009) found that White American college students express contradictions when attempting to rationalize Whiteness, which results in the use of discursive methods that preserve the White racial frame. According to Foster (2009), preserving the White racial frame occurs through impression management, which allows White people to maintain an image that they are not racist (Trapagnier, 2010). For example, this is operative when a White person claims they have no problem with Black people, while simultaneously blaming "blacks for the prevalence of segregated social spaces in US society" (2009, p. 700). Further, Foster (2009) identified that respondents went out of their way to rationalize the racial order of the US, but were unable to connect the concepts of systemic racism and the "prevalence of white supremacy in US society," yet, "they go out of their way to disbelieve the prevalence of white racism" (p. 699-700). The ultimate finding of the research suggests that White Americans "employ a sophisticated discursive strategy that defends white supremacy while simultaneously attempting to come across as not defending it" (Foster, 2009, p. 700). And, perhaps more important, "the perception of young whites today as more open-minded than their parents is false. In fact, these young people are products of the post-Civil Rights Movement retrogression, living in a white bubble" (Foster, 2009, p. 700).

Protecting Whiteness

Bondi (2012) investigated how students and institutions protect Whiteness as property by examining how students engage with race and racism and where their experiences with race and racism are located within the larger context of education. Bondi's (2012) qualitative research focused on graduate students enrolled in a master's program in student affairs at a large land-grant institution where 91% of the student body was White. This research is interesting because it bridges the gap between students, specifically between graduate and undergraduate, but it also looks at how the professional practice of future higher education administrators is shaped by their educational experience.

According to Bondi (2012), students expressed a willingness and readiness to learn about race and racism, however; White students also expressed perceptions of experiencing negativity and defensiveness from Students of Color when asking certain questions or engaging in certain dialogues, which Bondi identified as protecting the privilege of Whiteness by prioritizing individual needs. White participants also revealed that they wanted instructors and peers to "let them contribute and validate their perspectives," and that they were disappointed and frustrated that their "experiences were not centered more in classroom discussions," with regard to race and racism (Bondi, 2012, p. 403). All participants discussed segregation and the racial divide they felt within their cohort that was one-third, Students of Color. Only one student did not express this, and of importance, this student grew-up in a diverse neighborhood. Bondi (2012) suggests that this reflects Whiteness as property because the White students protected their Whiteness by focusing on "their right to learn while devaluing the impact it had on racially minoritized students" (p. 414). They also expected to be centered in the classroom with a focus on their learning needs and personal experience. In addition, the White students "protected their right to

exclude by maintaining segregation in the classroom and in social situations (Bondi, 2012, p. 404).

Bondi (2012) argues that White students have not learned to protect their Whiteness in a vacuum, but instead have learned within the larger context of the U.S. educational system and the institutional processes that privilege Whiteness. One of the ways in which Whiteness is privileged is by presenting learning as an objective process where White students are seldom if ever asked to consider how the learning process may impact Students of Color. Nor do educators feel the need to connect power dynamics within their pedagogical process (Bondi, 2012). Further, the expectation White students have to be centered in the classroom is reinforced by Eurocentric texts and curriculum that privileges a monocultural, White perspective. Lastly, Bondi claims that participants in the study "have had their right to exclude demonstrated by the institution because exclusion is the status quo in higher education" (2012, p. 405).

Hikido and Murray's (2015) study had similar findings. In their study, Hikido and Murray (2015) investigated White students' attitudes towards campus diversity at a large, multiracial public university and found that there were four discourses that were employed to maintain White dominance and protect Whiteness, while also purporting to promote inclusion. The main take away from these findings was that the participants employed color-blind happy talk when discussing diversity to obfuscates Whiteness, and as a result, propagate an 'ideal community' (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2017) which, was also evident in perspectives on racial segregation (Hikido & Murray, 2015). White students shared that it was Students of Color who racially separated themselves and positioned themselves (the White students) as the "more open-minded mediators who attempt to embrace such situations" (Hikido & Murray, 2015, p. 15; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; DiAngelo, 2011). White students also claimed that "diversity efforts exclude and

undervalue whites" because the focus is on Students of Color. This finding echoes Bondi's (2012) findings about White students feeling the need to center themselves in the classroom. Lastly, the White students shared that "avoiding whiteness," was the appropriate action because they associated naming and addressing Whiteness with violent White supremacy (Hikido & Murray, 2015; Cabrera, 2011; Trapagnier, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Hikido and Murray assert that their study is an important step in CWS and campus climate studies because it addresses that racially diverse, pro-diversity institutions face a different set of issues with Whiteness.

Specifically:

as a third wave of whiteness studies warns, the white students in this study utilized and negotiated diversity discourse to recuperate, reconstitute and restore white identities and the supremacy of whiteness in post-apartheid, post-industrial, post-imperial, post-Civil Rights context. (Hikido & Murray, 2012, p. 19

Color-blind Meritocracy

Cabrera (2011) examined the racial hyper privilege and racial ideology of White men in higher education. The research found that White men enter college with the strongest color-blind orientation of any study participants and are also the least likely to change their ideological orientation during the first year of college (Cabrera, 2011). Another finding was that White men on college campuses tend to have limited views on what constitutes racism, thereby supporting the color-blind theory on an individual level by not seeing the connection of race to systemic racism (Cabrera, 2011). Four dominant racial frames emerged suggesting that participants subscribed to a modified version of Bonilla-Silva's color-blind ideology (Cabrera, 2011). First, participants saw Whiteness as normative (McIntosh, 1989; Frankenberg, 1993). Cabrera (2011) ascribes this to the fact that most subjects came from racially homogeneous neighborhoods or

were at least used to being in the racial majority. Second, participants indicated that racism is of minimal importance to them indicating that it is not a concern or on their radars. According to Cabrera (2011) "most participants defined racism as some type of overt hatred or inner disdain of racial minorities, which was framed as either a relic of the past or contained within fringe groups" (p. 82). Third, most participants saw the United States as meritocratic, meaning that White students believe that that racism is not a structural barrier for Students of Color—essentially, if Students of Color work hard they can succeed. Fourth, participants had strong opposition to race-conscious social policies like Affirmative Action. Cabrera (2011) concluded that:

Within the campus environment, specifically the campus racial climate, the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors around issues of racial and ethnic diversity, cannot be improved without addressing the beliefs of those who perpetuate racist ideologies. Institutional researchers who are assessing climate often focus primarily on understanding the experiences and outcomes of those who are marginalized on college campuses, but strategies to improve campus environments and foster equity must also consider the ideologies, behaviors, and beliefs of those who are privileged (p. 89).

Further, Cabrera (2011) stressed that with respect to systemic racism, the analysis "demonstrated that by leaving white male undergraduates insufficiently challenged regarding their racial selves during their first year of college, the institution inadvertently was helping perpetuate and support systemic racism" (p. 90).

Color-blindness was also a finding of Chesler, Peet and Sevig's (2003) study which identified that White students view racism as an individual deficit, as opposed to a systemic reality, and this corresponds to their view of White people as victims of 'reverse discrimination'

(i.e. perceived discrimination against White people). This echoes Bonilla-Silva (2006) finding that it does not matter to White students that there is no empirical evidence to support claims that White people are discriminated against more than Black people; however, White students often believe that reverse discrimination exists. When this occurs, the discourse shifts from addressing what is factual, demonstrable and occurring—racism on college campuses—and instead the conversation is shifted to defending false notions of reverse racism or discrimination against White people. This re-framing of discourse allows White people to remain untouched by racism, and further, it removes White people from any complicity, and leaves People of Color without a forum for representation or voice.

Putman (2017) also found evidence of reverse racism as a powerful discourse. Putman (2017) examined the ideologies of 12 undergraduate college students who participated in a three-day seminar on systemic racism, intersectionality and White privilege, and identified three ideological discourses that "work in relation to perpetuate the pervasiveness of Whiteness" (p. 513):

1. Liberal pluralism
2. Meritocracy
3. Reverse racism

Putman (2017) describes liberal pluralism as a discourse built upon ideologies of individualism and meritocracy. Essentially, if I work hard, I will get what I deserve, as will everyone else in the United States. This is predicated on the ideology that equal access is afforded to everyone. Furthermore, the ideologies of liberal pluralism and meritocracy frame success as an individual responsibility and suggest that opportunity is made available to those that prove themselves to be successful. Similarly, failure is attributable to individual behaviors

associated with a lack of effort or ability, not to systemic racism. However, according to Putman (2017), the way hard work is defined is also determined by the individual, thereby allowing for different understandings of what constitutes working hard. Putman (2017) found that the discourse of reverse racism was operative, when discussions of White privilege came up during the seminar. Specifically, the contention by some students was that not all White people took advantage of White privilege, and as a result, White people who were not taking advantage of their privilege, were experiencing a form of reverse racism. Examples were given of White students who were not able to apply for scholarships or use programs like Affirmative Action, even though it was "deserved."

Good/Bad Binaries

A new study by Chaplin and Montez de Oca (2019) examined how 32 mostly White college students understand the NFL players protests against state violence in Communities of Color. The study found that the White students processed the protesters and the conceptual framework of the protests themselves through a racialized lens of Whiteness that created an interpretation of either patriotic (good) or unpatriotic (bad) behavior. This is interesting because it connects political interpretations of behaviors to a racialized lens of Whiteness and then to perceptions of what is or is not un-American, which was also a finding in Nakayama and Krizek's 1995 research. Also of interest is that the researchers found that the binary of good/bad "categories are primarily based how students account for African-American NFL players' resistance to white supremacy and their own whiteness" (Chaplin & Montez de Oca, 2019, p. 12). The authors suggest that the White students demonstrated an avoidance and a denial of race because many saw race and racism as a personal experience and were unable to connect racist acts to political and systemic racist actions such as the protests. Even when students, which the

authors identified as politically liberal, could connect to the protests as a constructive form of criticism, it was only under specific conditions. These students had typically taken multicultural courses and utilized what the researchers referred to as "buzz words" to identify themselves as good, anti-racist White people. However, it was also identified that these same students were largely lacking "a deeper understanding of racial structures or oppression" (Chaplin & Montez de Oca, 2019, p. 19). For example, the students:

can embrace protesters that act according to their liberal white ideals of civility and that reminds them of the Civil Rights Movement they studied in school. Their white privilege allows these students to passively benefit from racial inequality while not identifying the institutional structures that produce the violence of racial oppression and, therefore, allows the state to be imagined as racially neutral (or color-blind). (Chaplin & Montez de Oca, 2019, p. 19)

White Faculty and Whiteness

There is limited extant scholarship specifically addressing White faculty and Whiteness. To be clear, there are numerous studies that focus on the experiences of Faculty of Color and there is also research that focuses on specific disciplines, like STEM and Whiteness. However, as of this writing, I have only been able to locate two studies that specifically examine White faculty and Whiteness. As White faculty myself, I find this remarkable, but not terribly surprising given the exposure White faculty would likely fear if confronted with questions about Whiteness. Brooks-Immel and Murray (2017) conducted a qualitative study at a diverse, large, public university in the San Francisco Bay Area, and examined Whiteness as a cultural practice and institutional discourse. The research involved interviewing faculty, staff and administrators to determine how they respond to multicultural educational environments and multicultural

ideals. The study found that “white educators adhered to an intermittent form of color-blind racism that enabled them to hold fast to the fiction that race has no meaning in their lives, yet remains the single most defining dimension of the lives of people of color” (Brooks-Immel & Murray, 2017, p. 319). Brooks-Immel and Murray (2017) identified five “contextually embedded manifestations of everyday racism and micro constructions of white supremacy” in their analysis which include:

1. Whites subscribe to a view of racism as an individual phenomenon.
2. Whites take a color-blind position regarding race in their daily lives.
3. Whites claim people of color see race, but I do not.
4. Whites employ a diversity discourse of helping and caring.
5. Whites see race primarily as a black/white binary. (p. 319)

The study suggests that White faculty uphold behaviors and practices that reinforce the importance of Whiteness and color-blindness in a multiracial educational environment. This was particularly apparent in the way White people employed a color-blind ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2013) based on the idea of good (not racist) and bad (racist), which exempts them from the responsibility of racism. Also of significance given the diversity of the institution, is that the White people interviewed saw themselves as not racist and “helpful benefactors or people of color,” which aligns with Trepagnier’s (2006) findings that “helpful” White women behave in a patronizing manner towards People of Color. The Brooks-Immel and Murray (2017) study is significant because it suggests that even at institutions that are demographically diverse, and located in diverse areas, where diversity initiatives are supported, that the ubiquitousness of Whiteness is pertinent and pervasive regardless of campus setting. Further, because the research identifies similar behaviors and practices that have been identified in research pertaining to

White students (Cabrera, 2011), it suggests that without strategic intervention, the behaviors of Whiteness are perpetuated across institutions, across generations and across institutional roles.

Patton and Bondi's (2015) research identified a similar pattern. Patton and Bondi (2015) focused on how White men constructed their roles as racial allies in their role as faculty. The findings suggest that the participants constructed ideas of White allyship do not align with their actions. Importantly, Patton and Bondi (2015) found that the participants focused most of their work on helping individual students address inequity (micro level), opposed to addressing issues at a systemic level (macro level). This allowed the participants to choose when and how to engage with race and racism. It also garnered visible rewards and accolades for them as "men who get it." Patton and Bondi (2015) describe these benefits as a form of property because they advanced their social standing while not being a requirement of employment or social acceptance—essentially, it functioned as a form of currency because "the very acknowledgement of our racism and our privilege can be turned to our advantage" (Patton and Bondi, 2015, p. 506).

A second finding Patton and Bondi (2015) identified was a focus on *helping*. However, when enacted by White men, helping sometimes came across as a need to control and an unwillingness to let the affected Person of Color use their own agency. This finding aligns with Trepagnier's (2010) finding that White women often take on a paternalistic, helping focused behavior with People of Color. While this helping behavior was not identified by the participants as problematic, it was identified as such by the researchers, further suggesting that there is a silent narrative of dominance at play. The third finding was that often what the White men perceived as allyship behavior, was in fact, simply appropriate and kind behavior. Patton and Bondi (2015) stress that this misperception "creates the potential for whiteness to function as a normalizing tool for how we think about ally work" (p. 509). These findings suggest that is

essential to center the dominance and oppression of Whiteness in all areas of White, racial justice work to examine how privilege affects ally work. Patton and Bondi (2015) conclude with a suggestion that "future research should focus on the role of expanding discourses surrounding white privilege, specifically the benefits of further situating ally work within the deeper understanding of white supremacy" (p. 511).

Developing Racial Cognizance and Allyship

Because of the social power held by White people, those in positions of leadership are in a unique position to legitimize claims that acknowledge racism and act as allies for People of Color (DiAngelo, 2011). Cabrera, Franklin & Watson (2016) explain that an ally is a "general term use to describe an individual from a majority group who is trying to step away from the confines of the majority context and is working to support a marginalized group" (p. 79). For the purposes of this research an ally is a White person that seeks to alleviate the racial burden carried by People of Color by working to address and correct social inequity (Cabrera, et al., 2016). I add to this definition that an ally is White person who takes White responsibility. As this is an ongoing process of learning for the White person, ally development is an appropriate way to discuss how one becomes and sustains being a true ally, or put differently, more racially cognizant. An important issue with White allies is that because of White privilege, White people can choose where, when and how to be an ally. Understanding this and challenging the racial comfort that comes from entering and exiting when it "feels right" is important aspect of ally development. As an ally you validate and support people who are positioned below yourself, you engage in self-reflection to uncover your privilege blind spots, take risks to build relationships, notice who is absent, recognize and affirm the importance of charged conversations, acknowledge your lack or experience, change pedagogy to small groups, and facilitate dialogue

rather than debate (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2009). To work towards becoming allies, White people in higher education must seek to understand the discourse of Whiteness, but also understand how Whiteness influences equity and a sense of belonging for People of Color on campus. Further, White people must be willing to change the discourse through knowledge building and what can be at times, uncomfortable feedback.

In a 2012 qualitative study Cabrera examined how White male undergraduates on campus can disrupt and challenge racism as allies and suggests that disruption of racism in higher education is still an understudied environment. Cabrera (2012), using Freire's concept of liberation praxis argued that it is not sufficient to criticize systemic oppression if anti-racist action and true allyship if praxis is the end goal. Instead, critique must be informed by theory, which will result in action, or the development of praxis (Cabrera, 2012). For example, for White people to truly become allies of People of Color they must first understand and be aware of Whiteness, seek to understand minority experiences, engage in coursework on race, learn about anti-racist action, interact with diverse groups of people and build friendships within those diverse groups, live in racially diverse environments, and have role models that model racial justice behavior. These actions de-essentialize Whiteness and promote the self-identification of Whiteness with praxis.

Cabrera's (2012) study specifically investigated how White undergraduate men learn about White privilege and racism, and how they can act against racism on campus. Again, this study is instructive for leaders because it not only explains the complexity of the White student experience, but it identifies strategies that can be used by *all* White people to develop greater racial cognizance. Cabrera interviewed 43 White men in their junior and senior's years of college using the Detroit Area Study (DAS) and divided the group into two: those working through

Whiteness and those normalizing Whiteness. As noted in the first section of this review the DAS was first used by Bonilla-Silva in his development of the theory of color-blindness. The students (n=15) identified as those working through Whiteness showed:

1. a systemic understanding of racism.
2. auto-criticism of racial bias.
3. support for race conscious policies.

Based on the interviews, the following themes emerged: racial cognizance, critiquing White privilege and racial justice actions, developing praxis and work still to be done. Ultimately, Cabrera discovered that instead of using the study of a means of “analyzing White male racial ideologies and the collegiate experience that influenced them,” the “participants narratives illuminated the process by which White men engage and struggle with working through Whiteness” (Cabrera, 2012, p. 394). The primary elements of working through Whiteness which emerged were the importance of racial cognizance development through multicultural education and cross-racial contact. Cabrera (2012) found that participants in the study often contradicted some foundational CWS research by demonstrating that racism and Whiteness are not necessarily synonymous. Because of the identity development and understanding of racism, some of the participants were already acting as racial justice allies and “demonstrated that it is possible to struggle against racial privilege and continue to be White” (Cabrera, 2012, p. 397). Cabrera attributes the higher levels of racial and identity development in the study participants to racial cognizance due to cross-cultural and multicultural experiences, which supported identity development including (a) cross racial interactions, (b) multicultural education, and (c) minority experiences (Cabrera, 2012). Cabrera argues that for racial identity development for White students to occur (and I add all White people on campus), a personal

connection to racism through Freire's (2007) concept of humanizing pedagogy is a critical and necessary component to achieve praxis. A personal connection supports deeper knowledge acquisition and allows for White people to begin to understand and see how epistemologies of ignorance (Mills, 2007) support and perpetuate Whiteness. This instruction can, and should happen in college classrooms (Cabrera, 2012). However, curriculum designed to deconstruct Whiteness is often missing from multicultural education given the lack of critical examination of White supremacy in higher education (Cabrera, 2012). This lack of intentional instruction and dialogue about Whiteness and race exacerbates “the students’ ahistorical and astructural interpretations of race” which “allows them to view Whites as victims of ‘reverse racism,’ thereby entrenching hegemonic Whiteness” (Cabrera, 2012, p. 377). Thus, it is essential that multicultural education include curriculum centered on White people. I add that this needs to be expanded to professional and faculty development, and the pedogeological development and support of graduate students. Further, humanizing pedagogy must be institutionalized to truly foster racial justice ally development. Single instructors in individual classrooms working through Whiteness and race with students is not sufficient. Nor will White students develop the skills to self-interrogate their roles in perpetuating racism without a systematic and holistic institutionalized approach.

To address the pervasiveness of racism, DiAngelo (2011) suggests that all white people need to build the skills and the “stamina to sustain conscious and explicit engagement with race” and that anti-racist, multicultural education cannot and should not only necessary for people who interact with minorities (p. 66). DiAngelo (2011) argues that education should begin at the micro level, moving to the macro level to help White people see how they are individually part of a discourse of Whiteness. DiAngelo (2011) further suggests that it is important to have direct

conversations about power and privilege as it provides a space for interruption “of common (and oppressive) discursive patterns about race (p. 67). However, multicultural, anti-racist education, which leads to a change in discourse is not typically being implemented in a meaningful way, nor is there a common understanding of what anti-racist, multicultural discourse is. What is needed is a common framework for deconstructing how access and social power afforded to dominant groups (White people) and nondominant groups (People of Color) impacts views of reality, as well as individual and collective experience. Essentially, we must define what is lacking in the discourse and then seek to change it.

Gaps in Research

Whiteness in higher education is seldom discussed and consequently, seldom researched. And, unfortunately, there are few interrogations of Whiteness in higher education policy (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson 2016, p. 105). Extant research, which has been predominantly centered on men at the undergraduate level has left a significant gap in research that seeks to understand Whiteness in the context of faculty, staff, administrators and leaders (Cabrera et al., 2016, p. 98). Further, because most of research on Whiteness in higher education centers on White men, empirical research on White women is limited (Cabrera et al., 2016). Cabrera et al. (2016) also assert that “Almost nonexistent from the literature are examinations of White people as they are beginning the process of exploring their racial privileges and nonlinear struggles as it pertains to learning how to be racial justice allies (p. 100). Lastly, “the bulk of empirical work on Whiteness in higher education is rooted in the interpersonal analysis that centers students as the unit of analysis” (Cabrera et al., 2016). However, if we are to take Leonardo’s (2002) statement seriously that Whiteness is a discourse of racial power, then it follows that the development of higher education policy would frequently be guided by the assumption of Whiteness. As an

administrator and faculty member, I take these suggestions seriously. Cabrera et al. (2016) identified that “future analysis of Whiteness in higher education needs to play in the gray areas of Whiteness, individual development, racism, ideology and action” and stresses that ethnography is a particularly underused methodology for examining this critically under examined issue in higher education (p. 100). Further, research on intersectionality in higher education is limited, but even more limited is research that investigates intersectionality and privilege (Cabrera, 2011).

In sum, there is a startling lack of extant research examining Whiteness in higher education. But more specifically, there is a startling lack of research on how White faculty and White leaders understand Whiteness in higher education. Based on the above review of literature it is evident that there is a severe need for research that critically examines Whiteness within the framework of higher education leadership and policy. Further, there is clearly a need for research that critically examines how White faculty understand Whiteness. It is important to note that the theories and studies outlined in the previous section all have a direct connection to leadership even though it is not explicitly stated. As shown, Whiteness does not exist in a vacuum. Thus, the behaviors and perceptions manifested by White students, faculty and researchers, are likely manifested at some level in White leaders. Since Whiteness is systemic, cultural and learned, White leaders must also engage critically and act to build antiracist communities on college campuses. By engaging in the process of writing this literature review, I have come to believe that the lack of research on Whiteness and leadership is a result of leaders believing that to protect their positions, a certain level of color-blindness and use of euphemisms is necessary to appear not racist. However, White people, specifically, White leaders are in a unique position to act and build race cognizance to positively transform institutions to reflect true inclusion and

equity. To begin this transformative process, White leaders in higher education must become more knowledgeable, adept and comfortable engaging in direct dialogue about Whiteness and racism.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this research was to identify the ways in which the discourses of Whiteness operate and influence the behaviors of White leaders to maintain systems of oppression and dominance that exacerbate racism and inequity in higher education. Using Critical Whiteness Theory as a framework and critical autoethnography as the research method, I used my lived experience as a White, middle-class woman working in higher education leadership as the source of data collection and data analysis to better understand how to effectively model anti-racist leadership that builds authentic equity and inclusion.

I organize this chapter first by research questions, followed by an explanation of autoethnography as a method. Next, I provide my rationale for choosing critical, realistic autoethnography as a process and product of this research, and why I believe critical autoethnography is important to the critical study of Whiteness. I then address questions that frequently arise about participants, validity, reliability and generalization. Lastly, I provide details of the research design and process, including location, data sources, ethical considerations and the methodology for data analysis.

Research Questions

1. How have the discourses of Whiteness shaped my racial identity and lived experience as a White woman in the United States?
2. Do existing critical theories of Whiteness account for my observations and lived experiences as a White woman working in a leadership position in American higher education?
3. What, if any, methods have I identified that helped to develop my own racial cognizance through this process?

4. What questions, insights and implications for professional practice have emerged through my process of researching and writing a critical autoethnography on Whiteness, racism and leadership in higher education?

Autoethnography

This qualitative research utilized critical autoethnography as the method and critical Whiteness as a theoretical framework to examine my lived experience as a White upper-middle class woman working in higher education. Examining my lived experience within the context of Whiteness in higher education and in my personal life was necessary to connect experience to theory, and ultimately connect theory to practice. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2001) describe autoethnography as an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) to understand cultural experience (p. 1).

Autoethnography as a method, embraces a researcher's personal, lived experiences to describe and critique cultural beliefs and practices. It "balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion and creativity" to tell "stories of/about the self through the lens of culture" (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015).

Autoethnography is best understood as a form of storytelling that uses personal experience in a particular cultural setting to gain deeper knowledge; it is essentially an illustration of a sense-making process (Adams, et al., 2015). Holt (2003) describes autoethnography as a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural. By placing the self within a social context, the researcher draws on personal experience to connect to and "extend understanding of a particular discipline or culture" (p. 1). Autoethnography as a method offers multiple forms and approaches that can be employed independently or in combination with each other. These forms and approaches borrow from ethnography and

include: Indigenous/Native ethnography, narrative ethnography, reflexive ethnography, layered account ethnography, interactive interviews, community ethnography, personal narratives and co-constructed narratives (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 5). These various approaches share many similarities, but differ depending on how "much emphasis is placed on the study of others, the researcher's self and interaction with others, traditional analysis, and the interview context as well as power relationships" (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 5). Autoethnography is experimental and participatory and written in the first person. It is narrative in voice and features "dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness," which connects to stories, history, social structure and culture (Holt, 2003, p. 1).

Critical Autoethnography

Critical autoethnography seeks to interrogate, disrupt and challenge hegemonic injustice and systems of oppression. As a method, critical autoethnography acknowledges the personal privilege and power of the researcher, as well as institutional and systemic oppression. This is achieved by raising issues that are often considered taboo and unspoken, and as a result remain uninterrogated. The goal of all autoethnography is to strive for social justice. However, critical autoethnography pushes this further by doing more than revealing how one fits into power structures. Instead, critical autoethnography, drawing from critical theory "attempts to deconstruct the very power structure that gets exposed" (Potter, 2015, p. 1436). Potter (2015) argues that the concept of *critical* autoethnography may seem redundant given that the method is already oriented towards social justice. However, as Potter states it is in fact an essential addition to the methodology because it "connotes an explicit focus on how power intersects with one's personal experience and the structural forces that helped to create those experiences" (p. 1436).

Autoethnographic projects related to identity and power offer an excellent opportunity for critical theories to move beyond discussing the forces of power in the sociopolitical landscape—they give us the tools to dismantle the very system that has created the power structure. (Potter, 2015, p. 1436)

Autoethnography as Process and Product

Autoethnographers often begin their research after an epiphany, or some life-changing experience that alters their understanding of their place in the world (Adams, et al., 2015). It is here, in these moments of clarity or epiphany, when we see what we have not seen, and the research begins. Essentially, this allows the research to start where the researcher is, either physically or metaphorically. Put more traditionally, it is at this point that the research questions are developed, and the research process begins. Through the process of doing and writing autoethnography, a researcher can show "the process of figuring out what to do, how to live and the meaning of their struggles" (Adams, et al., 2015, p. 2). As a method, autoethnography is a combination of ethnography and autobiography; and as a result, it is both a process and a product (Ellis, et al., 2001).

Following an epiphany, autoethnographers use reflexivity and reflexive writing as a form of analysis to generate "deep and careful self-reflection" intended to "to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political" (Adams, et al., 2015, p. 2). Reflexivity and reflexive writing are essential components of autoethnography because they serve to document the ways a researcher changes as a result of the research (Adams, et al., 2015, p. 2). According to Ellis, Adams & Bochner (2011) reflexive/narrative approaches "exist on a continuum ranging from starting research from the ethnographer's biography," to the "researcher studying his or her life alongside cultural members'

lives," to memoirs or "confessional tales" where the researcher's "backstage research endeavors become the focus of the investigation" (p. 6). Nakayama and Krizek (1995) suggest "reflexivity as an important direction for further inquiry" in the study of Whiteness and offer three aspects of reflexivity which they suggest may be helpful in "further examining the space of Whiteness" (p. 303).

First, reflexivity encourages consideration of that which has been silenced or invisible in academic discussions... 'White' here is ideological, as one must play the white game; it does not require that one be 'white'—discursively or scientifically. Second, reflexivity encourages consideration of the presentation of research and the articulation of the researchers position vis-à-vis social and academic structures... At issue is not whether critical rhetoricians or those who critique critical rhetoric have social positions from which they write, but rather how they might articulate those social positions... Following from the first and second points, reflexivity encourages the examination of the institutions and politics that produce 'knowledge.' (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995, p. 304)

Participants

When using autoethnography as a method, the researcher is the focus of the study. Thus, I was the focus of the research, data collection and analysis. Critical autoethnography centered this research on my experience, my identity and my personal truth from the outset. Hayano (1979) states that the criteria for autoethnography "must include some prior knowledge of the people, their culture and language, as well as the ability to be accepted in some degree, or to 'pass'" as a native member. This insider/outsider or (auto-ethnography/ethnography) dimension is best seen as a continuum rather than a rigid dichotomy" (p. 100). Hayano (1979) goes on to state that "The most common type of auto-ethnography is that written by the people whose 'master status' is

obvious and important to their self-identity" (p. 100). The concept of the insider having, master status is significantly different than ways traditional ethnographers have observed groups different from themselves. Within more traditional forms of ethnography, the researcher can become formally or informally socialized within a group without gaining actual membership (Hayano, 1979). Hayano (1979) describes this as "living in," which is distinctly different from master status because master status includes an understanding of cultural meaning and knowledge developed over a lifetime. Further, master status is also not the same as *going native*, which is in fact in opposition to tenants of autoethnography and not considered appropriate to autoethnography because going native has been associated with the distortion and romanticization of the *other*. Instead, autoethnography and the notion of master status is predicated on the researcher possessing "the qualities of often permanent self-identification with a group and full internal membership, as recognized by both themselves and the people of whom they are part" (Hayano, 1979, p. 100).

Using Hayano's descriptive criteria, I have master status within the culture of Whiteness. However, given the connection of the word master to White supremacy, I use the term *insider* instead. My Whiteness is indisputable given the color of my skin combined with how I have been socialized since my birth. My culture is White. My worldview is White. The lifetime of education I have received has been White. Whiteness is a primary part of my identity. Whiteness is all I have ever known. My Whiteness, combined with my status as a doctoral student at a state research university and my role as a practicing professional administrator and a faculty member at a community college in a predominantly White community, make me an insider in Whiteness and in higher education. It should be noted that while the institution I work at is a PWI, at the off-campus center that I am responsible for, an average of 40% of the students are Students of

Color. Further, if numbers across the entire campus system continue to grow as projected, the institution will become the first Hispanic Serving Institution (HIS) in the state.

Reliability

Autoethnography is a method that "treats research as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act," which "challenges the canonical ways of doing research and representing others" (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 1-3). As such, autoethnographic research must have a criterion of its own to measure validity, reliability and generalizability because "the context, meaning and utility of these terms are altered" in autoethnography (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 7). As a research method, autoethnography has been criticized for challenging "the boundaries of academic research because such accounts do not sit comfortably with traditional criteria used to judge qualitative research inquiries" (Holt, 2003). However, autoethnographers "believe research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical and emotional, therapeutic and inclusive of personal and social phenomena" (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 8).

Theory can provide an objective rationale for human behavior. However, theory disconnected from experience and human emotion can only go so far and often fails to identify nuances and unspoken behaviors that can lead to deeper understanding. Where theory falls short in relation to fully understanding human experience, storytelling, generated through autoethnography, can be used to fill the gap (Ellis, et al., 2011). Potter (2015) addresses the disconnect between theory and studying human emotion and suggests that it is an important aspect than needs to be addressed in the study of identity exploration. Potter (2015) further argues that autoethnography can bridge the chasm of theory and method surrounding the study of Whiteness because autoethnography operates as both theory and method. Potter states, "While autoethnographic research is still a relatively new form of qualitative ethnography, it is an

obvious choice when attempting to theorize about one's own identity, the social position it delineates, and the structural violence operationalized therein" (Potter, 2015, p. 1435). This is due to the necessity of exploring one's own identity through lived experience and reflexivity which "creates the potential for a much more nuanced and complex approach to explaining the contextualization of individuals within a much larger social construct" (Potter, 2015, p. 1436). Potter addresses the misconceptions of autoethnography lacking rigor as a method by asserting that there is nothing as "theoretical as a good story," and citing Bochner (2000) supports this claim and connects back to the importance of opening the academy to new methods:

The sad truth is that the academic self frequently is cut off from the ordinary, experienced self. A life of theory can remove one from experience, make one feel unconnected. All of us inhabit multiple worlds. When we live in the world of theory, we usually assume we are inhabiting an objective world. There in the objective world, we are expected to play the role of the spectator. It is a hard world for a human being to feel comfortable in, so we try to get rid of the distinctively human characteristics that distort the mythological beauty of objectivity. We are taught to master methods that exclude the capriciousness of immediate experience. When we do, we find ourselves in a world devoid of spirituality, emotion, and poetry—a scientific, world in which as Galileo insisted, there is no place for human feelings, motives and consciousness. (Bochner, 2007, as cited in Potter, 2-15, p. 1435).

According to Ellis, et al., (2011) it is best to address questions of reliability by referring to the narrator's credibility. Establishing credibility is paramount and can be achieved by questioning where and how the information was gained, whether literary license appears to have been used, and establishing whether the narrator believes that the event actually occurred (Ellis, et al.,

2011). For the purposes of this research, I am narrator. Thus, any questions of reliability ultimately rest with me since I am the primary data source.

Using the self as a primary source is a legitimate and documented form of research (Hayano, 1979; Ellis, et al., 2011; Holt, 2011; Potter, 2015; Adams, et al., 2015). Because of the personalized nature of autoethnography, the data being collected and analyzed often must be "self" data. Autoethnographers recognize that personal experiences influence the research process and that observable truth is subjective. Thus, by openly centering values on the experiences of the researcher there is no pretense that the research can ever be value-free (Ellis, et al., 2011). Ellis, et al., (2011) argue that "autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on the research, rather than hiding from these matters assuming they don't exist" (p. 2). The goal is to openly embrace the emotional and subjective nature of the research and offer "findings of autoethnographic research as evocative stories that a researcher presents about his or her own experiences" (Potter, 2015, p. 1435).

Generalizability

Generalizability, like reliability, remains relevant and important in autoethnography, but it takes on a different meaning. Instead of large random samples, Ellis, et al., (2011) argue:

the focus of generalizability moves from respondents to readers, and is always being tested by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know; it is determined by whether the (specific) autoethnography is able to illuminate (general) unfamiliar cultural processes. (p. 8)

I interpret this to mean that an autoethnographic work is "generalizable" if it is accessible and meaningful to readers, and contributes to the knowledge of the researcher and readers

(Adams, et al., 2015). This can mean the discovery of new knowledge or an extension of existing knowledge. Adams, et al., (2015) argue that "Contributing to knowledge also means valuing the particular, nuanced, complex, and insider insights that autoethnography offers researchers, participants, and readers/audiences" (p. 103).

Validity

Validity in terms of autoethnography "means that the work seeks verisimilitude; it evoked in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true" (Ellis, et al., 2011, p. 8). Ellis, et al., (2011) suggest that essential questions of validity include: 1). How useful is the story? 2). Is the story coherent? 3). What uses might the story have? Autoethnography can also "be judged in terms of whether it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves or offer a way to improve the lives of participants and readers or the author's own" (Ellis, et al., p. 8).

Design

Using an emergent design, this self-study developed using foundational concepts of autoethnography including the documentation of an epiphany and the use of reflexive writing as a way of collecting and analyzing data. Specifically, this research focused on my experiences at NCORE 2018, NCORE 2019, and the process I went through learning the truth about my family history and myself. This study was bound by a timeline from May 2018 through December 2019 and held together by my initial epiphany, followed by subsequent defining moments as shown in Figure 1. It is important to clarify the difference between an epiphany and a defining moment. An epiphany is defined as "a sudden spiritual manifestation, whether from some object, scene, event, or memorable phase of the mind — the manifestation being out of proportion to the significance or strictly logical relevance of whatever produces it" (Beja, 1971, p. 18). Whereas,

defining moments typically represent a “leadership development ‘jolt’ or turning point that causes individuals to re-think their self-perceptions” (Avolio & Luthans, 2010, p. 11). While the differences are subtle, they are important. The defining moments I experienced were powerful and served to redirect my attention or highlight something that I had not seen or known before; they were “aha moments” or a paradigm shift in terms of how I understood, the direction I took and how I responded. However, the epiphany I experienced was life altering; it was spiritual in nature. I am not a religious or spiritual person and until New Orleans, childbirth was the only experience I had considered spiritual. My epiphany was more than an aha moment. I am not the person I was before I experienced my epiphany, nor do I understand myself and the world in the same way. I am forever changed. Thus, the defining moments of this research process were powerful and important, but they were not spiritual. Further, there would not have been defining moments without my epiphany.

My research began with an epiphany I experienced while I was in New Orleans at the National Conference for Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education in May 2018. Because of the experiences I had, my perceptions of myself and the world changed over the course of 48 hours. I have not been the same person since. It was not the intensity of the conference alone, but also the experience of being in New Orleans for the first time that had such a significant impact on me. The events that occurred in New Orleans, a city layered with a history of racism and oppression, not only forced me to change the direction, topic and tone of this dissertation, but also deeply impacted my professional practice and my personal life.

The epiphany I had shook me because until that point, I believed I was a *good White person*. In my mind being a good White person meant that I wasn't racist. What I didn't understand until New Orleans was that I was perpetuating racism with my overly simplistic

notions of race, racism and my failure to understand how Whiteness and White Supremacy operate. Further, prior to my epiphany, I had never considered that the stories I had been told about my family were anything but the truth. After New Orleans I knew I needed to better understand myself if I wanted to truly work towards building equity and inclusion in higher education.

Data Collection Process

Because of the emergent nature of autoethnographic research, I was continually engaging with the data and following new paths, and as a result, was conducting analysis throughout the entire course of this study. The data corpus (Figure 2) ultimately included field notes, journal entries, jottings, reflexive essays and dialogues, theory maps, emails, social media posts, genealogical documents, genealogical DNA tests, reference texts and websites, family albums and photographs. From the data corpus, I began to generate themes.

I used my epiphany in New Orleans to ground my research by writing an essay reflecting on my memoirs of the events (highlights of the essay are included in Chapter 4). Following the documentation of my epiphany, I began work on the literature review. Once I completed the literature review and became more acquainted with autoethnography as a method, I started to write reflexively. Using the literature review and my epiphany essay to guide me, the research questions for this study emerged.

Initially, my primary method of data collection was my memory. I wrote extensively about my experiences at NCORE, my time in New Orleans and about memories that I began to have as I thought about myself as a White person, *instead of just a person*. The writing I did at this point was largely stream of consciousness. I carried small journals with me everywhere I went, and I wrote down anything and everything. Sometimes this took the form of jottings or

detailed accounts of my thoughts and observations. Slowly, I started to notice my Whiteness in my day-to-day activities, but also in my professional practice. As a result, many of my early field notes were based on my professional experiences as an administrator and member of the faculty at rural community college. The next phase of research emerged through what Poulos (2009) refers to as “accidental ethnography” that led to defining moments. With each defining moment my research took a new turn as I engaged in an ongoing process of data collection and analysis.

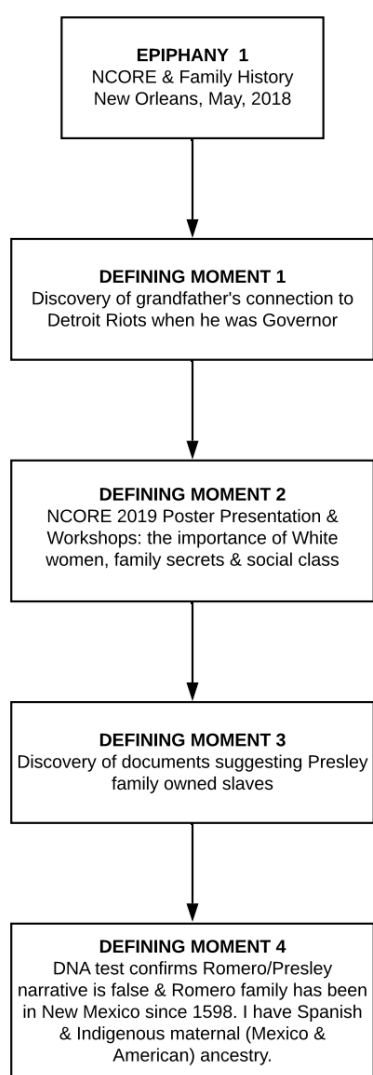


Figure 1

Emergent Research Pathway

Defining Moment 1: Detroit Race Riots

In the spring of 2019, I came across a reference to the 1943 Detroit Race Riots in a text I was reading relating to racism and the history of the United States, and for the first time, I made the connection that my paternal grandfather was the Governor of Michigan at the time of the riots. This accidental finding was a defining moment and changed the trajectory of the research. Had I not been using an emergent and highly flexible research design, it is quite possible that I never would have come across this information. At this point I began to organize my data by post 2018 NCORE, pre-2019 NCORE and other defining moments as shown in Figure 1.

Defining Moment 2: NCORE 2019

Learning that my grandfather was not the man I thought he was led to reflexive writing where I challenged myself to remember specific moments of my childhood and the many family stories I had been told; I tried to focus on where the memories came from. Themes began to emerge from this process that I connected to foundational theories of Whiteness. I presented the emerging themes of my research at NCORE 2019 in Portland, Oregon, which became my second defining moment. My poster presentation (*Appendix A*) was titled, “Whiteness in Higher Education: Using Autoethnography to Reframe White Family Narratives to Include White Supremacy” (Star, 2019). The process of presenting my preliminary findings, which included my family history discovery, was deeply impactful and led to the collection of a new round of data.

The data I collected at NCORE 2018 and NCORE 2019 was based on interactions with NCORE participants and other presenters. All interactions were informal and did not involve formal interviews. Instead, the interactions were generated organically based on time and place, naturally allowing conversations and observations to occur. Thus, my data collection strategy developed into a process of venturing into a space and seeing where conversations and

observations took me. Given obvious concerns about ethical standards and anonymity, I only collected data, in the form of field notes, which I thought may prove to insightful during the reflexive writing process. Data was not collected in real time, meaning I did not use an audio recording device, nor did I take formal notes. Instead I used my field notes in later reflexive writing exercises. No person or institution was ever specifically named in any of my notes I and did not identify where and when conversations occurred to retain the strictest confidentiality.

Defining Moment 3: Family History

Following NCORE 2019, I knew that I had to learn more about my family history as part of this research. I had gained new insight into the life of my paternal grandfather, but I still knew nothing about my mother's family history. In the summer of 2019 I reactivated online accounts with 2 genealogy databases. I had unsuccessfully tried in the past to learn about my mother's family through online genealogy sites and decided to reinvest some time researching to see if it would lead to new discoveries. Once you have an initial "tree" including yourself and your immediate family members, both sites begin to auto populate with suggested matches. Since the last time I had looked, names on my mother's side had populated beyond my great grandparents, Annie Clifton Presley and Henry Romero, both of whom we knew very little about. The surprise came because the family names populating on the Presley side were not located in places where I had been told they lived. Further, census documents suggested that if the names populating were in fact my ancestors, then they were the owners of enslaved human beings from Africa as shown in Table 1 (see Chapter 4). As I discovered more information (data) about my family, I wrote reflexively about the process and what I was learning.

Towards the end of the summer, I decided to take a DNA test through one of the sites. I did this reluctantly. I was concerned about my privacy and the privacy of every person who I

share DNA with. I made the decision because I was getting nowhere on the Romero side of my family and I hoped that by taking the DNA test and attaching it to my family tree, that I would be connected to distant family moments who had also completed a DNA test, and this would shed light on who my Romero family was. What I was not concerned about were the potential results. In fact, it never occurred to me that the results would present a new set of issues that would further complicate my family history and my research.

Defining Moment 4: DNA Results

The results came back several weeks later and I was stunned. As explained in Chapter 4, I have spent my life, as my mother has, believing that the Romero's came from Spain in the mid-1800s. When my DNA test results came in, my family tree populated back to the 1500's in New Mexico and I learned that I have DNA which connects to me to Indigenous Americans, as well as Ashkenazi Jews. To ensure that the DNA test was valid, I triangulated the data with 2 other DNA testing sites and with a certified New Mexico genealogist. Further, my mother and my half-sister took the same test. To be clear, I do not consider myself Indigenous. The DNA test found markers that indicate I have ancestral ties to New Mexico and Mexico, just as I have markers that indicate I have ancestral ties to many other places like Ireland, Spain, France and Norway. In fact, the percentage of the the markers found indicate that my Indigenous ancestors were so long ago in my family history that my children may not have any markers at all. My half-sister took the test and she does not have any markers, whereas my mother took the same test and she has almost twice the markers I have. I am, and will always be White. I am culturally White. A DNA test does not change my identity or my cultural history, and it does not make me an Indigenous person or a Person of Color. What it does do is expose how complicated Whiteness is by showing how White supremacy has manufactured who I am through secrets,

opportunistic moves and violence. It is important to clarify that had my DNA test consisted of more markers indicating a stronger or more recent connection to Indigenous heritage, I would still not connect my identity to this part of my history. It is not mine to claim. However, I will also not be silenced by this discovery because it is through silence that White supremacy gains power.

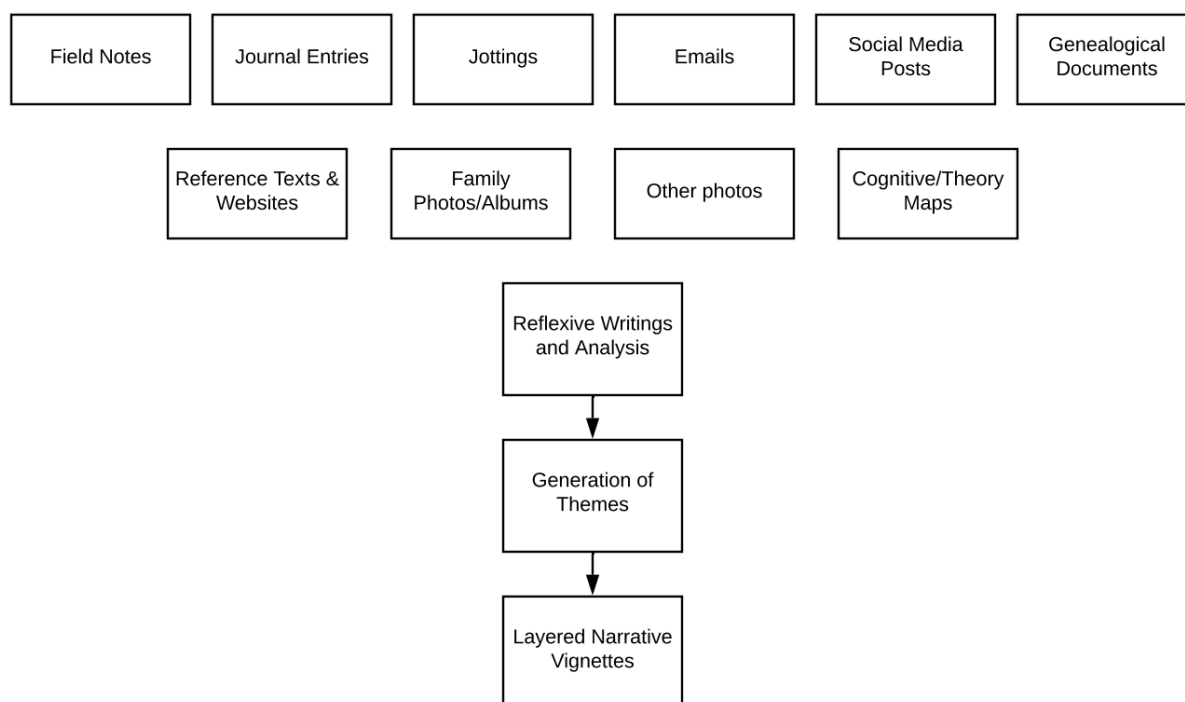


Figure 2

Data Corpus

Data Analysis

I used critical Whiteness theory as the theoretical framework to ground this research and to analyze the data. As mentioned previously, I was engaging in analysis from the outset of this research as part of the emergent design (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). By December of 2019, I had generated a massive amount of data, including the early themes that had emerged prior to my NCORE 2019 poster presentation. I began to transcribe the data corpus and

organized it by date. Once the data was transcribed, I started to analyze it in its entirety, while simultaneously working to condense it. At this point, I generated multiple data displays (*Appendix B*) including word clouds and walls of Post-It Notes as the next layer of condensation and analysis (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

My next step was to take key words that I had identified in the word clouds and mind maps—words and phrases that were consistent throughout the data—and use them to generate themes (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Miles et al., (2014) describe a theme as “an extended phrase or sentence that identifies what a unit of data is *about* and/or what it *means* (p. 73). I used the themes I generated to start to see patterns and connections (Adams, et al., 2015). As the patterns and connections came into view, I pivoted between generating different visuals depicting critical Whiteness theories ranging from sketches to mind maps (*Appendix C*), and writing layered, realist narrative vignettes. Miles et al., (2014) explain that a narrative vignette: is a focused description of a series of events taken to be representative, typical, or emblematic of a case you are studying. It has a narrative, story-like structure that preserves chronological flow and that is normally limited to brief time span, one or a few key actors, a bounded space, or all three. (p. 180)

Writing vignettes is a literary exercise; “it offers the researcher an opportunity to venture away from traditional scholarly discourse and into evocative prose that remains firmly rooted in the data but not slave to it” (Miles et al., 2014). Adams, Jones & Ellis (2015) describe realist autoethnographies as moving “from story to analysis, showing and interpretation” and take many forms including “layered accounts, which juxtapose fragments experiences, memories, introspection, research, theory and other texts. Layered accounts reflect and refract the relationship between the personal/cultural experience and the interpretation/analysis” (p. 85).

Using layered narrative vignettes, allowed me to “include story *and* analysis, showing *and* interpretation” through the juxtaposition of “experience, memories, introspection, research theory and other texts” (Adams, et al., 2015, p. 85).

As my narrative vignettes emerged, I entered the the final stage of analysis, which including attempting to connect theory to my experiences “because stories are theories that we use to understand” our lives (Adams, et al., 2015, p. 85). After completing the narrative vignettes, I focused on condensing the length and number of the layered vignettes to ensure that only the most essential texts made it into the final product. This was achieved by triangulating the data with other sources, readers and reflection, and by taking time to step back and reflect. *Appendix D* provides a detailed map of my process, the questions that arose throughout the course of the research and how I came to the themes I present in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Each of us is called upon to take a stand. So in these days ahead, as we examine ourselves and each other, our works, our fears, our differences, our sisterhood and survivals, I urge you to tackle what is most difficult for us all, self-scrutiny of our complacencies, the idea that each of us believes she is on the side of right, she need not examine her position.

(Lord, 1985)

The purpose of this research was to provide insight into the ways in which the discourses of Whiteness operate and influence the behaviors of White leaders to maintain systems of oppression and dominance that exacerbate racism and inequity in higher education. Using critical Whiteness Theory as a framework and critical autoethnography as the research method, I have used my lived experience as a White, middle-class woman working in higher education leadership as the source of data collection and data analysis to better understand how to effectively model anti-racist leadership that builds authentic equity and inclusion.

I organize this chapter in the following way: First, I restate the research questions. I follow the research questions by providing an explanation of my decisions regarding the presentation of the data and findings, both of which are non-traditional in form and appearance. Next, I display the data in the form of layered, narrative vignettes, which is followed by a discussion of themes that emerged through the process of doing critical autoethnography. It is in the final section where I discuss the themes I identified, that the presentation takes on a more traditional form.

Research Questions

1. How have the discourses of Whiteness shaped my racial identity and lived experience as a White woman in the United States?

2. Do existing critical theories of Whiteness account for my observations and lived experiences as a White woman working in a leadership position in American higher education?
3. What, if any, methods have I identified that helped to develop my own racial cognizance through this process?
4. What questions, insights and implications for professional practice have emerged through my process of researching and writing a critical autoethnography on Whiteness, racism and leadership in higher education?

Data

When using autoethnography as a method, data collection and analysis are conducted simultaneously through an emergent process. Once data collection is completed, decisions must be made about how to further analyze and ultimately, present the data. Since I have been the source of both data collection and analysis, showing the process of *doing* realist autoethnography as a method is a necessary component of this research. To show the research process, I chose to present the data and my analysis as comprehensive, layered narrative vignettes. This gave me the freedom to “move from story to interpretation” and then back to story in an ongoing cycle of interpretation and analysis (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015, p. 85). Using layered narrative vignettes, allowed me to “include story *and* analysis, showing *and* interpretation” through the juxtaposition of “experience, memories, introspection, research theory and other texts” (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015, p. 85). The decision to include the full text of the vignettes in the main body of this manuscript, instead of using a more traditional qualitative presentation was made because autoethnography is as much about the process, as the themes I have ultimately identified.

Therefore, “separating the content of the text from the form is not desirable or possible” and would have resulted in a final product lacking verisimilitude (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015, p. 81).

To show my process, I organized the layered vignettes chronologically, beginning with my initial epiphany. Writing narrative, layered accounts has allowed me to unearth lost memories and provide deep descriptions of my experiences and observations. My aim when presenting the vignettes was to ensure that the narrative flow of my realist, autoethnographic journey was not interrupted by citations and stylistic protocol. To achieve this, I used footnotes to keep the primary, narrative text as readable as possible (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015). Using footnotes has allowed the primary text to tell one story, while adding more context and secondary information to tell other aspects of the story.

The vignettes presented are my refined field notes and were selected for inclusion after themes were developed; they also provide essential demographic information. Each vignette begins with a description of an experience or event and includes grounding descriptions such as time, place and participants to provide necessary context. The vignette is followed by reflexive writing, which I identify in italics. Given the personalized nature of autoethnography, I have chosen italics to indicate my reflexive analysis, which includes my thoughts, memories, questions, observations, feelings, and the intrapersonal dialogues. The use of italics made it possible for me to move back and forth from the present to the past and view the events as both a participant and an observer; a process that has been essential for ongoing analysis and the identification of themes. The vignettes have become more to me than just snapshots in time. Instead, they have become a testament to the work I have done, and still must do, to move towards authentic anti-racism in my personal and professional life.

Narrative Vignettes

The Epiphany: An accidental Ethnographer Wakes up in New Orleans

New Orleans, Mid-day, May 28, 2018

It was midday and it was already hot. The sign was weathered, made of old, cracked ceramic tiles and I was immediately drawn to it. It had what looked like a family crest on the left and as I drew closer, I could make out the letters: “When New Orleans was the capital of the Spanish Province of Louisiana 1762-1803, this street bore the name Calle del Hospital.” Until that moment, it had never occurred to me that New Orleans was a Spanish colony before it was French. This realization suggested to me that perhaps the reason I had trouble to locate any information on my Romero family history beyond my paternal great grandfather was because I had been looking in the wrong place, and at the wrong time. It also occurred to me that with a change in timeline and location, my Romero ancestors could have a past tied to colonialism and slavery.

I am Alone in the Dark and I am Dangerous

The French Quarter, New Orleans, Evening, Monday, May 28, 2018

The streets and sidewalks are narrow in the French Quarter and full of people, so I had spent the day dodging in and around them, but now, with the streets and sidewalks less crowded, I started to notice that when I was approaching a Black man or Black men, they would move out of my way, and give me a wide berth. This wasn't a single occurrence. It kept happening repeatedly. I recalled conversations with Black men and how more than once I have been told that White women move away, sometimes even going as far as crossing the street to avoid meeting a Black man heading toward them. This was the reverse affect. I saw a group of White men and walked towards them and we almost ran into each other. The White men were quite

comfortable moving me out of their way, which meant physically touching me, but the Black men I encountered seemed like they didn't want to be anywhere near me.

White women in the United States have always been a threat to Black men and Black women. White women have always been a threat to all People of Color. I am a White woman and I am threat. My presence, me simply being near, makes Black men feel unsafe because I cannot be trusted. I cannot be trusted because I am White. I cannot be trusted because throughout the history of the United States, White women have been simultaneously safe and unsafe. White women, even good White women have, and do cause harm. I am dangerous.

I have come back to this moment time and time again. What I have realized is that the phenomenon I was noticing that night in the French Quarter was something I had experienced in all the places I have lived in the United States. I had just not noticed it before because I had been doing what many other White women do. I had been moving away from Black men and other Men of Color as they came towards me without even thinking about it. I had not ever given Black men and other Men of Color the time to step away from me. I had been moving first.

Part 1: NCORE 2018

New Orleans, Tuesday, May 29, 2018

Early the next morning, I walked into an NCORE pre-conference session. The full-day, pre-conference workshop was facilitated by a White lesbian. The room was full of at least 30-40 participants, who were primarily Women of Color. I sat next to a young, Black woman who was a doctoral student in educational psychology at a flagship state university in the Midwest, who would be my partner for the day. Midway through the morning, I was speaking to my partner and I asked if she had explored the city the night before. She looked at me like I was crazy. “No way.

I'm here by myself. I'm not going into the French Quarter or any city for that matter alone at night. I stayed in the hotel."

Women of Color don't feel safe. Men of Color don't feel safe. Because I am White, I have no idea what that means. It had never even occurred me that it might not be safe for me to be out alone at night, just like it had never occurred to me that White women can be a significant threat.

I am Here to Save You

Before breaking for lunch, we moved into a section on White privilege and within a few minutes, my partner whispered to me that she disagreed with a statement the facilitator made. I told her to say something. She didn't, so I suggested it again because she was clearly agitated. "No, not now. I need to think about how to do that," she said.

We broke for lunch and walked together to the self-serve food line and as we waited in the crowded banquet hall, the facilitator walked by carrying a plate of food. I grabbed the facilitator by the arm, albeit gently, but I grabbed her, and stated that my partner had a question she wanted to ask about a statement made in the workshop. The facilitator politely stopped and seemed un-phased that I had accosted her and as we both looked to the doc student, I saw her look of absolute horror. "No, I don't have a question, but thank you." I realized what I had done, and I was mortified.

I do what I want, when I want. I have been taught to do and take what I want. I have been taught to see myself as an individual, with individual needs. I have been taught not to allow my gender or any circumstance to act as a barrier to achieving my goals. I don't think about how unspoken norms are different for different people, especially for upper middle-class White women trained since birth to maneuver through cultural and academic settings to achieve our goals.

I thought I was just being helpful, but instead, what I did was patronizing and demeaning. In that moment, I didn't think the young woman would advocate for herself, so I did it for her. I thought she needed my help and I treated her like a child. She is not a child, she is an adult woman capable of acting on her own. She did not need me to save her. She was more than able to save herself. She just needed the space to do it when she wanted to.

I don't like to be touched by people I don't know. Yet, I touch people I don't know, just like the White men in the street the night before, and I do this without thinking. I have struggled to identify a time when a Man of Color or Woman of Color has touched me like this, in an uninvited way. I cannot think of a single time. Whereas, White people, specifically White men who are my peers, or superiors at work or in other professional settings, touch me in the same kind of casual, yet uninvited way almost daily.

Color-blindness is for White People

The facilitator prompted us with the next question. “When did you first know race, or when did you realize you were different from people with different skin colors?” My partner told me that her parents had been telling her she was Black and that was different from White from her earliest memories. She had been told that her life was about racial difference and being Black from the beginning. Her life had been about preparing her for what she needed to know about being Black in White world.

My childhood was not like hers. I had been taught to not see color, because seeing color, noticing color, meant you were racist, and racists were bad people. However, I now know that from my birth, I was taught how to be White and that while color-blindness was being professed as the racial philosophy of my youth, I was also being prepared for what I needed to know to be

White in a White world. I was being taught that White was different from Color, while simultaneously being taught that color had no meaning, and everyone was equal.

Whiteness as Societal Standpoint

My partner went on to tell me about a time when she was a child. She was walking on the sidewalk by herself and as she approached a parked car with a White woman inside, the woman leaned across the empty passenger seat and locked the passenger side door. My partner said it was the first time she could remember that happening, but she noticed it happening all the time after that. She thought she must have reached an age where she became frightening to White people or, she had started noticing their fear. She went on to tell me how seeing the woman lean across the car to lock the door was like her experience in her doctoral program. She was the only Black student, let alone Black woman in her program and all the faculty were White. When the time came to submit proposals for research projects in the Psych lab, every single other doc student in the program and been offered a spot in the lab to conduct their research. She had not. When she asked why, she was told, your work isn't ready. She had been locked out again.

Los Angeles Circa 1980

My mother and I stopped at a taco truck in LA when I was 4 or 5 years old. I don't remember where the taco truck was, but it was somewhere on the West side when the West side still had places that were "unsafe for White people." When we got there, my mother told me to wait in the car. The truck wasn't far and I could easily see her talking to the man through the window ordering food. I was a confident kid and I had always been encouraged by to be independent and I wanted to get out of the car, so I did. As I was heading towards the taco truck, a Black man stepped in front of me and said something. I don't remember being afraid or even concerned. All I remember is the man inside the taco truck started screaming and pointing and

then my mother was running towards me, and she was yelling too. I couldn't understand what they were trying to say, but within seconds, the man was out of the taco truck and he was running, with my mother, towards me and yelling at the Black man, who looked terrified. They were yelling at him to get away from me. I wasn't afraid until I understood that my mother and the man from the truck thought something terrible was happening. It was at that moment that I began to panic and I started screaming because the whole situation had become terrifying and confusing and I didn't understand. When she reached me, my mother picked me up and yelled something I don't remember at the Black man. Then she ran, still carrying me, to the driver's side of her car. She opened the car door and threw me inside, climbed in and reached across the passenger seat and locked my door.

I don't remember ever going back to the taco truck again, nor do I remember ever talking about this event, but I do remember my mother leaning across me in the front seat, and many times after that, locking the car door. I also remember, once I had my own car, locking the doors when I drove into certain neighborhoods, neighborhoods like the one with the taco truck.

But, I'm Not Racist!

The facilitator asked what would be the final question of the workshop, "Where in your body do you feel race?" I knew immediately. I knew immediately because I'd felt it the night before. I knew immediately and I didn't like how it made me feel. It made me feel uncomfortable and confused because I feel race in my shoulders and in my head. I feel race, my race, my Whiteness is my shoulders and head like there is an invisible string holding my head high and tall. This string allows me to walk down the street with confidence and be safe. I taught my daughter to walk like this as well, with an invisible string of confidence. I walk down the street and people, specifically Men of Color move out of the way.

What I did next, I will always regret. When it was my turn to share, I lied. I didn't tell the truth because I thought what I wanted to say would make me sound racist, and I didn't want to sound racist because I didn't think I was. So, I lied. I said, "I feel race in my head and my neck." I told the group that I felt race in my head, but I presented it more like it was in my mind; like I feel it because I think about it or because it is a "state of mind." Then I said, "I also feel it in my throat because of the way my throat tightens when I am forced to do something hard, and talking about race is hard," which is also true, but this was not what the facilitator had asked. She had not asked, "how do you feel when you are confronted and have to talk about race?" She had asked, "Where do you feel race in your body?"

I stupidly thought that my avoidance of the truth would make me look like the not racist person I believed I was. I was worried about telling the truth because to say I felt it in my head and shoulders would mean I thought I was better than other people, like I was superior, and I didn't believe that was true. I thought saying I felt it more in my head and neck would allow me to maintain my perception as a good, White person, not a bad racist White person who would say something that sounded like I was a White supremacist. But, once I said it, I immediately knew I had made a catastrophic mistake because suddenly the eyes of every Black woman in the room were on me, but the person I noticed the most was a Black woman directly across from me wearing a "No White Tears," t-shirt. "No White Tears," was burning a whole into my heart with her eyes. What had I done?

No White Tears

The facilitator asked if anyone had a response to my comment. Silence. The silence was deafening because while no one spoke, everyone was staring at me with a look of contempt. I wasn't sure what was happening until the facilitator said, "Yes, this is a common response from

White women; a feeling of being afraid to talk about race or engage with an issue, especially when it is presented by a Person of Color or there are People of Color present. The problem is that you just made the about your discomfort and how you feel like you can't breathe."

I am a White woman of privilege and I know nothing. I made it about my White suffering and my fear of my own discomfort. My fear of looking racist made me make a horrifically racist remark. I misjudged the situation so badly because I was only thinking of myself, of my own feelings, of my own need to avoid something hard. I had been trying to manage perceptions; to protect my Whiteness. At that moment I wanted out of the room with no windows, where all eyes were still on me, and the silence that was screaming at me and growing louder and louder. But, I stayed because somehow, I knew that right then, in that moment, my horror and discomfort was important. I also knew that everything I thought I knew was wrong. I knew nothing, and I had to learn. It was in that moment that I decided to restart my research and focus on what I had just done and what I had just experienced because, I was racist. I was acting out White supremacy while believing myself to be not racist. I was the problem. I wasn't racist in the overtly hostile way that makes racism obvious. I was racist because my worldview was White through generations of social, emotional and behavioral conditioning. I am racist because I am White in America.

In that moment, I told myself I would never take the easy way out again, because in that moment, with those Women of Color staring me down, with "No White Tears" still burning a hole in my heart, I understood that holding back the truth was not only a lie every Person of Color in the room saw through, but holding back the truth for my own benefit was a way of exerting my racial privilege that allowed me to maintain power and dominance. Saying I felt race in my neck was an act of aggression. It was an act of violence. I was protecting myself. I

was protecting my privilege. I was protecting my Whiteness. I said, I felt race in my neck. My, neck. My White neck. Words matter. I said, I felt race in my neck to a room full of People of Color. I said, I felt race my neck to a room full of People of Color with a collective history of lynching and neck irons. I said, I felt race in my neck to a room full of People of Color after Eric Garner³ pleaded for his life when he was being murdered by a New York City Police Officer and his last words were, "I can't breathe."

I saw my partner in another, much larger presentation a few days later. She walked past me and pretended that she didn't know me. I understood immediately. What I saw as a meaningful learning experience, the experience in the workshop that bludgeoned me into seeing myself, was not meaningful to her. I was just another White lady trying to work my stuff out and using her in the process.

Part 2: White Ignorance and Family Narratives

Like many people, I grew up on family stories. Our family stories are part of who we are, they are part of ancient oral tradition, they connect us to our ancestral past and can help us make sense of the present. We believe our family stories, even some that are clearly embellished, and over time, across generations, they become "facts" that we use to explain who we are and how we came to be. Our family stories serve as facts and allow us to mythologize people and events. They justify who we are and can be a source of pride or shame. Our family stories are the scaffolds that hold our lives and beliefs together. And, if the scaffold isn't securely built, or it is built on a faulty foundation, the whole thing can come crashing down, and the consequences can

³ Eric Garner died on July 17, 2014 in Staten Island, New York after a New York City Police Department (NYPD) officer, named Daniel Pantaleo, put him in a chokehold while arresting him. His last words while being choked to death were "I can't breathe."

be devastating. However, if we are willing to dig through the wreckage, we can find the truth, and once we have the truth we can rebuild on a much more secure foundation.

My Kelly Narrative: Individualism, Hard Work and Moral Goodness

Harry F. Kelly, my grandfather, died before I was born. Thus, all I know of him is based on a family narrative, which is tied to stories and old photographs. It goes something like this...Harry was the grandson of Irish immigrants. In 1830, Martin Kelly, my great great grandfather emigrated to the United States from Ireland. Upon arrival he married Ellen Meagher, also from Ireland. Martin was the son of a stone mason and he moved to Illinois and worked hard and created a life of opportunity for his son, Henry. Henry made his father proud and became a lawyer. Henry married Mollie Morrissey, the daughter of the Ottawa, Illinois Sherriff, who fought in the Union Army during the Civil War. Henry and Mollie built a 21 room “home” in Ottawa, Illinois.

Harry, my grandfather, the son of Henry, married Anne O'Brien, whose grandfather, Patrick O'Brien emigrated to the United States from Ireland in 1834. Patrick married Mary Green, also from Ireland and they moved to the Michigan Upper Peninsula, where Patrick went to work in the copper mines. Patrick died in a mining accident, leaving a large family behind. Patrick's son, Michael, my great grandfather, became a lawyer and then a judge with the intent of defending miners and workers' rights. Michael was a hero of the working man.

Both the Kelly's and the O'Brien's were from County Cork, “The Rebel County,” a place still known for resistance and the endless fight for Irish independence. It was also a place hit particularly hard by the potato famine, a consequence of British imperialism. For centuries, County Cork was a place where only hard men and even harder women survived. To be from

County Cork meant you were hard as nails, could hold your Whiskey, would die for church and family, had a magical twinkle in your eye, and were as Irish as Irish can be.

Meritocracy, Class Similarity and Gender-blindness. My grandfather, Harry, and his entire class held their graduation from the University of Notre Dame at Fort Sheridan and enlisted as a body in the United States Marine Corps to fight in WW1. Harry was immediately sent to France, where he fought bravely. At Chateau Thierry he was shot and bayoneted in the leg and left for dead, while attempting to rescue a fellow Marine. He was rescued, but because of his severity of his injuries, his leg was amputated above the knee in a Red Cross field hospital. Harry spent many months in hospitals and was awarded the Croix de Guerre with Palm, considered the highest military honor to be bestowed by the French upon allied soldiers who exhibited exemplary heroism in battle. The citation, which still hangs on the wall in our family cabin in northern Michigan reads, "Wounded in two legs, made prisoner by five Germans, this officer valiantly defended himself and escaped with the help of some men who ran to his aid. Wounded a second time, he passed the entire night at the bottom of the trench before being evacuated." Harry was a hero and when he returned home, he was sent around the country selling War Bonds on his new wooden leg.

My grandmother, Anne O'Brien was the first woman in the O'Brien-Kelly family to go to college. She graduated from Sargent College, now part of Boston University in 1927, majoring in physical education and dance. Anne O'Brien married Harry F. Kelly in Detroit in 1929. He was 34 and an amputee and she was 24. Anne broke off her engagement with another, "able bodied man"⁴ after she met Harry. She married Harry even though it meant she had to give up her other love, dancing.

⁴ These are the words my grandmother would use to describe the man she almost married.

Harry was appointed to District Attorney's office in Detroit, then went on to become Michigan State Attorney, Michigan Secretary of State (1939-1942), 2 term Governor from (1943-1947), and Michigan State Supreme Court Justice, where he served for 17 years. Harry was a republican, a devout catholic, and equally as dedicated to his wife and six children. He worked for everything he had, and even when he was Governor, the Kelly's lived a modest lifestyle. Harry was a civil servant that gave his life to the people of the United States. There are portraits of my grandfather in the Michigan Capitol, Michigan Supreme Court, and in a family lakeside cabin that he bought while he was Governor and my family collectively still owns.

Education was important to Harry and Anne and they ensured that all 6 of their children, including their 2 daughters graduated from college. My father, Brian and his twin brother, both followed in Harry's footsteps and attended the University of Notre Dame. This trend continued into the next generation, where I am the third youngest of 21 cousins, all of whom graduated from college. It was not just an expectation, it was a requirement.

The Kelly Family Narrative Without Omissions

March 2019

In March I stumbled across a reference to the 1943 Detroit Race Riots while reading for this research. I was struck by the date. My grandfather was known as the "War Governor," meaning he was the Governor during the 1943 riots. This was startling because I had never heard this mentioned, not once; it had been removed from my family history, as if it were erased and never existed. Nowhere in the family oral narrative or volumes of print material is there any reference to my grandfather's connection to the Detroit Race Riots, until you look outside of my family for it, then like Whiteness it is everywhere.

Maintaining Epistemological Ignorance During a Race Riot. The riots lasted for three days. The official death toll was 34, with 676 injured, and \$2 million in property damage. 25 of the 34 dead were Black. 18 out of the 25 Black people killed were shot by police, many of them in the back. 4 times as many Black people were arrested, even though they were only 10% of the Detroit population. Sixteen hours into the 1943 Detroit Race Riots:

Mayor Jeffries and Gov. Harry F. Kelly met with local commanders of the armed forces at Detroit's federal building. As they debated how to get manpower on the streets, a tumult from Fort Street distracted them. They rushed to the window to see a white mob chasing a terrified black man with torn clothing and a bleeding face. Despite this shocking scene, the men quibbled over the legal ramifications of martial law.⁵

My grandfather, the Governor of Michigan, ultimately waited 24 hours to call in federal troops to quell the violence because he did not want to be viewed as weak by President Roosevelt. This is just one example illustrating how my grandfather used his power of political office to maintain White supremacy, and before I began this research, I had never once heard reference to any of it.

He waited for 24 hours and quibbled over legal precedent while watching a White mob chase a bleeding Black man down the street. Did that man die? Was he one of the 25 dead men? I have read this many time since I first discovered it, and every time I read it, my soul feels like it is collapsing inside of me because the man who allowed this to happen had the power to stop it. And he didn't. And that man was my grandfather, a man I have been told time and time again was a man of honor and principle; a man of justice. His were not the failed actions of a

⁵ Michael Jackson, Detroit Metro News, June 18, 2003

bystander lacking power and agency to make the racially motivated bloodshed end. He was not a bystander. He was the author and commander in chief of the events.

Authorities closed ranks with the police and political establishment, turning their backs on black grievances. Gov. Kelly stacked a fact-finding committee with prosecutors and city, county and state police. The report exonerated the police and condemned white violence but excused it as retaliatory. It placed blame for the riot squarely on Detroit's blacks.⁶

My grandfather affirmed that state sanctioned police violence against Black people was not only acceptable, but warranted. He was racist, and he raised my father and my father raised me. I am the product of systemic White supremacy and I did not know it. I have spent the last 44 years of my life believing the tale of the "good White people from the North," that fought against slavery in the Civil War to create a more equal and just America. I have spent the last 44 years believing that sometimes good men must make hard decisions, but those decisions are always made while striving for justice.

The NAACP wrote a report and an article for "The Crisis," and both implicated my grandfather. "The committee had before it abundant evidence, including a report from the NAACP, of wholly unjustifiable killing and other violence by police."⁷

I believed what I was told. I am not naive, but it was right in front of me. I, like the rest of my family must have not wanted to see it. We cannot claim that we are lacking education. We are a product of generational, educational privilege. More than that, we are a product of generational wealth, cultural power and privilege. We are the product of political privilege. We know how the systems work; we helped create them. Yet, we see nothing, we know nothing. We

⁶ See number 4.

⁷ The NAACP Crisis, 1943, Volume 50, Number 9

do nothing that would compromise our privilege. We think we are good, non-racist White people, and we do nothing.

I am a product of what was passed on to me, whether I witnessed it or not. One does not have to witness an act to receive unconscious messages about it. I am unconsciously connected to these events through the gestures, comments, looks, direct actions and language choices that I have witnessed throughout the course of my life. I am complicit because “the past cannot be divorced from the present.”⁸

It’s Complicated

January 2020

Leadership is complicated. People are complicated, and my family history is complicated. I have only recently begun to realize how complicated and different my experience has been compared to many other women in my age range, and certainly compared to most women older than me, and all Women of Color. As I came close to completing my research, I discovered another story about my grandfather. It is important that I include this story, as it presents a different man; a man capable of a different kind of action. I do not include this to paint a “gentler” picture, but to illustrate the complexity of living in a country founded on White supremacy. This story is about women in higher education and helped me understand why higher education was not only something that seemed completely natural to me, but also why I have never felt that I could not access and then achieve whatever I set my mind to. Simply put, I was never told I couldn’t. In fact, it was the opposite. I was told that I could and should, that I was expected to, and educated women could be whomever they wanted.

⁸ From *Good White People*, (p. 69) by S. Sullivan, 2014, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press.

As Governor, my grandfather appointed Vera Baits to serve as a member of the Board of Regents for the University of Michigan (1943-1958).⁹ Baits was the second woman to serve in this capacity following Esther Cram (1929-1943). Of significance, both women were appointed and then elected. It was through intentional appointment and the creation of opportunity by someone with institutional and political power, in the case of Baits, this person was my grandfather, that led to their formal election. Also of significance, when Cram's 14-year tenure ended in 1943, Baits' 14-year tenure began. Thus, they maintained representation and the momentum needed to ensure that more women had the opportunity to be leaders in higher education.

There is an irony to this late discovery and it serves as example of an important lesson I have learned through the process of doing this research; a person can support one form of oppression such as racism, while simultaneously championing the cause of another marginalized group, like women. We must be cognizant of two things. First, people had intersectional identities long before there was a word to describe it. Second, it is too easy to "other" people, especially members of our families when we learn about aspects of their past that we disapprove of. We must not fall into the trap of seeing them as "bad" racists and ourselves as good "non-racists." Instead, we need to work to accept who they were and what they did. We do not have to forgive their actions, nor should we condone them as something acceptable in a different time, but we cannot ignore and hide them because if we place them outside of our own moral framework, if we vilify them and send them back into the dark, we create a false dichotomy that only serves to reinforce White supremacy.¹⁰

⁹ University of Michigan History Subject Guide: https://bentley.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/University_of_Michigan_History_Subject_Guide.pdf

¹⁰ See footnote 7.

The Regents of the University of Michigan adopted the following resolution on the death of Vera Burrige Baits. It now sits on my desk to remind me that with darkness comes light, and with power comes a great responsibility to always, even in the darkest of times, be aggressively moving towards the light.

In Vera Burrige Baits the University and the State have lost a leader in the cause of higher education. As a student at the University, as a teacher in the schools of the state, as a spokeswoman for the alumnae, and as a regent, she stood for the highest quality of performance at all levels. Mrs. Baits had a profound understanding of students and appreciated sound teaching as a practitioner of the art of teaching. In her frequent appearances throughout the state she reflected the aims and aspirations of the University and won the support of the people not only for the educational programs of her alma mater but for those of all the universities and colleges.¹¹

Part 3: NCORE 2019

After the initial shock of learning that I am not who I thought I was and my family were not the people I had mythologized, I realized that I needed to redefine my research design to include my family history if I wanted to truly understand Whiteness and examine my experience in higher education. I decided that I had to include my family history in the design of this research because I could not separate myself from the past if I was committed to moving towards anti-racism in the present. This change in my design resulted in the preliminary findings of this research, which I presented as a poster at NCORE 2019 in Portland, Oregon.¹²

Tuesday, May 28, 2019

¹¹ Proceedings of the University of Michigan Board of Regents 1963-1966, p. 152.
<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.49015003101822&view=1up&seq=160>

¹² See *Appendix A* for poster.

I signed up for an all day, pre-conference workshop on White supremacy in education. Upon entering the room, we were instructed that all participants were being placed in race affinity groups; White, Black, Mixed Race, etc.

It was interesting to observe people coming into the room. No one knew what to do, myself included. It was awkward and uncomfortable because it was in direct opposition to all our espoused daily practices of equity and inclusion. One young woman who came in late was flustered and when told to sit with her affinity group she stated that she wanted a diverse group, so she could learn. I understood how she felt, and clearly others did as well. I too had that moment where I thought that my time would be better spent in a racially diverse group, where I could learn, but I reminded myself that People of Color were not there to teach me and that my work was about Whiteness, so I embraced my table.

White Women: Opportunity, Secrets and Silence

"What is your earliest *negative* memory of race?" the facilitator prompted. Silence. Ten highly educated White women sitting at a round table trying not to make eye contact, scribbling on their notepads, adjusting their clothing or sipping their water, doing anything to avoid the question. No one wanted to start. No one would speak first.

We were all afraid. What if we made a mistake? What if we were exposed? Exposed as what? A Racist? For knowing things, we shouldn't? For living a lie? For knowing we have privilege and not knowing what to do about it? I have noticed that White women will often remain painfully silent when we are asked to share feelings or thoughts about race, especially when we know we cannot hide. We all wait for someone else to go first, to sacrifice themselves, because we won't do it ourselves.

Finally, after what felt like an endless amount of time, a woman, probably in her early thirties, from a small, Northeast Liberal Arts College shared. She told us that her first negative memory of race was when she was 3 or 4 years old. She was sitting in front of the TV and a Black newscaster came on. She said, "look Mommy, it's a nigger." She thought she was using a new word she had learned, and her mother would be proud of her. Instead, her mother walked across the room, and without speaking, grabbed her, spanked her and turned off the TV. Then her mother angrily walked away. She talked about the shame of being punished and not knowing why. She was confused and ashamed because she thought she was saying a new word she had just learned. She was still deeply ashamed as an adult that the "n" word had passed her lips as a child.

We were all silent around the table, but we knew what she was feeling. I knew what she was feeling. We had all witnessed people we were supposed to respect, people who taught us to be color-blind, saying and doing racist things and when this happened we had all felt confused and powerless.

At this point, I couldn't hold it in any longer. I said, "You heard that word somewhere, you learned it somewhere. You didn't come up with it on your own, you were just a little kid. You probably heard it from an adult." She looked at me sadly and nodded. She was willing to own her personal shame and share it with the group, saying this terrible word and being spanked by mother for something she didn't understand, but she was not willing, or maybe not even able to share whom she had heard the word from.

My heart broke for her because once she told her story, she knew it was a mistake. She had been courageous, where the rest of us had been silent. She had told the truth and consequently, she could feel the upper-middle class ice; a feeling I know all too well and despise,

creeping across the table, waiting to engulf her back into silence. She could see what was lurking behind our eyes and subtle non-verbal cues. By telling the truth, she had exposed us all and the secrets we were protecting, and now we all had to decide whether we were going to allow the ice and silence to overtake us and freeze us back into quiet submission, or we were going to continue speaking truth and break the ice back by sharing our real, unfiltered experiences with racism. We chose ice and the brave woman was frozen out. We froze her out to protect ourselves. We punished her again.

Protecting Opportunity at all Costs

A White woman in her mid-50s decided to be our savior and dove in to rescue us all from the crushing ice and silence. She shared with the group that her early memories of race were all positive. She simply had nothing negative to share. Her father had been a professor and she had grown up in university housing. Now she was a professor and her daughter also worked in higher education. As a child, her father would hire his Black women students to babysit his children. They were always part of the family. They were great babysitters and she and her sister always had a great time when they took them to the pool.

The professor jumped right in after the previous woman was frozen out for telling the truth and pretended like had nothing happened. She dismissed her experience. She had canonized her father and saw him as a savior for the assistance he gave to young Black women he employed in his home. He was also a savior for giving his daughters the opportunity to get to know Black women in their youth. She could have used her story to piggyback on the story of the previous woman and talk about how our parents' behaviors have been seared into our memories, often without any explanation, leaving us with emotions ranging from confusion and apathy to shame and fear. She could have stood in solidarity with the previous woman instead of forcing

her further into shame. But, she didn't. Instead, she countered the "bad" woman who said a "bad" word, with a story of goodness and opportunity. She hadn't even answered the question, which was "what is your first negative memory of race" because she simply had nothing negative to share. But, just because she had nothing negative to share, doesn't mean that negative memories didn't exist.

The minute the session broke for lunch the woman who had shared first, grabbed her stuff and left. I looked for her and couldn't find her. I wanted to tell her that I was humbled by her honesty and her willingness to share and learn. I wanted to tell her I was sorry for remaining silent. She didn't come back after the break, and no one asked where she went.

I have thought about this moment repeatedly. The group of women I was with humiliated the courageous woman after she shared her experience of humiliation. Why do White upper middle-class women do this to each other?¹³ I think we have developed particular skills in this area. We have been taught to be protective of anything that could damage our reputation or the perception that others have of us, so even when we are in a safe place to discuss race (a White affinity group), we feel unsafe and if pushed, the daggers will come out. We have been taught to manage exposure for ourselves and our families at all cost. We have been taught that perceptions are tied to judgement and judgment is tied to opportunity, and negative judgment damages opportunity. We have been taught to protect opportunity; opportunity we have gained through White supremacy.

White supremacy has given us opportunities that People of Color have not had access to. White supremacy has given us access to opportunities that low and middle income White people have not had access to. We understand the power of opportunity. We understand that opportunity

¹³ I recognize that women of all background can do this to each other, but from my own experience, I believe that White upper-middle class women do this in a different way.

is exponential. We know that we must not only protect opportunities for ourselves, but we must protect and create more opportunities for our children. We know that access to opportunities like the best schools and colleges and the right social networks and neighborhoods matter. They matter a great deal because they increase opportunity. We know the hidden rules and we know how to navigate through them. We know that pre-school, tutors, extracurricular activities, travel, summer learning, language development, clothing, etc., help to either maintain or increase opportunity. We know that not having access to those things will decrease opportunity and we fear losing opportunity. We also know that depression, learning disabilities, drug and alcohol abuse, unwanted pregnancies and violence also reduce opportunity, so we keep it all a secret. We manage it all. We fear losing access to opportunities because there is an expectation, as well as a belief, that we must have it.

Through this process, I have started to recognize that it is the protection of opportunity that makes White people dangerous. It makes us dangerous because we understand, perhaps even subconsciously, the power we have and the power we must maintain to ensure generational opportunity. White women are dangerous, but highly educated White middle-class women might be the most dangerous of all because we don't see how protecting opportunity is about maintaining White supremacy—what we see is meritocracy.

The Poster Presentation

White Women, Violence and Shame. People began walking by the line of posters and started slowing down and looking. Men stopped and read the poster, and some asked to take a photo of it, but only women stopped to talk to me and this only happened one-at-time. All but two of the women were White. Some of the White women began to cry as they shared stories with me about the racism expressed in their families. In hindsight, it was as if they were giving

each other space, or making sure they had the space to themselves so no one else would hear what they wanted to say. I just listened. I was in a state a disbelief.

One White woman told me that when she went home for the holidays, which was seldom, her father said racist things, horribly racist things that she couldn't repeat. She shared that it was so embarrassing and awful that she never took people home with her, not even her intimate partners. She couldn't trust what her father might say or do because she had memories of him saying and doing terrible things and she was afraid of him.

I could not believe that these women, women I had never met before were sharing intimate details of their lives with me. Perhaps they were doing this because we were strangers and I had essentially gone first by exposing myself with my poster. Several times, their stories and emotions were so powerful, I had to fight back tears. How was it possible these women were silently carrying family secrets about racism that were crushing them? Not once, during these emotional encounters did one of the women suggest we stay in contact, which is interesting given the number of business cards that are typically exchanged at conferences. I didn't ask either. I think I understood that it was shared experience and anonymity that allowed them to open-up to me. This wasn't something they could have done in a different setting because it would have exposed them too much.

He Would Have Killed Her: The Depth of Racial Hate. Towards the end of my poster session time, a White woman stopped to speak with me and through the course of our conversation she shared that her sister had married a Black man and they never told her father because it would have been dangerous. They simply kept it a secret. This woman was probably in her early forties, like me. "What would your dad have done if he had found out," I asked? "He would have killed her," she replied. This was not a figure of speech. The woman standing in

front of me meant that if her White father had known his White daughter had married a Black man, he would have murdered her. It was only after their father had died, that her sister felt it was safe enough to tell the rest of the family. This woman was not elderly. This wasn't something that had happened in a bygone era of violent racism. It was 2019 and this was something that had happened in the last 20 years.

I have come back to this moment again and again and I have realized I missed something critical until recently. I understood what the woman I spoke to meant, but I missed the true import of the language she chose: "he would have killed her." She did not say "he would have killed him" or "them." It was only about "her" because while her husband had been complicit in maintaining the relationship, she was the one that betrayed her father. The act of marrying a Black man was so egregious, the betrayal so profound, that the consequence—the punishment—could lead to death. Yet this man, her father, had still been part of her and her sister's life, albeit the relationships were built on monumental lies and fear, but they were still maintaining the perception of a functional family.

I left the poster session thinking that there are White women that are desperate to talk about Whiteness, so desperate that maybe they need to talk about it. But, to do this, they may also have a need for it to be anonymous, at least in the beginning. What most of the comments and stories had in common were a connection to White men and violence, or the threat of violence, and a great deal of shame. There was also a pervasive element of class and the protection of opportunity.

Perfect White Women and our Perfect White Families

The next day, I was sitting on a bench alone outside during a break and a Black woman sat down. She was also a doctoral candidate in higher education administration, maybe a little

older than me, and she was studying and working as a higher education administrator in Boston. We had both been presenting posters at the same time. I shared with her that I was struggling after my poster presentation to connect the dots between class, White women and violence. We spoke at length and she told me that growing up she lived in a semi-affluent White suburb. Her family was one of the only Black families in the neighborhood. She remembered a White middle-class family that lived across the street. By almost all appearances, they looked like the perfect, White middle-class family. She told me how surprised she was when she realized that the perception was dreadfully wrong. Shortly after moving into the neighborhood she heard the perfect house, with the perfect people in it, erupt into violence. The father would come home from work and scream and storm around the house breaking things and hitting people; you could hear it across the street, down the street, all over. She had never seen or heard anything like it. It surprised and scared her. But, what was so interesting was that no one called the police, not even the immediate neighbors. The police never came. And, then the next day would come, and the imperfect family pretended that everything was perfect again. And, it wasn't just the one house. There were other houses and other families. Her parents had moved to the White middle-class suburbs to get away from inner city violence, but she had never seen violence in the city like the violence in the perfect, White suburbs.

I wasn't surprised by her comments about her neighbors because it was something I have seen countless times. We have been taught to not say a word, to keep what happens in the privacy of our homes a secret, and like other secrets, these secrets can fill us with shame. We have even been taught to keep secrets for our friends and neighbors. We have been taught to remain silent in the face of family violence, just like we have been taught to remain silent in the face of racism because to speak against racism and family violence could leave us vulnerable. It

could lead to losing opportunities. It could mean losing everything. We are taught to hide the violence committed against ourselves and others, whether it be physical, emotional or financial, because if we were to expose it, we would have to choose. We would have to choose between protecting our Whiteness and our class and all the opportunities and advantages that we gain because of White supremacy and possibly losing it all, and this would mean losing it all for our children as well. It would mean being in the world alone without the protections we have become dependent on. We have been taught to remain silent and we are teaching our children to do the same.

Part 4: The Other Side of the Family

My Romero Family Myth: Manifest Destiny and the American Dream

Dallas, Texas, circa 1900

My maternal grandfather, Charles “Ray” Reign Romero was born in Dallas, Texas in 1901 when Annie Presley his mother, was very young. Annie was married to my great grandfather, Henry James Romero. Annie was from a poor family in Dallas. She had no other history. There are no records of her birth or the birth of her son, my grandfather. Annie was petite, barely 5 feet tall and she was frail. Ray was premature, so premature in fact that his tiny body fit into a shoe box. Annie would set him on the stove to keep his miniature body warm.

Henry James Romero was born in Texas on March 12, 1883. Everyone just assumed he was born in Dallas since that was where he met Annie. Henry’s mother was named Sophia Aragon. Sophia emigrated from Spain as a young woman and married a man with the last name of Romero who lived in Texas. No one knew his first name, but that didn’t matter because according to family lore, Sophia was from an ancient and noble Spanish family. Ray never met his grandparents and never heard his father speak anything other than perfect English. Like

Annie, there were no records of Henry's birth, his mother's immigration or any other fact that would tie them to this narrative.

In 1902, once Ray was strong enough, Annie and Henry took a train from Dallas to San Francisco in search of their fortune, and like many Americans of the time, they headed west to manifest their destiny. My great aunt Nita was born in 1903. The young family survived the San Francisco earthquake of 1905, and were forced like many others, to live in a refugee tent camp in Golden Gate park, where Ray contracted Polio from contaminated water. Ray spent much of what he remembered of his early childhood in an iron lung and then in casts that covered both of his legs and immobilized him. Life was hard after the earthquake and the recovery from Polio slow, but one-day Nita took Ray in a wheelchair, down to the waterfront, where she hauled him into the ocean and helped him swim. They continued this practice until Ray began to improve. My grandfather fully recovered, and against all odds could walk; all because his child sister had the insight to use the ocean as physical therapy.

When Ray was 14, he took Nita and they made their way to Los Angeles and after that, seldom, if ever, saw either of their parents. Annie remarried, but died at 35. No one knew what happened to Henry, but it was clear that there was no love lost between my grandfather and his father. When Ray and Nita reached LA in 1915, they slept on the beach under the Santa Monica pier. My grandfather started going to what were then the first movie studios looking for work. He would wait, with all the others in need of work, hoping to be picked for day labor. One day he was chosen to work in the wardrobe and make-up department. He worked hard and did a good job, so he was asked to come back the next day, and the next, until he found himself as an apprentice doing make-up. Ray became the first highly skilled, professional make-up artist in Hollywood and became a leader in the union. He taught himself how to make a person into

someone else; his specialty was a technique he developed to give White people "oriental eyes." Ray was the man behind transforming a White, Swedish actor into the fictionalized Honolulu police detective, Charlie Chan in 1931. While it was never said, I'm sure he put White people in Black face, just as he turned men into Frankenstein. Ray became a self-made man with a long and storied career spanning the globe for decades. He never made it past elementary school. By all standards, Ray achieved the American dream. When Ray died in his early nineties, he left a mortgage free home in an affluent part of Los Angeles to his three children.

Ray married my grandmother, Mary Helen Quinn, a ballet dancer of Irish descent. Helen's mother, Lucille had defied all societal codes. Not only was Lucille in the first graduating class of women at the University of Colorado Boulder, she left her husband when Helen was a toddler, bought a car and drove the two of them, alone, from Chicago to Los Angeles where Lucille became a self-made woman, owning her own accounting firm.

My Romero Family Narrative Without Omissions

August 2019

After months of failed attempts to learn more about the Romero side of my family, I ordered an autosomal DNA test through a family tree and ancestry company. The results came back at the end of September 2019 and like many times through this process, my life changed. I changed. As expected, the test reported that I am predominantly of Irish decent, meaning that I am White from Western European ancestry. What wasn't expected was that the test reported that I am also of Indigenous American/Indigenous Mexican and Ashkenazi Jewish descent.

Conquistadors, Indigenous Women and Crypto Jews. My Romero and Aragon ancestors came from Spain in the 1500's and were part of the first group of Spanish Conquistadors to make their way through Mexico to what is now Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Documents substantiate the DNA results that some were Crypto-Jews fleeing the Catholic inquisition in Spain, essentially, they were hiding in plain sight.¹⁴ There were 500 in the group that arrived in 1598, eight years before Jamestown. Juan de Oñate claimed the territory and named it Santa Fe de Nuevo México. Oñate and his soldiers, my ancestors, committed genocide in the name of Catholicism, colonization and empire building.¹⁵

The Erasure of History. While some of the men in the original party brought wives with them that had been born in Spain or Mexico City, others *took* indigenous women from communities along the journey from Mexico City to Santa Fe.¹⁶ Many, if not all of these women, were kidnapped and taken against their will.¹⁷ The Indigenous Women I have discovered in my ancestry were from the Zuni and Sandia Tribes of New Mexico and Aztec communities around Mexico City. I suspect that another woman was Apache, and it is likely that over the course of several hundred years that there were more. These women, my ancestors were kidnapped, enslaved and baptized with Catholic names like Graciana and Maria and Beatriz.¹⁸ They were baptized Catholic and forced to convert so the church could sanction marriages and justify the mestiza and mestizo children the women had with the Spanish men.¹⁹ I am a product of kidnapping, rape and genocide.

¹⁴ From *Origins of New Mexico Families, A Genealogy of the Spanish Colonial Period*, F. A. Chavez, 1992, Santa Fe, NM., Museum of New Mexico Press. My ancestors, those who were in the first group of Spanish colonizers to arrive in New Mexico are extensively detailed in this book.

¹⁵ From *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality and Power in Mexico, 1500-1846*, R. Gutierrez, 1991, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press.

¹⁶ I was intentional about my choice to use the word “took.” I had an accidental encounter one day with a woman who worked at the Shoshone Bannock Tribal Museum at Fort Hall, who was also a member of the tribe. I asked her about a display because the word “took” seemed intentional when referring to how men “took” wives. She explained that it was intentional because that is what White men did, they “took” indigenous women and children, just like they “took” her grandmother from her community to the Indian Boarding School on the reservation.

¹⁷ From *The Other Slavery*, A. Resendez, 2016, Boston, MA, Mariner Books.

¹⁸ See footnote 13.

¹⁹ See footnote 14.

These men who came, were powerful men. These were men who lived their lives for conquest, for glory, for gold and for land. These were not poor men who had somehow been overlooked and not recorded in history. Instead, the lives of these men were recorded in excruciating detail. These men existed, and they did terrible things. They took indigenous women and children from the last indigenous barrios surrounding Mexico City; the barrios that had become home to the survivors of the Aztec genocide.²⁰ They took Pueblo, Aztec, Apache, Navajo and Comanche women, men and children and they then stole them from everything they knew.²¹ Men I am descended from, kidnapped, raped and enslaved women I am a descended from. I am both. I am victim and torturer, enslaved and enslaver.

There are no words to describe what it felt like to learn that I am descended from Indigenous women who were kidnapped, stolen from their families, raped and enslaved. This discovery has been the most disarming and confusing of all that I have learned in this process. It has shown me that none of this is simple – that I must wrestle with duality, the oppositional forces of knowing and not knowing, of victim and torturer. I must wrestle with the knowledge that until now, the torturers won. I must come to terms with the fact that I am who I am, and I have what I have because the torturer inside of me won; that I simultaneously benefit and lose at the same time. I lose because of what I will never know; culture, language, extended family, tradition. I must navigate this sense of loss and grief that I am feeling, that I have no right to have. Again, I find myself staring down the barrel of what has been kept from me—what has been kept from all of us.

²⁰ Resendez argues that women were the majority taken into slavery because of their reproductive capabilities, along with children, but indigenous men were less desirable to early colonizers.

²¹ Resendez used historical documents to generate an estimate of enslaved Indigenous People in North America between 1492-1900 to be between 147,000-340,000 and in Mexico and Central America to be between 590,000-1,410,000.

It is interesting to me that while it was difficult to discover that I am a direct descendent of Conquistadors with names like Baca, Chavez, Greigo, Gonzales, Salazar, Zamora, Perez, Castillo, Lopez, Montoya, Roybal, Robledo, Sanchez, Serrano, Ortiz and Gabaldon, somehow this part of my history makes sense. I was prepared for this. Perhaps I was prepared because my mother's maiden name is Romero. Or, because I have students with the last names Gonzales, Lopez, Castillo, Chavez and Zamora and these names are familiar to me. What I was not prepared for I was the truth about the Indigenous women in my history. The women who are connected to me, were forced to convert to Catholicism because the religiosity of colonial conquest demanded that their savage, heathen souls be saved. It was demanded that their souls be saved while their land and bodies were being destroyed, while the people they loved were being murdered in the largest genocide known throughout the history of the world.²² I grieve for these women and their parents and their lovers and their children. They came, and they took women and children. We came and took women and children. Men I am descended from, kidnapped and raped women I am a descended from...I am both. I am a product of White supremacy, religious supremacy, genocide, violence and rape and my soul is collapsing under centuries of violence, secrets and lies.

Like my Kelly family history, my Romero family history is complicated.

Whiteness as Property: Becoming a White American

Henrique Romero (Henry James Romero), my great grandfather was born in Las Vegas, New Mexico in 1882. Las Vegas was founded from large land grant from the Spanish government, thus families passed title from generation to generation, until after the Spanish-Mexican War when most existing titles were determined to be null and void and transferred to

²² From *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, R. Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, Boston, MA., Beacon Press.

the U.S. government.²³ Henrique's father was named Francisco Romero and his mother was named Beatriz "Sophia" Aragon. Both the Romero and Aragon families had been in the Las Vegas and Santa Fe, New Mexico areas for hundreds of years, and there are many of my newly discovered extended family still there. Both were there when it was a territory of the United States, both were there when it was Mexico, both were there when it was New Spain, and both were there when it was home to many different Pueblo communities. Both families have Indigenous women in their history. The Romero's and the Aragon's are Spanish, Mexican, American and Indigenous. They are mestiza and mestizo. We are mestiza and mestizo, but we are also White.

My great grandfather, Henrique found himself born on the right side of the border with the wrong name. To White American's in 1900 Henrique and his family were Mexican, regardless of the color of their skin. It was understood that the people from New Mexico were of mixed Indian and Mexican descent, which made them not White. They were People of Color, regardless of how light their skin was. This made them Mexican and this limited opportunities. Thus, Henrique's family went from land owning Spaniards to poor Indio-Mexican's in a generation. Henrique left New Mexico in 1900, 12 years before New Mexico became a state and he left his Spanish, Pueblo and Aztec mestizo history behind, and he became Henry James Romero, a White American from a Spanish family that had emigrated in the last 40 years. He had two brothers who did the same thing; one went from Ricardo Romero to Richard Romero and another went so far as to change his name from Arturo Romero to Arthur Bond. Richard and Arthur moved to the mid-west. Henry, Richard and Arthur left their six other siblings, their parents and countless extended family members behind.

²³ From *A Different Mirror*, by R. Takaki, 2008, New York, NY. Bay Back Books.

All Henrique had to do was to assume the role of Henry, change his origin story, move to a new city and keep his secret. The light color of his skin, combined with his bi-lingual ability did the rest. He was even able to keep his last name because he could explain it. It made sense and it continued to make sense through my mother's childhood. Whenever my mother was asked if her last name was Mexican, which happened frequently in Los Angeles during the 1950s-60s, she simply responded that it was Spanish. She was of Western European descent, and that was enough, and she believed it. Henry took advantage of the situation presented to him because he saw the opportunity of American Whiteness. My grandfather, Ray died without ever knowing the truth about his family.

The Whiteness of my Romero family was given to us by my great great grandfather and is the result of having fair skinned ancestors fall on the "right" side of the U.S./Mexico border. This part of my Whiteness was an accident. It was a geopolitical consequence of war, colonialism and greed. The part that followed was not accidental. Henrique becoming Henry was intentional. It was an opportunistic move that I and my children are still reaping the benefits from. It was an opportunistic move made possible because of the color of his skin.

I am White, and I Will Always be White

I am White. I am culturally, socially, economically, politically and psychologically White. My identity is White. I do not claim to be anything else. I will always be White. The DNA I have discovered does not make me Indigenous and it does not make me a Person of Color. What I do claim is the importance of telling this story and taking responsibility for what my ancestors have done and what I perpetuate. Discovering my connection to Indigenous ancestry is too important for there to be any mistakes. It is too important to me and it is too

important to Indigenous communities for me to get it wrong. Thus, I have taken every precaution and verified this information in multiple ways.²⁴

The Presley Family Narrative Without Omissions

Annie Presley was born on October 7, 1888. Annie was 12 years old when she married Henry Romero and 13 when she gave birth to my grandfather. Henry was almost 18 when they married on February 15, 1901. Annie was poor, uneducated and likely desperate, and she did what she needed to do to survive. Today, she would be called “poor White trash”²⁵. I now see how her class and lack of status were used in my family, and most certainly in the outside world as well, to justify her marriage and motherhood at 12 years old. We have always “othered” Annie. Today, regardless of whether it was consensual, it would be understood that Annie was raped because she was nowhere near an age of consent²⁶.

After moving to San Francisco and living through the earthquake, Annie eventually filed for divorce because Henry was abusive. This is why Ray and Nita went to Los Angeles; they were running away from Henry and quite possibly from Annie as well. Annie lived a hard life and died at 35. She is buried in an unmarked grave in the Bay Area.

Whiteness as Property: A Visceral Example. Annie’s family moved to Dallas after losing their land and status following the Civil War. Annie’s family, like Henry’s had been in

²⁴ This information comes from documents I confirmed through conversations with a genealogist in New Mexico who works for the Baca Family Historical Project after I learned that I am a descendent of the Baca family. The Baca Family Historical Project is funded by the Angioma Alliance, a national non-profit research institute that studies the Common Hispanic Mutation, a gene mutation that can cause Cerebral Cavernous Malformations (CCM). The Baca Family Historical Project has identified that the first mutation occurred in either Cristobal Baca or his wife, Ana Moreno de Lara who both arrived in Santa Fe, NM in the 1600s. I was able to trace my family history back through 6 different lines, that all converge with Cristobal Baca and Ana Moreno de Lara, 11 generations ago. Because my genealogical research and DNA aligned and was confirmed by the staff genealogist, the Angioma Alliance admitted me to a research study and did further DNA testing to see if was a carrier of the Common Hispanic Mutation. I am not, however, my mother is still waiting for her results. <https://bacafamily.org/>

²⁵ See footnote 7.

²⁶ While many people child brides and child mothers were commonplace in 1900, they were not. The median age of women when they married in 1900 was 22 and men were 26.

America for a long time, at least as far back as the early 1700s. The men in the Presley/Russell families fought in the Revolutionary War against the British and then in the Civil War for the Confederate Army. Annie's father was William Madison Presley and he was born in North Carolina in 1845. Annie's mother, Mary Jane Russell, was born in 1848 in Lumpkin, Alabama. The Russell's were the recipients of multiple plots of large acreage stolen from the Cherokee Nation and awarded in land lotteries to White men who fought in the Revolutionary War.

For generations, the Russell's forced the slaves they owned to work the land stolen from First Nations People. The most recent land acquisition was a result of the Homestead Act and in 1860 the Russell's gained an additional 40 acres in Alabama. The table below is a replication of the 1840 Federal Census, which shows that in 1840, Ignatius Russell, my great great great great grandfather owned 10 slaves. I suspect that further research will show the he owned significantly more human beings that were enslaved in other states and counties throughout the south.

Table 1

Replication of 1840 Federal Census

1840 Federal Census, Troup County, Georgia	Ignatius Russell
Free White Persons: Males: 20 thru 29:	1
Free White Persons: Males: 50 thru 59:	1
Free White Persons: Females: 50 thru 59:	1
Slaves: Males: Under 10:	1
Slaves: Males: 24-35:	4
Slaves: Females: Under 10:	2
Slaves: Females: 10 thru 23:	1
Slaves: Females: 24 thru 35	4

Slaves: Females: 55 thru 99	1
Total Free Persons:	3
Total Slaves:	10

I have struggled with this information, just as I struggled with learning about the harm and bloodshed caused by my Spanish ancestors. Unearthing my family's slave holding past was just as much of a shock, but somehow it was different. It was more visceral. I felt it in my body. I believe it was more visceral because I am more familiar with it, yet I am still ignorant of the true horror that was perpetuated for centuries. I have not had the same exposure to the merciless, coldblooded attack on Indigenous Peoples. I don't think most of us have. There simply are not representations of that slaughter, it has been erased.

Throughout my life I have seen films, photographs and read about the brutal atrocities experienced by enslaved Africans at the hands of White people. I visited the Whitney Slave Museum when I was in New Orleans in 2018, which was deeply impactful, but, I was able to remain separate – I was a bystander then, not a perpetrator. How very different it would have been had I known what I know now. How different it will be where I go back. Now, I am perpetrator, a torturer, an enslaver of human beings, an enslaver of children. We enslaved people, generation after generation. We sold their children, their lovers, their friends. We tortured them. We have committed countless crimes, yet we have never been held to account. Instead we hid the crimes and we hid the record. We erased it.

There is another aspect to this knowledge that troubles me deeply and must be addressed. The record in Table 1 explains it visually. The people listed are human beings with no known names; they had names, we just didn't record them. These are people who had everything stolen

from them, over and over and over again, for generations, including the ability for their ancestors who are living now, people that are so resilient and somehow still here, to discover who they are and where they came from. I can trace all my family lines on both my paternal and maternal lines back for generations because my ancestors were meticulously charted in church, government and social records. This is a privilege. This is what privilege is. This is what White supremacy is. It is a privilege that defies logic, because like other privileges, it should not exist as a privilege. All human beings should be afforded this respect. All human beings should be able to connect with their past, to learn who they are and where they come from. The fact that the people listed above, the people my family enslaved, do not have documented names goes to depth of the depravity of life and the monstrous cruelty that people like me inflicted on Black people. We stole everything.

I have come back to this question again and again throughout this process...does the level of the crime change depending on how many victims there are? If my ancestor owned 10 slaves does that make him more culpable than an ancestor who owned 1 slave? Should someone who owned 500 human beings be considered more depraved and more responsible than someone who owned 100 human beings? What I have come to is this; we must separate the actions of enslaver from the experience of the enslaved because to combine the two perpetuates a connection that must be severed. It must be severed because different actions are required. White people in the United States must understand that to own one human being and treat them as an animal, as chattel, requires the same blindness and lack of compassion and empathy, as owning 1,000 human beings. We cannot be absolved because we only held 1 person in bondage, or we were too poor to own a human being. Slavery was a collective effort and we are all responsible. It was a system designed to enforce White supremacy and use human beings, enslaved human

beings, to create individual and national wealth, which in turn created capital, and created opportunity for all White people. We are all complicit. Just as we are all complicit in the genocide of Indigenous Americans.

The generational trauma and harm experienced by enslaved people, displaced people and the resilient few survivors of genocide that are somehow still here, must be individually accounted for; there must be reparations. What those reparations need to be, must be determined by the people who experienced the harm, not the people who inflicted it, which means we may have to give things up. Lastly, people like me, people who are the decedents of enslavers and colonizers have a duty. We have a responsibility to share the information we learn about the people that were enslaved by our families, so they may be found.

Themes Identified

Research Question 1

How have the discourses of Whiteness shaped my racial identity and lived experience as a White woman working in American higher education leadership?

Table 2

Question 1 Themes

Theme 1: Whiteness as Property	Whiteness as property is under theorized and highly operative in the American experience. Whiteness as property has a “value.” My racial privilege created and maintains my class privilege, and my class privilege is protected by White supremacy.
Theme 2: Colonial Discourse Fosters Epistemological Ignorance to Protect Whiteness	Epistemological ignorance protects Whiteness through a complex, almost invisible system of discourses that intersect with class and gender including: individualism, manifest destiny, moral goodness and work ethic. These discourses are colonial and religious in nature and operative across all people in the United States.

Theme 3: Family Level and Individual Discourses Reproduce White Supremacy	White family narratives justify privilege and frame how we understand power. Family level discourses are built off national level discourses, but are framed from a specific orientation based on family and individual experiences. My family narratives include: color-blindness, gender-blindness, class similarity and meritocracy.
Theme 4: Discourse and Lack of Race Cognizance Foster Racist External Behaviors	When we are unable to see racism as a system because the complex layers of national and family discourses, we are lacking race cognizance, which produces a wide-range of externalized behaviors. In my case, the more operative of these behaviors are: fragility, paternalism, good/bad binaries, othering and ontological expansiveness.

Whiteness as Property

Through this process I have come to understand that my racial privilege created and maintains my class privilege, and my class privilege is protected by White supremacy. In this discourse Whiteness has economic, political and cultural “value,” and as a result operates as property. While the “value” of Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) is relative to class status, the power that comes from this framework is unmistakable. The interrelated relationship between racial privilege, White supremacy and class status is the power structure that creates Whiteness as property as shown in Figure 3. However, Whiteness as property has different dimensions and levels of power depending on gender, sexual orientation, age, education, ability and a myriad of other identifiers. Not only is Whiteness as property under theorized in the critical study of Whiteness, but the more nuanced intersections that create different “values” are even less so.

By learning about myself, my family and Whiteness, I gained insight into the way that Whiteness operates as a form of property that I benefit from. In my case, there are multiple dimensions of Whiteness operating as property with the most obvious including land theft and

enslavement (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014, p. 2), combined with the opportunistic move my great grandfather took to become a White American. However, there are more nuanced aspects as well such as having a grandmother and great grandmother attend university and owning multigenerational property.

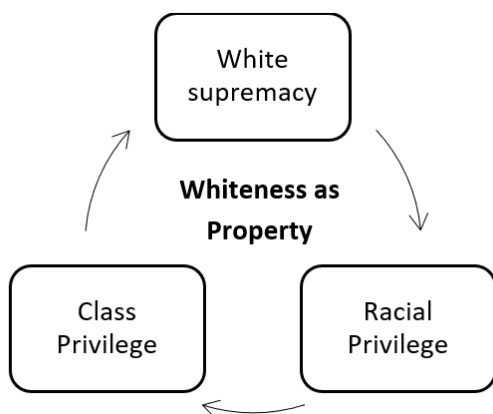


Figure 3

Whiteness as Property

Theme 2: National Discourse Fosters Epistemological Ignorance to Protect Whiteness

Epistemological ignorance protects Whiteness through a complex, almost invisible system of interrelated national, family and individual discourses that then intersect with gender and class to create an even more complicated relationship. At the national level, the discourses are tied to settler-colonialism (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993) and religiosity (Weber, 2002) and include: individualism, manifest destiny, moral goodness and work ethic; all of which have been operative since the founding of the United States as shown in Figure 4. These discourses justify privilege and explain how the United States came to be, and were clearly operative in my family narratives and my own life experiences. It was not until engaging deeply with my own history that I became able to see how integral discourse tied to settler-colonialism has been to my identity formation as a White person in the United States, specifically as it relates

to the justification of privilege and opportunity. From national holidays to pre-school school books, we are surrounded by tales of pilgrims and men who braved the wild frontier and made their fortune.

Importantly, national discourses omit events such as the Indigenous American genocide, slavery and exploitation, thereby removing them from our collective understanding and ancestral identity, what Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) refers to as “unconscious manifest destiny.” The removal or the erasure of these events, which are central to understanding race and White supremacy in the United States creates epistemological ignorance (Mills, 2007). In my case, the national discourse served to protect me from even questioning the possibility of my family being connected to countless horrific events in the past. Thus, national discourses framed by settler-colonization and religiosity legitimize power, justify privileges, and in the case of the United States, these discourses legitimize White supremacy. National discourses are not unique to my experiences or to White people. Rather, these discourses are operative in the American experience (Mills, 2007).

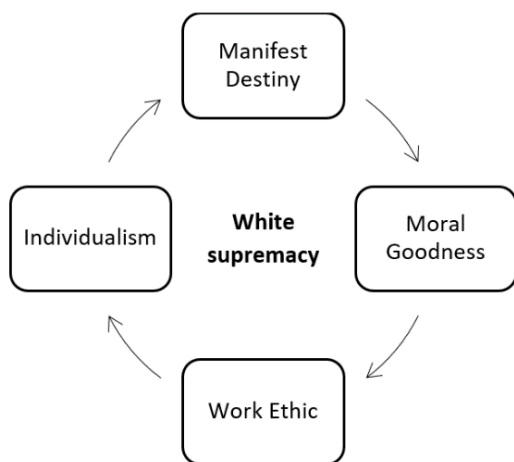


Figure 4

Colonial Discourse Fosters National Epistemological Ignorance

Theme 3: Family Level and Individual Discourse Reproduces White Supremacy

At the family level, national discourses provide the framework for family narratives. White family narratives justify our privilege and frame how we understand power. Family level discourses are built off national level discourses, but are framed from a specific orientation depending on many factors including, but not limited to class, religion, education, occupation, political affiliation, etc. These discourses often function as both *ideological* viewpoints and *behaviors*. In my case, as an upper-middle class, cisgender, Gen X, White woman with liberal political views, the operative discourses are color-blindness, gender-blindness, meritocracy and class similarity.²⁷ Combined, I believe that these discourses collectively lead to a particularly powerful belief in meritocracy, which ultimately leads to a lack of race cognizance and difficulty seeing racism and other systems of inequity. To be clear, I was raised with these discourses, “they were received rather than chosen,” and while they are still operative at some level, I am actively pushing back against them (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 55).

I do not believe that family and individual level discourses are static, but they do require intentionality to change them. For example, White middle-class and upper middle-class people rely on the pretense of moral goodness and meritocracy which is often based on false family narratives and incorrect historical information to protect the cultural, social, economic, educational and political benefits conferred by our Whiteness. This is further enhanced by believing that individuals with a strong work ethic manifest their own success, which is achievable by all who seek it regardless of who they are or where they come from. Viewed from this perspective, it becomes easier to see how the narrative feeds back into national discourses of

²⁷ See research question 2, finding 1 for an in-depth discussion on gender-blindness and class similarity.

individualism, manifest destiny, moral goodness and work ethic to create an ongoing loop. This loop reinforces the perception that privilege has been earned as shown in Figure 5.

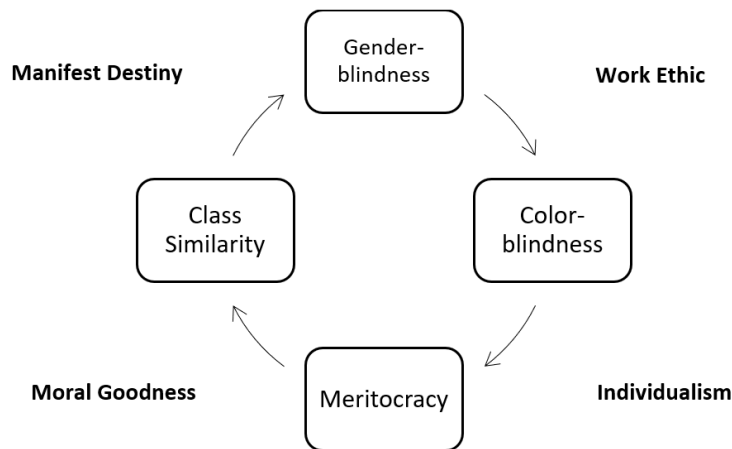


Figure 5

Family Level Discourse

Theme 4: Discourse and Lack of Race Cognizance Foster Racist External Behaviors

When we are unable to see racism as a system because the complex layers of national and family discourses, we are lacking race cognizance, which produces a wide-range of externalized behaviors. When externalizing these behaviors, White people are often unknowingly exerting racial privilege and attempting to assert racial dominance. I believe that these behaviors are externalized in both conscious and unconscious ways. In my case, these include, fragility (White tears, silence, avoiding discomfort, aggression, etc.), paternalism (I am here to help, overly helpfulness towards People of Color, taking charge, etc.), good/bad binaries and othering (good non-racist, bad racist, White people and People of Color who I disapprove of) and ontological expansiveness (all literal and figurative space is White, having different personal rules for physical contact) as shown in table 2. These behaviors are not exclusive and often overlap. They become operative when we feel we are in danger of being exposed or when Whiteness is threatened. However, even though these behaviors are often unconscious, if we

learn to identify when these behaviors are triggered, we can learn to change these behaviors and move closer towards anti-racism.

Table 3

Externalized Racist Behaviors

Fragility	White tears, silence, avoiding discomfort, shutting down, aggression.
Paternalism	I am here to help, overly helpfulness towards People of Color, taking charge, special treatment.
Good/Bad Binaries & Othering	Good non-racist and bad racist, good and bad People of Color, good and bad White people (White trash), good and bad thoughts, good and bad family members/stories.
Ontological Expansiveness	Literal and figurative space is White, different rules for physical contact and proximity.

Research Question 2:

Do existing critical theories of Whiteness account for my observations and lived experiences as a White woman working in a leadership position in American higher education?

Table 4

Question 2 Themes

Theme 1: Whiteness as Property, Societal Standpoint and Epistemological Ignorance as a Framework	Whiteness as property, Whiteness as societal standpoint and epistemological ignorance were the most operative theoretical frameworks to account for my observations and lived experiences in both my personal life and in my professional life. White fragility, color-blindness and ontological expansiveness were also prevalent.
Theme 2: Critical Whiteness Needs Intersectional Models	Critical Whiteness needs to develop intersectional models to interrogate the power structures that maintain Whiteness including class, gender and other key identity markers.

	Whiteness is hegemonic, but it has important nuances that must be better understood.
Theme 3: White Women, Class, Hidden Discourses and the Protection of Opportunity	<p>Protecting opportunity is mired in a complex relationship of class, gender, national discourse, family discourse and White supremacy.</p> <p>The protection of opportunity is about creating exponential generational power, which requires protecting aspects of family history and family life that could reduce opportunity.</p>

Theme 1: Whiteness as Property, Societal Standpoint and Epistemological Ignorance as a Framework

For my purposes Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995), epistemological ignorance (Mills, 2007; Sullivan, 2007) and Whiteness as societal standpoint (Frankenberg, 1993) were the most operative theoretical frameworks that can be used to account for my observations and lived experiences in both my personal life and in my professional life. Of importance, these theories intersect and build upon each other. White fragility (DiAngelo, 2018), color-blindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2013) and ontological expansiveness (Sullivan, 2006) were also prevalent; however, these operate more as discourses and behaviors, rather than a theoretical framework. Epistemological ignorance, Whiteness as property and Whiteness as societal standpoint can be used together to create a complex, interconnected framework for the deconstruction of Whiteness.

Some extant theories of Whiteness are framed as both a *discourse* and *behaviors*, which I found to be problematic. An example of this is color-blindness. Color-blindness is a *discourse* and a *behavior*; thus, it can be challenging to try and tease out what is happening especially when observing others. For example, individual and structural color-blindness is deeply

entrenched within the discourse of Whiteness and as a result also in behaviors exhibited in higher education. However, when placed within an interconnected framework of epistemological ignorance and Whiteness as societal standpoint, it becomes easier to see how color-blindness as both discourse and behavior serve to perpetuate epistemological White ignorance, which ultimately serves to protect Whiteness and create a societal standpoint that is based on White experience.

Theme 2: Critical Whiteness Needs Intersectional Models to Interrogate Whiteness

Whiteness as property, epistemological ignorance and Whiteness as societal standpoint proved useful to my research as theoretical frameworks, but it quickly became clear that none of the models adequately engage with the intersections of Whiteness, class, gender and other key identity markers that transect to create power and privilege. While Whiteness is hegemonic, there are important nuances that are missed when viewing Whiteness through such a limited lens. Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995), emerged out of Black feminist theory and was first used to explain how identities overlap to create multiple sources of oppression and violence that frame the lives and experiences of Black women. Over the last 20 years, intersectionality has been used and expanded as a means of describing the oppression experienced by LGBTQ communities as well as numerous other oppressed groups, which has raised questions about the co-opting and diluting of intersectionality as theoretical framework and tool. I realize the problems that arise by suggesting that White people engage in intersectional analysis to better understand Whiteness, just as I realize the problems that arise when the suggestion is made by an upper-middle class, cis-gender White woman. I do not suggest that intersectionality as a theory be co-opted by White people, and in my case by White women to assert that we are oppressed. Nor do I want to dismiss or erase the importance of intersectionality as a means of explaining the violence and

oppression experienced by Women of Color, something that I myself have never known. Instead, I suggest that White people look at the intersections of privilege to better understand how White supremacy masks power.

For example, gender-blindness, when combined with color-blindness creates an interpretation of the world where sexism and racism are largely non-existent, except for the most egregious of examples. To be clear, when I refer to gender-blindness I am not referring to post-feminist theories that suggest that we have achieved gender equity, instead, I argue that gender-blindness operates like color-blindness in the sense that White women like myself, who desire to be seen as morally good and non-racist, want to believe that everyone, including ourselves have equal opportunity, even though we know it isn't true. This is complicated by family discourses that women of my demographic were raised on, which conditioned us to believe we should go to college, we should have careers and families and we should be as successful as men. This discourse of equal opportunity and meritocracy functioned well for many of us, until we found ourselves being sexually harassed, offered less money for the same work, pumping breast milk in dark storage closets and being passed up for promotions and other opportunities for advancement. Yet, we are still pushing our daughters in the same way we were pushed. In fact, we are pushing them harder because our standpoint is still shaped by the pretense of meritocracy and the protection of opportunity. I believe that this is an area that requires further investigation as it leads to my conclusions in theme 3.

Theme 3: White Women, Class, and the Protection of Opportunity

By examining my own lived experience, I discovered the power of intersectional self-analysis. Specifically, I identified a connection between White women, class and the protection of opportunity. This is an area of interest to me, which I intend to explore more. I have chosen to use “opportunity” instead of “privilege” because I think opportunity is more descriptive and easier to understand. Further, as noted in the literature review, the idea of privilege has become problematic. In fact, while this did not make it into the final version of this research, there were numerous instances where I observed people, especially young White affluent women college students engaging in “privilege checks,” designed to acknowledge their privilege in a situation and reduce their discomfort in the face of inequity. The problem with privilege checks is that they are typically performative; they serve as a “pass” and require no further action. An example of this is: *I realize I have privilege in this situation, but...* In this case, a privilege check is just another mechanism deployed to protect Whiteness by managing perceptions.

The protection of opportunity became visible to me through behaviors I observed in myself and in women like me. Reflexive writing about past experiences was an especially helpful way of identifying this because I came to realize that I have been witnessing women protecting opportunity my entire life. At this point, I believe that this collection of behaviors may be most operative in upper-middle class White women, however, further research is necessary to learn more about this interesting and under-researched area of Whiteness.

Protection of opportunity is directly tied to the discourse of meritocracy, but exists in direct philosophical opposition because meritocracy is predicated on effort, ability and achievement as a *point of access* regardless of socio-economic status, whereas the protection of opportunity is about *ensuring access to maintain* socio-economic status. Protecting opportunity

is mired in a complex relationship of class, gender, national discourse, family discourse and White supremacy. However, I do not think women like myself see it this way. Instead, I think we see it as maintaining meritocracy, not protecting opportunity. I believe this helps explain, at least in part, why upper-middle class White people get so angry when we feel that meritocracy is being challenged or limited by programs like Affirmative Action or when wealthy people “pay-to-play,” like the events in the recent college admissions scandals.

The protection of opportunity is about creating exponential generational power, which requires protecting aspects of family history and family life that could reduce opportunity. But, it also involves preparation and the necessary development needed to take advantage of the opportunities presented. Protecting opportunity also has a dark side, which involves managing perceptions, exposure and reputation. This often requires secrets, lies and omissions. It can also include shame, silence, emotional, physical and financial violence. It is in this area of *necessary* opportunity protection that White women can be dangerous. It is also within this space that White women will endure domestic violence and other forms of oppression to ensure opportunity for themselves and their children. Shame and secrets, when viewed within this realm of White women protecting Whiteness by protecting opportunity is an undertheorized area that warrants further attention.

Research Question 3

What, if any, methods have I identified that helped to develop my own racial cognizance through this process?

Table 5*Question 3 Themes*

Theme 1: Autoethnography Builds Race Cognizance through Personal Identity Development	Critically examining my own family narrative within the context of historically accurate information has been essential to gaining understanding of my racial identity. It provides a window to the past that allows for clarity in the present. Reflexive writing creates an opportunity to not only reflect, but to remember.
Theme 2: NCORE and the Need for Anonymous Work Between White People	The anonymity of NCORE coupled with intensive workshops creates the opportunity for deep learning and deep reflection because it provides a safe-place to engage, that also will not allow the externalized behaviors of White supremacy to go unchecked, which is essential to for White people to build greater race cognizance.

Theme 1: Doing Autoethnography Builds Race Cognizance through Personal Identity**Development**

I did not truly understand what it would be like to center this research on myself, my perceptions, my experiences, my behaviors and my Whiteness. What has resulted is the deconstruction of myself, my family and my family history, as well as my professional practice. I have learned that I cannot separate my personal history and personal experience from my professional practice; they are one in the same. I now know that this process of critical deconstruction was necessary to understand who I am, how I came to be and why I see the world the way I do. What I have come to recognize is that I am a product of my race, gender, class and family history, but in a far more profound, and sometimes disturbing way than I could have ever known without having spent so much time engaging with myself within the context of history and White supremacy. I have determined that as a White leader working in higher education,

coming to terms with the reality of being White and how Whiteness is White supremacy is the most critical first step towards anti-racist leadership.

Critically examining my own family narrative within the context of historically accurate information has been essential to gaining understanding of my racial identity. Doing autoethnography has forced me, sometimes reluctantly, to interrogate my own racial privilege and family history. Through layered narrative reflection, I have critically examined the ancestral narratives of my family and unearthed a more truthful, yet painful history that identifies the scope of the privilege that was bestowed upon me because of the color of my skin. This process has also forced me to confront my class privilege and gender-blindness. An important part of the critical analysis of my family experience has been learning about the historical events that occurred alongside my family history. This helped provide essential context and is another important step towards reducing epistemological ignorance and working towards anti-racism.

Theme 2: NCORE and the Need for Anonymous Work Between White People

Attending NCORE in 2018 and 2019 was an integral part of this research. The conference itself is an excellent way to enhance knowledge and learning about race and ethnicity because there are such a wide variety of people and topics available. However, for me the most powerful moments, many of which I have documented as vignettes in this chapter, came from attending the full-day Pre-Conference Institutes before the commencement of the actual conference. The primary reason both Pre-Conference Institutes were so impactful in terms of supporting the development of my own race cognizance is that they afford a guided time and place, with engaged participants coming together from similar professional backgrounds, who have all convened to work on one set of issues that pertain to race and ethnicity. In our busy lives, we are not afforded opportunities such as this enough. However, it is not just the time and

the quality of the facilitators. I believe it is the anonymity of the experience that allows us to begin to open-up with less fear and concern about making mistakes and consequence of judgement.

Most often White people find ourselves in “required” diversity training with colleagues or other members of a familiar group, like a church group, after a racist incident has occurred. At times, this can be helpful, but it can also hinder development because we find ourselves constantly managing perceptions to protect our Whiteness—to protect opportunity—when we are in the presence of people we know. To be clear, it is absolutely critical that when racist incidents occur, that they are met with knowledge building at the group and individual level. What I am suggesting here is that there is opportunity when the two are separated. NCORE provides the opportunity to build knowledge not in response to a racist incident, but as a form of prevention.

Attending NCORE with an open heart and an open mind for the purpose of building race cognizance is a powerful knowledge building experience. It creates the opportunity for deep learning and deep reflection because it provides a safe-place to engage, that also will not allow the externalized behaviors of White supremacy to go unchecked. In my experience, the power of the NCORE experience, when combined with autoethnography and reflexive writing has been transformational.

Research Question 4

What questions, insights and implications for professional practice have emerged through my process of researching and writing a critical autoethnography on Whiteness, racism and leadership in higher education?

Table 6*Question 4 Themes*

Theme 1: I am Racist Because of White supremacy and My Societal Standpoint is White	I am complicit, my family is complicit, and I reproduce White supremacy every day. It is not so much about what I (we) did not know, but why we didn't know it, that demands attention. We can no longer not know if we want to move towards anti-racism.
Theme 2: White Leaders are Needed for Systems Level Work to Dismantle Racism and White supremacy	We cannot do systems level work if we cannot see the systems clearly. Further, it is not enough to see the systems, we must understand how we contribute to and maintain the systems.

Theme 1: I am Racist Because My Worldview and Societal Standpoint is White

I benefit from White supremacy and my family has a direct and irrefutable history of racism and systemic oppression. My upper middle-class, do-good life does not exempt me from the structural racism created by White supremacy, which has been strategically used by my family for generations to gain opportunity. I am complicit, my family is complicit, and I reproduce White supremacy every day. It is not so much about what I (we) did not know, but why we didn't know it that demands attention. This is particularly relevant to those of us in higher education leadership because many of us likely self-identify “good” non-racist White people who genuinely want to help increase equity and foster diversity and inclusion. It is critical that White people in leadership are not only able to see and identify how and when White supremacy is operative, but we must understand how we operate within the framework and discourses of Whiteness. We must be able to see from the inside and from outside to begin to see systemic racism. However, we cannot do this on our own because we run the risk of leaning back

into non-racism by missing important elements and trying to “fix” things in an unproductive, racist way. Instead, we must learn to be vulnerable, stop protecting our Whiteness and work to develop authentic relationships with People of Color. White leaders cannot be anti-racist leaders without listening to, and working in collaboration with People of Color.

Theme 2: White Leaders are Needed for Systems Level Work

White leaders in higher education, and all other industries and organizations, are needed the most at systems level work where we can support the efforts of People of Color in the process of dismantling White supremacy. However, if we are lacking critical race cognizance, we are not ready for systems level work. We cannot *do* systems level work if we cannot *see* the systems clearly. Further, it is not enough to *see* the systems, we must understand how we *contribute* to and *maintain* the systems. To gain the skills to see and understand, we must learn to identify where we are on a continuum of racial development and understand that the continuum is not linear or static; we may make progress and then lose ground. We may flounder, and we may make mistakes that are embarrassing, and then we must get back up and try again. It is the awareness of the continuum, and where we exist on it, that is important if we want to build the skills we need to make decisions and live our lives through an anti-racist framework.

This process has also taught me that attempting to simplify White supremacy increases its power. It is a complex system and must be treated as a complex system. We cannot attend a workshop to solve White supremacy and stop systemic racism. A workshop may help, but it takes time and sustained effort to peel back the layers to see what is happening because while there are national level discourses that frame our understanding, it is within our family discourses and individual frameworks where we exist and where we have the most work to do.

But, it is also there where we can make positive change. We must be willing to aggressively engage with our family discourses, even when it causes us discomfort.

Chapter 5

Racist: One who is supporting a racist policy through their actions or inaction or expressing a racist idea.

Antiracist: One who is supporting an antiracist policy through their actions or expressing an antiracist idea. (Kendi, 2019, p. 13).

Racism, especially from the perspective of White people is typically seen as an isolated, individual behavior, which some people may or may not exhibit, rather than “historic, traditional, normalized, and deeply embedded in the fabric of U.S. society” (DiAngelo, 2011). As the majority, dominant racial discourse in the United States and in higher education, Whiteness often goes unseen and unchallenged by those who benefit the most from its dominance and invisibility (DiAngelo, 2011). Further complicating the matter, most White people in the United States view themselves as color-blind and as a result, not racist (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Additionally, White people typically fail to see the effects of structural racism and, therefore, see racism and racist acts as individual, isolated, and not the behavior of good, non-racists (Sullivan, 2006). This same color-blind or color neutral, individualist attitude is reflected and perpetuated on campuses across the country and has negative consequences for People of Color because it allows structural racism to remain unseen and unchallenged by well-intentioned White people (Bensimon & Bishop, 2011; Cole & Harper, 2017, Harper, 2007). It also has negative consequences for White people because it hinders the development of racial cognizance, which reduces the possibility for authentic relationships with People of Color and does not move White people from non-racist to antiracist action (Kendi, 2019).

To gain insight into how Whiteness operates and better understand how to move towards antiracism, I have spent the last two-years using my lived experience as a White, upper middle-

class woman working in higher education leadership as the source of data collection and data analysis. My aims were twofold: first I sought to gain insight into how Whiteness maintains systems of oppression and dominance that support White supremacy and exacerbate racism and inequity; and second, I sought to identify strategies to help White people like myself become more race cognizant, understand and see systemic racism, and start to take personal responsibility for complicity in White supremacy. What I have discovered has changed my life forever. I can never be who I was before I began this journey, nor do I want to be.

Discussion

A Personal Truth Commission

I am the descendent of colonial-settlers who enslaved and tortured human beings kidnapped from Africa and forced them to labor on land stolen from First Nations people. I am the descendent of a powerful Irish Catholic politician that allowed Black people to be beaten and murdered and wrote laws that are still used to determine the fate of people and property today. I am the descendent of Spanish conquistadors who committed genocide in the name of colonization and religion, some of whom were Crypto-Jews fleeing the Catholic Inquisition (Chavez, 1992). I am the descendent of Indigenous women from the Zuni and Sandia Tribes of New Mexico and Aztec communities around Mexico City; women who were kidnapped, raped, enslaved and forced to convert to Catholicism (Resendez, 2016). I am a White American and I did not know any of this before I began this research.

This research has become a personal truth commission. At times, I have felt like judge, jury, prosecutor, defendant, witness, and at some of the most difficult points, executioner. This story, my story is one of finding my way through a tangle of lies, often heavy with darkness and emotional pain, to a place of acceptance, healing and hope. It is a story of coming to grips with

the truth about who I am and where I come from, but most importantly it is a story of reckoning with the past and learning to understand the present. It is a story that required me to go back in time, to places I have never been and engage with people I have never known, to bear witness to hate, genocide and enslavement. It is a story of centuries of White supremacy, colonialism, slavery, capitalist manifest destiny and violence against Children, Women and Men of Color. It is a story of loss that at times has filled me with such intense despair and grief that I have had countless moments while writing where I find myself unable to see through the tears. It is a story I must own, affirm and share because it is the story of how I came to be the White woman I am today. It is a story that once shared must not ever serve to absolve me or my children, or their children's children, of the responsibility we bear. This story, my story, is not an apology because apologies are designed for absolution and nothing can ever undo what has been done—simply an impossibility. What there can be is accountability and transformational learning, but this can only happen by taking personal responsibility, openly sharing and encouraging other White people to do the same. To take responsibility, I must bear witness to what has been unearthed.

The Discourses that Normalize White supremacy

Discourse, as defined by Foucault (1972), constitutes the body of knowledge and meaning. Discourses are historical constructs that define and maintain particular versions of reality, the social world and the people, ideas, and things that inhabit it; essentially power and dominance are maintained through discourse. A discourse has systematicity or recurring patterns. These recurring patterns function in an established, institutionalized way to generate "regimes of truth," which Foucault saw as power constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and 'truth' (Foucault, 1972). Discourse operates as a "regime of truth" by actively constructing what can and cannot be known, what can and cannot be said, and what is and is not

legitimized. Thus, discourses are often hidden, and as a result are part of the unconscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they govern. The discourses of Whiteness include a complicated structure of historical rationalizations, language, knowledge, behaviors, perceptions, practices, laws, policies, norms and attitudes that marginalize People of Color and privilege White people.

Whiteness as Property

Whiteness in the United States operates as property and property rights, both of which “are rooted in racial domination” (Harris, 1995, p. 277). Through this process I have identified that my racial privilege created and maintains my class privilege, and my class privilege is protected by White supremacy. In this complicated discourse Whiteness has economic, political and cultural “value,” and as a result operates as property (Harris, 1995). Based on my observations and findings, I believe that Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) is a foundational structure that supports White supremacy, and as a result must be considered a foundational theory of critical Whiteness studies. It is also foundational to the study of Whiteness in higher education because the discourse surrounding Whiteness as property is directly tied to class, racial privilege and access, all of which intersect in education. Further, there are tangible, physical and corporeal aspects of Whiteness as property that are explicitly tied to growth of financial, political and cultural capital in the United States, as well as in higher education. This connection to Whiteness as property as a tangible effect in higher education is evident by the numerous institutions that were literally built on the backs of enslaved Africans upon land stolen from Indigenous People (Wilder, 2013). Harris (1995) explains that “both the oppression of Black people and Indigenous Americans is based on the seizure of property; both labor and land, for the economic, political and social gain of White people. Through the exploitation of labor

(slavery) and land (appropriation), White people gained exponential power” (p. 277). Without understanding how the seizure of land and labor, combined with the creation of racial class as form of property is bound to a legal framework that created freedom and enslavement, we cannot understand the lasting implications of race and racism within the context of higher education. However, Whiteness as property is under-theorized and under-researched in critical Whiteness studies, so much so that Whiteness as property was not included in the literature review for this research other than in a cursory way because it related to a specific study referenced.

Whiteness as property is supported by the creation of epistemological ignorance. Epistemological ignorance protects Whiteness through a complex, almost invisible system of interrelated national, family and individual discourses that then intersect with gender and class to create an even more complicated relationship. At the national level, these discourses are tied to settler-colonialism (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993) and religiosity (Weber, 2002), and include: individualism, manifest destiny, moral goodness and work ethic. These discourses justify privilege and create Whiteness as a societal standpoint (Frankenberg, 1993) because they explain how the United States came to be and form the ideologies that support White supremacy. Importantly, the omissions in national discourse are equally as operative as false narratives utilized to change the story in the creation of epistemological ignorance.

The Power of Family Stories Told and Untold

Family level discourses often function as both ideological viewpoints and behaviors, which work to provide a framework for how we understand the world, justify privilege and our relationship to power. It is in this intersection of ideologies and behaviors, and justification of privilege and relationship to power that individuals can push-back against systems, but we must first be able to see them. Understanding what was operative in my family discourses during

childhood, and what is now operative in my life as an adult and within my own household, has been a critical component of developing greater race cognizance. It is critical because we must know from where our ideas came to change them; our individual societal standpoint is formed within the context of our childhood and family experience, and the ideas can be buried, deep under the surface:

Family is our first culture, and like all cultures, it wants to make known its norms and mores. It does so through daily life, but also does so through family stories which underscore, in a way invariably clear to its members, the essentials, like the unspoken and unadmitted family policy on marriage or illness. Or suicide. Or who the family saints and sinners are, or how much anger can be expressed and by whom. (Stone, 2008, p. 7)

Our families have tremendous power over us and are the foundations of our identities, something in contemporary culture many of us have lost sight of as we move farther away from our childhood homes and the lives formed there. We cannot selectively decide as adults which pieces of our internal family experiences to keep and discard, because our experiences, our understanding of the world through the framework of our families, is who we are. However, we can investigate and learn, which may require us to unearth secrets. Further, we must interrogate our family discourses that we believe are built off “facts,” which have become stories—stories tied to settler-colonialism—and we must be willing to accept that “the facts of a family’s past can be selectively fashioned into a story that can mean almost anything, whatever they most need it to mean” (Stone, 2008, p. 17).

At the family level, I discovered that discourses such as gender-blindness, color-blindness and class similarity were highly operative and further complicate my relationship to Whiteness, as well as my positionality within society. Family level discourse is often built upon

false family narratives (Stone, 2008) and incorrect historical information which serve to protect the cultural, social, economic, educational and political benefits conferred by Whiteness. In my case, family discourses, which centered on work ethic and equal opportunity created a societal standpoint where gender-blindness, color-blindness and class-similarity were highly operative.

Color-blindness, when combined with gender-blindness creates an interpretation of the world where sexism and racism are largely non-existent, except for the most egregious of examples (Ferber, 2007). However, as with other aspects of Whiteness this is not as straightforward as it first appears and, I believe largely influenced by the perception of opportunity created within certain discourses such as meritocracy and equal opportunity. Further, class similarity comes into play with the ever-expanding definition of what constitutes the middle-class in America, which now ranges from dual income households of highly educated white-collar professionals to single income blue collar households. The false widening of the middle-class and the perpetuation of gender-blindness create the same epistemic issue that is created by color-blindness; they create not-knowing, which ultimately results in the inability to see gender inequity, class struggle and racism, which in turn fosters false discourse around issues such as meritocracy and equal opportunity (Ferber, 2007). I suggest, as does (Ferber, 2007), that gender-blindness, color-blindness and class are intertwined and highly operative within Whiteness, and as such need to be examined within an intersectional framework. This is especially relevant when we consider the use of “othering” as an externalization of racist, sexist and classist behavior when used by White people to minimize discomfort and explain structural differences (Sullivan, 2014; DiAngelo, 2011).

Conclusions

The Need for an Intersectional Approach to Whiteness

While Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995), epistemological ignorance (Mills, 2007) and Whiteness as societal standpoint (Frankenberg, 1993) as theories were incredibly useful to my research because they provided me with a framework to interrogate Whiteness, they do not adequately account for the complexity that exists between the intersections of Whiteness, class, age, gender and family experience. However, none of the other existing theories do either. Frankenberg (1993), Sullivan (2014; 2006) and Trepagnier (2010) focus on women and engage with class, but only minimally. Davis (1981), Harris (1995), Crenshaw (1995), Collins (1993), hooks (1984; 1988) and Lord (1984), provide significantly more context and a greater volume of work pertaining to race, gender and class through intersectional exploration, however, their work is focused on the experiences of being Black women in the United States.

Intersectionality as a framework has been used to illuminate overlapping systems of oppression; however, I believe it can also be used to illuminate overlapping systems of privilege and power vis-à-vis oppression making it an important and needed area of focus within the critical study of Whiteness. Levine-Rasky (2009) makes a compelling case suggesting that “Through reconsideration of intersectionality theory as applied to the ‘other side’ of power relations, that it is to the intersections of whiteness and middle-classness rather than to the more traditional categories of racialization, gender, and working-classness, it becomes possible to explore power in relation to the enduring problem of racism (2011, p. 239). Within the field of critical Whiteness studies, we need more than surface investigations of what I found to be externalized racist behaviors such as fragility, good and bad binaries, paternalism and ontological expansiveness. To see and understand Whiteness, White people need to connect to other identity

areas such as gender, class, age, sexual orientation, ability, national origin, etc. To achieve this, I believe we need to think about Whiteness within the context of intersectionality. I do not mean to suggest that the critical study of Whiteness should co-opt intersectionality, which has been an important framework for oppressed people of multiple identities to see the how and where power and marginalization transect. Rather, I suggest that intersectionality be used to foster a deeper and more critical understanding of how Whiteness operates within the multiple identities that exist among White people and locations to power.

Levine-Rasky (2009) argues the need for examining Whiteness within an intersectional framework and asserts that intersectionality is overlooked as means to explore “power in relation to the enduring inequities between groups,” through the lens of dominate positionality. For example, I have identified through this study that there is lack of research examining the lived experiences of White upper-middle class women like myself and the protection of opportunity. The research on this topic is non-existent, which indicates the newness of critical Whiteness as a field of study, but it also indicates the problems that will arise if the critical analysis of Whiteness fails to become more intersectional. By not delving into multidimensional, intersectional analysis based on the lived experience of a wide range of White people, the critical study of Whiteness will only serve to perpetuate epistemological ignorance. As of this writing, research that specifically explores intersectionality as a tool to help identify locations of power and oppression in relation to Whiteness is severely limited. Ferber, (2007), Levine-Lasky (2009), and Anthias (2005) all argue for an intersectional approach to identify the multi-dimensional aspects of Whiteness. By utilizing intersectionality as a method of illuminating where power, privilege intersect, we can begin to “elaborate the practice of domination in its relation to

oppression” (Levine-Rasky, 2009, p. 250). To see where power resides and how it is wielded, it is necessary to name it and identify its location.

Using Accidental Ethnography to Illuminate Systems of Oppression

Through this research, I became an accidental ethnographer, employing a research praxis that comes from spontaneous, unplanned, accidental signs that draw our attention and grip us.

Accidental ethnography is about embracing possibility that:

emerges from the synergy of the ethical and the mythical impulses that reside deep within each of us. It deals directly with the ‘shadow’ worlds of secrecy, deception, dissembling, silence and silencing that emerge so often when traumatic events interrupt our lives. This study rests on—and demonstrates—the claim that writing autoethnography is a fundamentally *ethical*—if sometimes *accidental*—performance that can in the end, lead to healing, wholeness, even redemption. Invocation of the ethical impulse as a guide for evocative writing is woven into the stories. (Poulos, 2009, p. 27)

By allowing myself to be guided by what I have found, to allow myself the freedom to question and search, I have allowed myself to see and better understand the complex contours of what White supremacy is and how it operates within me and within society as a whole. I have learned a great deal through this process, but at the forefront, I have come to understand that my racial privilege created and maintains my class privilege, and my class privilege is protected by White supremacy—not something I came to lightly. When I first began down this road following my epiphany in New Orleans in May 2018, I could not see my connection to White supremacy. In fact, I resisted it fiercely. At that point, I saw White supremacy as extremist behavior limited to White nationalists and others who openly espouse hate. Now, I see that my racial identity has been forged within a culture of generational Whiteness built upon three powerful discourses that

are operative at the national level and frame the way White supremacy operates: Whiteness as property, Whiteness as societal standpoint and epistemological ignorance. I do not mean to suggest that discourse alone created my identity and the tangible privileges to which I have always had access. Rather, these discourses have sustained my privileges and protected me from knowing the truth.

Using Autoethnography to Find Truth and Build Race Cognizance

I did not begin this research with the goal of examining my own family history within the context of White supremacy and the history of the United States. Nor did I expect that this research would take me down, what has at times, has felt like an endless search for truth, only to discover more lies. Through autoethnography I have been able to critically examine and learn about my family histories, an exercise I recommend for all people who wish to build a greater understanding of self, racial identity and ultimately develop the skills to build greater race cognizance.

Critically examining my own family narrative within the context of historically accurate information has been essential to gaining understanding of my racial identity. Doing autoethnography has forced me, sometimes reluctantly, to interrogate my own racial privilege and family history. Through layered narrative reflection, I have critically examined the ancestral narratives of my family and unearthed a more truthful, yet painful, history that identifies the scope of the privilege that was bestowed upon me because of the color of my skin. This process has also forced me to confront my class privilege and gender-blindness. An important part of the critical analysis of my family experience has been learning about the historical events that occurred alongside my family history. This helped provide essential context and is another important step towards reducing epistemological ignorance and working towards anti-racism.

What has been most striking about this process was learning about the omissions from my family narratives, which were significant because they have allowed us to reproduce and reinforce White supremacy to our advantage, over decades and across generations. The omissions made the opportunities created by Whiteness exponential. It is important to address that I have come to see that the omissions in my own family histories are no different from omissions in our national history; the two feed off and reinforce each other, and as a result, create epistemic ignorance—they create not knowing held together by secrets and missing memory. Secrets create silence and when silence lasts long enough, it removes events and people from the record. Essentially, the record is erased and forgotten, and in its place, epistemological ignorance takes over, ultimately changing who we are, what we see and what we know. Forgetting protects us from knowing ourselves completely.

Countering Epistemological Ignorance Through Truth-seeking

To counter epistemological ignorance, I believe that we must make what has been hidden and kept secret, visible; essentially, we must break the silence and create counter-narratives based in truth. There were numerous instances over the last two years where my own missing memories have risen to the surface of my consciousness. In those moments of heightened consciousness, I was forced to confront my family narratives and discourses because my memories were often in direct opposition to what I thought I knew about who I was and where I came from. Had I not been engaging in reflexive writing through autoethnography, I believe these memories would still be buried and I would not have connected the secrets, the silence and the erasures that have been so central to my formation as a White person. According to Poulos:

Knowing, at least intuitively, that forgetting is essential to sanity, knowledgeable human agents consciously and unconsciously craft strategic means of managing the dialectics of

memory and forgetting (McGlashan, 1998). One of these strategies is a strategy of silence, the kind of silence that disrupts the story, a silence that keeps the narrative from being spoken—and thus defusing its power a little—a heavy silencing silence (Clair, 1988; Glenn, 2004; Poulos, 2004a) that builds into a secret. A story told is a powerful thing that can unleash all sorts of grief; an untold story gives off at least the illusion of control. (2009, p. 39)

I realize what I have discovered about my history through this process is unique to me; however, I do not think it is so very different from the stories other White American's will discover should they seek to learn the truth about their family histories. When I began this process, I believed what I had been told. Just like other members of my family and just like millions of other Americans, I internalized the myths that had been created across generations to explain who we are and protect what we have. White Americans are complicated because we exist in a world of contradictions: a world of the hidden and the exposed, the known and the unknown. For those of us who believe we are not racist, the contradictions become even more complicated because we simultaneously believe that we are above racism—that racism exists in bad White people, not good White people like ourselves—while perpetuating systematic racism through our ignorance and discourse. Sullivan (2014) argues that White people currently living in the United States are all responsible for White supremacy and racism, regardless of whether we have something specific in our ancestral past that ties us to a history of enslavement, genocide, and White supremacy. Sullivan (2014) powerfully articulates this idea by stating:

Given the inhumanity of white history, white people today thus can find it difficult, and even refuse to relate themselves to white racists of the past. Distancing themselves from their white forebears can seem to be the only responsible way for contemporary white

people to (not) deal with their racist history. It can seem to be the best way to demonstrate that they disapprove of slavery and that they are not racist like previous white generations. (p. 60)

Distancing ourselves from our history is a mistake. It is a mistake because we cannot separate ourselves from our “racial history, because that history is now” (Sullivan, 2014, p. 60). Through the process of doing this research I have come to understand that it is too easy to “other” people, especially members of our families when we learn about aspects of their past that we disapprove of or are ashamed of. We must not fall into the trap of seeing them as “bad” racists and ourselves as good “non-racists.” Instead, we need to work to accept who they were and what they did. We do not have to forgive their actions, nor should we condone them as something acceptable in a different time, but we cannot ignore and hide them because if we place them outside of our own moral framework, if we vilify them and send them back into the dark, we create a false dichotomy that only serves to reinforce White supremacy.

Implications for Professional Practice

Building Race Cognizant Leaders through Autoethnography and Family History

Early on in this research process I was concerned about whether I would ultimately find connections between Whiteness, my personal life, and my professional life in higher education leadership. In the end, the most foundational, and I believe important finding of this research, is that it is impossible to not connect them; not only are they interconnected, they are one. I cannot separate myself into my personal and professional lives any more than I can remove Whiteness from any aspect of who I am. Similarly, I cannot separate my past and my family experience from who I am today. I am the product of Whiteness. I am White, my societal standpoint is White (Frankenberg, 1993) and I cannot divorce my connections to the past (Sullivan, 2014).

The way I engage professionally, the way I teach, and how I make decisions, come from a societal standpoint of Whiteness created by a lifetime of discourse supporting Whiteness as property and vast distortions of history. Higher education and education in general operate from this same orientation. Just as I am, higher education is a contradiction in practice; openly asserting a powerful discourse about color-blindness, meritocracy, equity and building diverse and inclusive environments where all people can thrive, yet failing to understand that discourse does not necessarily lead to action, and if it does, discourse alone does not change systems. People change systems, but they must first be able to see the system they seek to change.

I have come to believe that most White people in higher education leadership believe in equity and are committed to creating change that will lead to inclusive antiracist environments. However, if we do not understand how our Whiteness frames all that we do, the goal will remain elusive. The insight I have gained through this process leads to me the conclusion that White people, people like myself, cannot begin to see the systems until we first understand that *we are the system*. White leaders in higher education, and all other industries and organizations, are needed the most at systems level work where we can support the efforts of People of Color in the process of dismantling White supremacy. However, if we are lacking critical race cognizance, we are not ready for systems level work. We cannot *do* systems level work if we cannot *see* the systems clearly. Further, it is not enough to *see* the systems, we must understand how we *contribute* to and *maintain* the systems. To gain the skills to see and understand, we must learn to identify where we are on a continuum of racial development and understand that the continuum is not linear or static; we may make progress and then lose ground.

If we can get to a place where we can see ourselves within the system, as primary actors, whose lives have been created by it and maintained by it, with sustained effort, we may also

begin to see how People of Color are affected by it. This is where using autoethnography to examine our own histories is helpful and I believe can be particularly useful in the development of race cognizance in White education leaders when used as a tool for research and exploration. To achieve greater cognizance, White people must see ourselves and the system in unison—as we actually co-exist—as individuals and as part of a system—and to achieve this, we must spend time reflecting on both. However, reflecting on Whiteness is not something that comes naturally to White people since we have been taught to not see color, but also not to speak of it. Nor do most of us have an accurate understanding of how Whiteness is connected to the formation of United States. Thus, using our family experiences and our family histories within the context of higher education and the larger history of the United States as a gateway can provide structure, but more importantly, it supports the creation of a lens that forces us to see ourselves as observers as well as participatory actors. Through the development of a new, more racially cognizant lens we are not only able to see present, but to bear witness to the past.

Under Theorized Areas of Whiteness and Future Research

This research has identified four specific areas that are under-theorized, under-explored and under-utilized in critical Whiteness studies, as well as in general higher education research. First, I believe I have identified an area that has not been investigated in relation to the critical study of Whiteness: White women, family secrets and the protection of opportunity. Research involving family secrets and the connection to maintaining opportunity is another undertheorized area of critical Whiteness studies. I believe that with secrets come other behaviors and emotions, such as a shame, lies and silence, which are all under-investigated in connection to Whiteness. I am interested in further examining how gender and class intersect to protect opportunity and how secrets, silence, and lies are used to “manage” generational opportunity. Shame was a pervasive

finding in my research that requires more study as is it is tied to the pain of secrets and families, but also to the protection of opportunity. I plan to also explore how the shame felt by White women I encountered in this research appears to be tied to negative family experiences related to race and racist behavior, which ultimately serves to keep White women silent in the face of racism. Poulos (2009) argues that literature on family secrets is “understandably somewhat thin,” but stresses that as “silence falls into secret longing, secret pain, secret darkness, secret fear—shrouds of secrecy that take us to a place from which we do not know how to extricate ourselves” (p. 32). I believe that this *place* “from which we do not know how to extricate ourselves” is an important area of further research into Whiteness. However, to dig deep into White women, family secrets and lies requires the use of two other theoretical frameworks, both of which originated within Critical Race Theory; Whiteness as property (Harris, 1995) and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995), but underutilized and underexplored in critical Whiteness studies. Lastly, these three areas of needed research are tied together by the relevance of autoethnography, which is also misunderstood and underutilized in critical Whiteness and higher education research. I believe all four of these areas are deeply interconnected and when combined can add significant depth and meaning to interrogation and deconstruction of Whiteness.

The Need to Take Personal Responsibility

Can we turn our epistemological ignorance into a deep understanding of White racial identity so that we can see how systemic racism and White supremacy operate in all aspects of our lives? Yes. I believe we can if we are willing to push through the fear and the shame; if we are willing to take the time to courageously and authentically acknowledge who we are and how we came to be; if we are willing to risk losing our exponential, opportunistic Whiteness.

White people can learn to see how White supremacy is operative within the fabric of our lives, but this requires sustained effort, coupled with a willingness to critically examine our collective national, as well as personal histories. This is hard, and it is painful, because to get past the walls of discourse at the national and family level that inculcate Whiteness, it is necessary to critically examine our secrets, some of which may be buried so deep, they are not only difficult to find, they are hidden for a reason. Stone (2008) states that “clinicians [have] long understood that for those with whom they worked, to change one’s story was to change oneself” (p. x.). For White people in the United States, changing the story may be painful, but it is essential because many of the stories we have do not belong to us; they are fabrications designed to hide our complicity. To counter generations of false narratives, we must create a new critically conscious discourse that illuminates the systems, instead of hiding them.

This research, ultimately an exploration of self, has shown me that White supremacy is operative in all that White people are and do in the United States, however, we are largely unable to see it. The knowledge I have gained about myself and my family history does not change my identity. I am White. I will always be White. What this knowledge does change is my understanding about what Whiteness is and what it means. The knowledge I have gained highlights the importance of knowing how families, like mine, and like millions of others, have leveraged Whiteness for generations with the primary intent of creating and maintaining opportunity. My White life has been constructed, created and manufactured for centuries, but I am not alone. My family narratives were changed for optimal advantage, to create power, to create wealth, to create stability, to create the American Dream. To open the American Dream to People of Color, we must confront ourselves and change the systems that have long conspired to be exclusive, invisible and impregnable.

Epilogue

White Privilege

Today I got permission to do it in graduate school,
 That which you have been lynched for,
 That which you have been shot for,
 That which you have been jailed for,
 Sterilized for,
 Raped for,
 Told you were mad for –
 By which I mean
 Challenging racism –
 Can you believe
 The enormity of that?
 (Frankenberg, 1985)

I came across the above poem by Dr. Ruth Frankenberg called “White Privilege,” written in the summer of 2018. Dr. Frankenberg was a White, British sociologist who did her doctoral work in the United States. Dr. Frankenberg died in her early forties from cancer and is not credited with being a poet. I have not come across any other poetry she wrote. I believe Dr. Frankenberg wrote this poem as she began to understand what it was she was doing as a White, upper class, British woman studying Whiteness and racism in the United States. It is this poem that has propelled me through this process and given me strength when I thought it was too difficult to challenge the hegemony of Whiteness in the world and in higher education. It has reminded me, as I've discovered the weight of the responsibility I must now carry as a White

person committed to confronting racism, that the weight, is in fact a privilege; that I must not forget what my privilege has shielded me from. This poem inspired me to continue with this project because this poem, written in 1985 describes the present. It speaks of my privilege and the enormous power of White supremacy. It speaks of the terror, hate and wrath that Whiteness has brought against those who would challenge it. It speaks to the need for White people to take responsibility. It speaks to White silence in the face of racism. And it screams that this a topic that is too controversial, too taboo, and it screams that this is a topic that must be addressed, now in 2020. It screams, we must find a way. Today.

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Appendix A: NCORE 2019 Poster

WHITENESS IN HIGHER ED: USING AUTOETHNOGRAPHY TO REFRAME WHITE FAMILY NARRATIVES TO INCLUDE WHITE SUPREMACY

Hallie Kelly Star MA, EdD Candidate

Idaho State University

starhall@isu.edu

BACKGROUND

WHERE I STARTED: How are institutional efforts to increase equity and inclusion perceived by minority students in higher education?

WHAT I FOUND: The body of existing research on equity and inclusion in higher education is focused on the effect of race (achievement gap), but fails to attribute the effects to racism (Leonardo, 2004). The focus is on racializing Students of Color (deficit) whereas White students are seen as normative and race-neutral.

As a result, I found myself confronting Whiteness.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: (1) Identify how Whiteness maintain systems of oppression and dominance that support White supremacy and exacerbate racism and inequity in higher education; (2) Identify strategies to help well-meaning White people (like myself) become more race cognizant in order to better understand the systemic structure or racism, begin to take personal responsibility for complicity in White supremacy and work towards becoming authentic allies for People of Color.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How has Whiteness shaped my racial identity and lived experience as an upper-middle class White woman working in higher education?
2. Do existing critical theories of Whiteness account for my observations and lived experiences?
3. What questions, insights and implications for professional practice have emerged through my process of researching and writing a critical autoethnography on Whiteness and racism in higher ed?

METHOD: CRITICAL AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Autoethnography is a form of storytelling that uses personal experience in a particular cultural setting to gain deeper knowledge. It is an illustration of a sense-making process often generated by an epiphany.

Critical autoethnography centers this research in my experience, my identity and my personal truth from the outset. Through a critical lens, I am able to openly address my power, privilege and status as a White, upper-middle class woman already working in academia through the use of reflexive writing and discourse analysis. Because of the framework of this research, I am able to dig deep and see how I experience and perpetuate Whiteness.

EMERGING THEMES

Individual and structural COLOR-BLINDNESS is deeply entrenched in the discourse of higher education. Color-blindness serves to perpetuate EPISTEMOLOGICAL WHITE IGNORANCE, which is ultimately about the PROTECTION OF WHITENESS.

- Color-blind language and value structures support epistemological ignorance (not knowing), however the systems which created epistemological ignorance were at work long before color-blindness became the primary racial construct of the United States.
- As a result, working through a lifetime of individual and systemic color-blindness and epistemological ignorance requires a commitment of time and a willingness to critically examine one's own racial identity for White people to be able to sift through many layers of blindness and ignorance.
- I was significantly more class conscious than race conscious prior to beginning of this process. I was comfortable critically analyzing my class privilege, but I was blinded by much of the systemic racial privilege conferred by my Whiteness. I now know that I allowed myself to maintain racial ignorance by hiding behind my class privilege. **My Whiteness created and maintains my class privilege and my class privilege is protected by White supremacy.**
- "Good" White people (like myself and many others in higher ed) are blind to our racial privilege and yet we still identify as "not racist" and believe we are ready for systems work. **The majority of us are not ready for systems level work because we cannot see the systems clearly.**
- White middle-class people rely on the pretense of meritocracy and moral goodness, which is often based on false family narratives and incorrect historical information to protect the cultural, social, economic, educational and political benefits conferred by our Whiteness.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Through this research I discovered how obfuscation, lies and the creation of false (more palatable) narratives have changed my own perceptions of who I am and who my family is. Critically examining my own family narrative within the context of historically accurate information is essential to this process. **Critically examining the lies and history of White supremacy of my family has been difficult, but I believe essential, if I want to begin to understand White supremacy and start to take responsibility for my complicity in maintaining it.**

White supremacy and systemic racism are often hidden from view from those who benefit the most from the oppression of People of Color. This is no different in higher education. In fact, given that the demographic of faculty, administrators and staff in higher education is predominantly White, the problem is potentially larger than it is in the general population.

In order to bring a higher level of race cognizance to middle class White people, it is necessary to engage critically through the connection of personal family histories, critical self reflection and the collective history of the United States in order to help systems of White supremacy, oppression, privilege become more visible.

INGNORANCE & NARRATIVES



My Kelly Family Narrative (Myth) 1975-2019

Michigan Governor Harry F. Kelly (1942-1946 seated left) surrounded by his wife and 6 children (my father is center, back row). Harry was a WW1 war hero (lost his leg on a French battlefield), Notre Dame graduate, Michigan state attorney, Michigan Secretary of State, Governor, and Michigan Chief Supreme Court Justice. He was a devout Catholic, a proud and hardworking descendant of Irish immigrants who dedicated his life to civil service and to his family, which allowed him to send all 6 of his children to college.

Through this research I discovered the stories not told...like my connection to the 1943 Detroit Race riots.

(Truth) 25 of the dead were Black. 18/24 were shot by police, many of them in the back, 4 times as many Black people were arrested, even though they were only 10% of the Detroit population. Sixteen hours into the 1943 Detroit race riots "Mayor Jeffries and Gov. Harry F. Kelly met with local commanders of the armed forces at Detroit's federal building. As they debated how to get manpower on the streets, a tumult from Fort Street distracted them. They rushed to the window to see a white mob chasing a terrified black man with torn clothing and a bleeding face. Despite this shocking scene, the men quibbled over the legal ramifications of martial law."



My grandfather waited 24 hours to call in federal troops so he would not be seen as weak President Roosevelt.

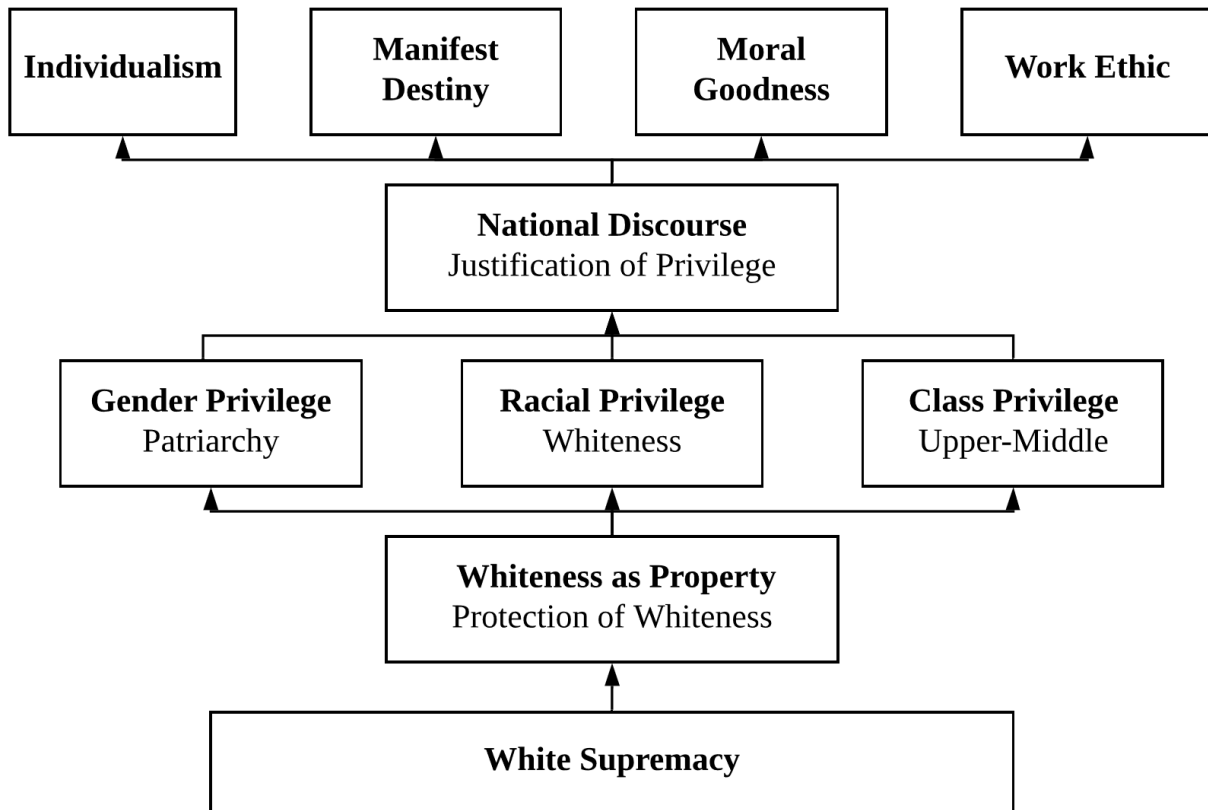
The official death toll was 34, with 676 injured, and \$2 million in property damage. "Authorities closed ranks with the police and political establishment, turning their backs on black grievances. Gov. Kelly stacked a fact-finding committee with prosecutors and city, county and state police. Two members headed police agencies the panel was supposed to examine. The report exonerated the police and condemned white violence but excused it as retaliatory. It placed blame for the riot squarely on Detroit's blacks."

What have I learned from this process? I have, and do benefit from White supremacy. My family has a direct and irrefutable history of racism and oppression. My leftist middle-class life does not exempt me from the structural racism created by White supremacy. I am complicit, my family is complicit and I reproduce it everyday. It is not so much about what I (we) did not know, but why we didn't know it? Where do I go from here now that I am facing the truth about my family and White supremacy? How does that conversation and accountability happen?

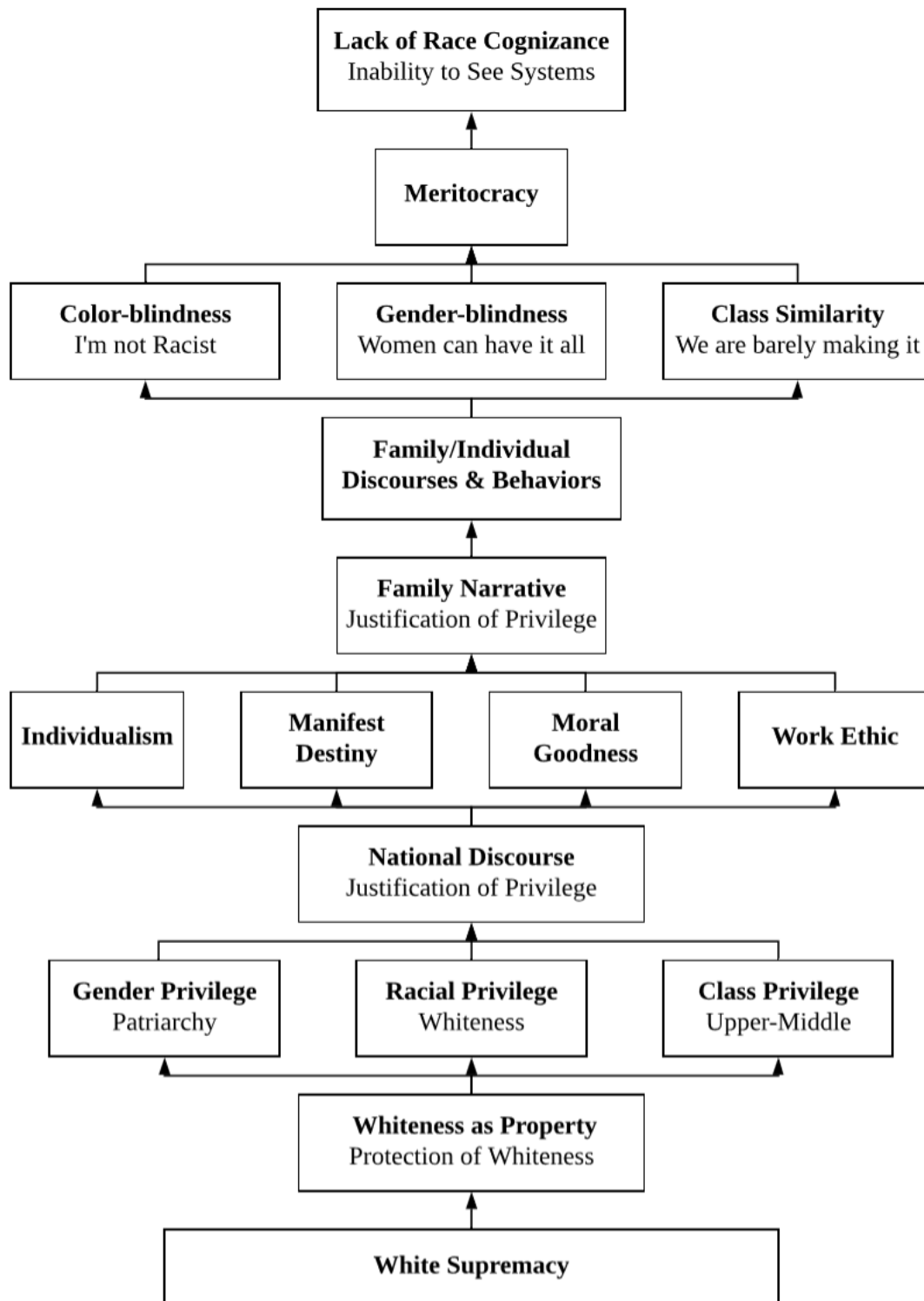
Appendix B: Word Cloud



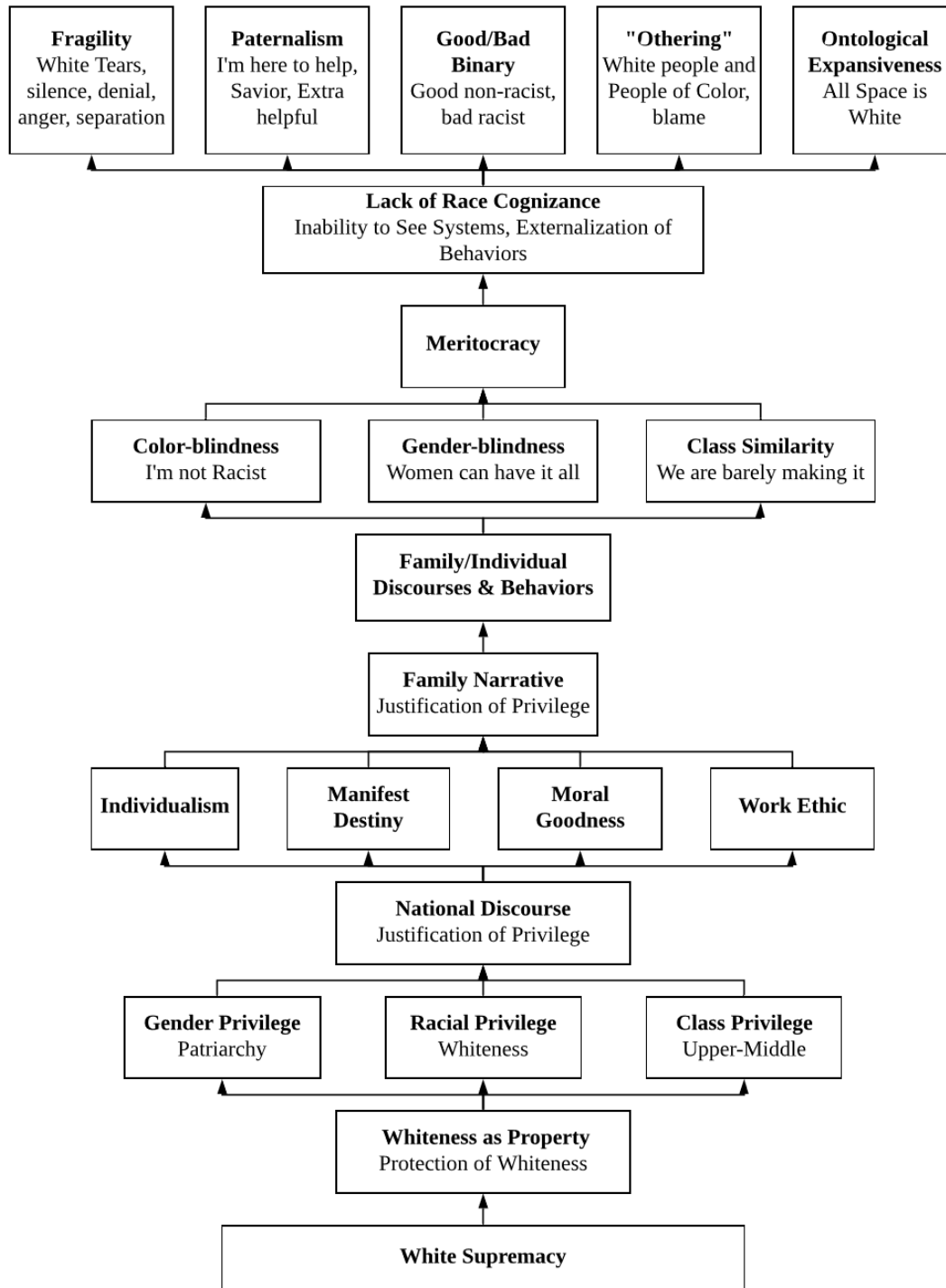
Appendix C: Mind Map 1



Appendix C: Mind Map 2



Appendix C: Mind Map 3



Appendix D: Process Map

