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Writing Through Whiteness: Utilizing Personal Narratives to Strengthen the Racial Competency of White Teachers

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Abstract

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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of White Teachers

By

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Directed by Dr. Kathleen Stanfa

While the student population in the United States is becoming increasingly diverse, the teaching force is still White-dominant by a large margin. In the 2017-2018 school year, 79% of public-school teachers in the United States were White and non-Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics). This White-dominant population of teachers is tasked with educating increasing numbers of students of color from diverse backgrounds. With this charge should come the necessity for White teachers to critically consider the complex ways that whiteness characterizes the American education system and their ways of teaching. White teachers cannot navigate issues of race in their schools and classrooms without working to strengthen their own racial competency. This study aims to assess the degree to which personal narrative writing as part of engaging in a White racial inquiry group impacts the ability of White educators to strengthen their racial competency. This dissertation narrates the stories of two White educators as they reflected deeply about their racial experiences personally and professionally through personal writing and discussions of that writing together.

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Lastly, I must thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Kathleen Stanfa. Dr. Stanfa, I could not have hand-picked a better person to chair my dissertation. Your varied experiences in the field of education undoubtedly proved to me an asset to my work. Your advice to me always drew from these varied experiences, and this allowed me to approach my work from a multiplicity of angles that I would not have otherwise seen had it not been for you. You always talked to me not like a doctoral student but as one of your colleagues in the field of education. Every word you offered me was wrapped in encouragement; I never felt lost in this journey after meeting with you. All of these qualities of your guidance came together to create a deep sense of trust in me for you. This was perhaps the most important for me. Your authenticity, passion, and kindness allowed me to trust you from the moment I met you. This trust only grew stronger as I continued on in the process of completing this dissertation. I never felt for a second that you would allow me to fail. I know I speak for our entire leader scholar community when I say that all of us felt more confident in ourselves and our work after each meeting with you. Dr. Stanfa, thank you for always believing in me and my work.

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Introduction

Over the last few years, my school administration (like many others around the country) asserted that they wanted to make antiracism, equity, diversity, and inclusion the focal points of the school culture. While you will never find me arguing against this goal, I was concerned about the tendency of school administrations to be reactionary. It was rather clear to me that the past few years characterized by racial injustice played a part in their wanting to make antiracism, equity, diversity, and inclusion the focus of the last few academic years. I worried that students can sniff out reactionary measures from miles away. My main fears were that:

1. Students would see this as reactionary and thus, inauthentic.

2. The training would be so cursory that the staff would not develop the tools necessary to do this in an authentic way if they even felt comfortable having these tough conversations with their students and/or colleagues at all.

3. The administration and teachers would not recognize the necessity for a change of this kind to be radical, not incremental.

This dissertation study sought to uncover a model for creating a more permanent attitude toward change in the minds and hearts of White teachers. The study chronicles the experiences of two White teachers who were willing to deeply reflect about their racial identity through critical writing and discussion. Chapter one provides my positionality as the researcher, a broader overview of the issue of the whiteness of education, the research questions and terminology relevant to the study, a summary of the theoretical framework applied to the study, and the significance of the study. Chapter two offers a review of the literature that provides a deeper look into to the theoretical frameworks and concepts that guided the study. Chapter three

covers the research design of the study including all methodological elements and procedures

such as data collection and data analysis. Chapter four highlights the results of the study

including the major themes garnered from participant responses. Lastly, chapter five offers a

discussion of these major findings and relates them to contemporary literature and studies on the

topic. This final chapter also discusses the possible implications of the study as well as the

potential for further research in the field.

Chapter 1: The Puzzle of Practice

This chapter begins with a discussion of my positionality as a human being and as a researcher. This includes an intimate story of my experience with one of my students after the murder of George Floyd. Understanding who I am and what brought me to this research is critical to understanding my passion for finding ways to use it in my work context in the future. The chapter also outlines the research questions that guided the study and offers definitions of terminology that are central to the study in order for all readers to have a common understanding of the vocabulary used throughout the course of the dissertation. This first chapter goes on to discuss the puzzle of practice that is at the core of this dissertation study which centers on the whiteness of the education system. The significance of the study is discussed which includes the potential for narrative writing to be utilized as a tool for White teachers to process their racial identity and strengthen their racial competency. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the theoretical frameworks that guide the study as a transition to the complete review of the literature in Chapter Two.

Researcher Positionality

I have always prided myself on the environment that I create in the classroom, one characterized by inclusion and the valuing of student voices from diverse backgrounds. I always saw myself as an educator who was not only interested in creating equitable classroom spaces but also as an educator who actually did the work in order to make these spaces a reality. I did not come to this research; it took me off guard and came to me. It came to me in the form of a student of mine who challenged me to reconsider the degree to which I was actually doing the work. In many ways, I have her to thank for this dissertation and for what I hope to be a lifetime

of doing the work for real. And if there I one thing I have learned while on this dissertation journey, the only way to do the hard work as a White educator is to commit to it for a lifetime.

At the end of May of 2020, I was preparing for a much-needed summer break. The COVID-19 pandemic had hit and thrust me into online teaching. I was away from my classroom. I was away from my students. I was away from my colleagues. I was away from the places and faces that make me excited to go to work every day with the hope of impacting people in a positive way. Coinciding with the disruption to education was the murder of George Floyd. Because we were home all day every day, it was impossible to not follow the gut-wrenching story from all angles. I taught a Politics of Writing course at the time. I remember watching the murder video for what had to be the 10th time and thinking "I am not with my kids. I would usually shut everything down to help them process this. I want to send them all a message. But I don't want the message to come across as reductive or insincere. I will think about it." And think I did for a few days. But she got to me first.

The following is the email I received from one of the students in my Politics of Writing course. Jessica is a Black young woman who took a very active role in our classroom conversations that focused on race, ethnicity, culture, gender, politics, and other social issues. She wrote with the subject line "Black Lives Matter":

Hi Mr. Walsh,

I cannot speak too soon because I am unable to know if you were already working on your response on behalf of George Floyd's death. As one of my teachers, I could always lean on you to hear my voice and validate it, that's how you are as a teacher and person. But I have to be honest with you Mr. Walsh, I was expecting you to share something with us. We share James Baldwin, Nikki Giovanni, Maya Angelou, and many others in your

class. We are the history that will be taught in the future, and the importance is just the

same. History this big cannot wait to be taught next year, we are in the midst of a

revolution. I love your classes, and I admire the way you teach to make students know

their voice is important. As for right now the voice of the allies and your voice is just as

important. Your students need to hear from you Mr. Walsh. The power of one's voice is

able to empower others to speak and a lot of staff members have been silent. As Elie

Wiesel once said "We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the

victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented"

The email made me sick to my stomach. Tears welled up in my eyes. How could I fail her this

way? How could I fail all of my students this way? They trusted me, and I let them down in such

a huge moment. I reached out to Jessice, and we met virtually to discuss her feelings on the

matter. The conversation was respectful and eye-opening. I listened to her and told her I would

work hard to repair our relationship. I like to think our relationship grew stronger as a result.

The days and weeks went on. There was more and more about George Floyd on the news.

Each night there was a new protest being covered on the news. Each time I came across anything

related to George Floyd or the Black Lives Matter movement, I thought about Jessica. I thought

about how she was looking to me, her White writing teacher, to provide support and allyship to

her and her peers. What eventually struck me about this experience with Jessica is what

inevitably brought me to this research. I had the privilege to wait to craft a response. I had the

privilege to allow my thoughts and feelings to work themselves out. I had the privilege not to be

a part of a community that was devastated by the murder of George Floyd. In short, I could take

my damn time as long as I wanted to. Until Jessica called me out about what I claimed to preach

in class but where I fell short when it mattered most.

I am a White, cisgender, heterosexual male. I am the oldest of two children and come from a modest but middle-class background that afforded me a life where I wanted for virtually nothing. I played for the sports teams I wanted to play for. I always had enough money to go to the movies with my friends and grab a bite to eat. I never once feared walking home from the bus stop as a child. If my mother was not able to meet me at the bus stop, there was at least one other parent at the stop, one whom I knew well and who was ready to keep an eye on me. I went to Catholic school from age four through high school. I attended a public state university. While I was left with some debt, it was not the crippling sort of debt incurred by so many others as my parents paid for roughly half of my undergraduate degree.

I am a father and a husband. My family and I followed along a similar path to my upbringing in settling into a middle-class neighborhood and enjoying a middle-class lifestyle. We go out to dinner when we want (for the most part) without having to fear being unable to pay another bill. While money is certainly tight at times, we have enough to send my son to full-time daycare and have done so since he turned one year old. While not always to the tune of a one-week all-inclusive destination, we do typically find a way to take a trip over the summer just to get away. I am a teacher, I am a writer, and I am a baseball coach, three roles that I take very seriously and understand the gravity that comes with the opportunity to influence people in these three positions.

I offer you this brief background to highlight that for the most part, I have lived a very privileged life. No life comes without personal struggle, but one thing is incredibly clear to me as I reflect on my life: never once have I had to answer to the color of my skin. I have never once been forced to consider the color of my skin as a variable in doing or not doing anything, entering or not entering a space, or being offered or denied an opportunity. Thanks to my

student, I came to realize that it was all these qualities of my whiteness that allowed for me to

have a lack of urgency as it related to supporting my students, something that I deemed myself a

professional at doing. I had not been forced to consider how the color of my skin contextualizes

my worldview and experiences in any real way until I received that email from my student. I

have now come to see this critical reflection on the part of White educators as integral to create

more antiracist classrooms, schools, and districts. I came to learn the importance of all this

through the eyes of my student who challenged me to push beyond the work I thought I was

doing.

The Whiteness of Education

In the 2017-2018 school year, 79% of public-school teachers in the United States were

White and non-Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics). As a White teacher, I want to

uncover the often invisible ways that the racial identity of White teachers impacts their teaching

and relationships with their students. My school is a great place to study this because our staff is

almost 100% White and our student population is over 70% white. As an arts school that

preaches being open, tolerant, accepting, and inclusive, I wanted to investigate the ways in which

the vast blanket of whiteness that shrouds our school does not allow us to be the things our

school claims to be. I am not asserting this is some sort of intentional trickery or purposely filled

with malice. I am asserting, however, that the American education system is largely a white,

middle-class enterprise. Seeing that my school is perhaps even whiter than the average school,

the teachers must engage in this systemic whiteness of schooling whether we realize it or not.

We must do away with surface-level conversations that begin and end with confessions

of white privilege if we want to create actionable change. A confession of white privilege is not

the end game; it is not the antiracist act in itself (Lensmire et al., 2013). We must engage in work

that has the goal of "making whiteness visible to everyone... [historicizing] the term...[showing]
how the trope emerges in the seventeenth century, how it changes over time and place, and how
it gets embodied differently within different bodies within different contexts" (Kennedy,
Middleton, & Ratcliffe, 2005, p. 366). Asserting and seeing one's privilege functions as an
important entry point to living a more antiracist life. However, "unfortunately, such confessions
contribute little to dismantling the system of oppression that is the condition of privilege"
(Applebaum, 2016, p. 9). In other words, we must investigate and challenge the systems that
allow for these privileges in the first place.

  In the specific context of education, White teachers must dive deeply into the self not
simply to find their privileges, but more importantly to uncover the various parts of the complex
system that gave them these privileges in the first place, a system they are a part of and must
constantly be aware they are a part of. This second wave of critical whiteness studies
"understands that whiteness is a hegemonic racial structure, and white identity is intersectional
'and often privileged but does not totalize, reduce, or essentialize white identities to these
important, however partial, understandings' (Jupp, 2016, p. 5, as cited in Tanner, 2019, p. 186).
White teachers must first become comfortable with seeing themselves as racial beings and
discussing their whiteness as a racial structure. But this cannot be the end game; in the same way
one cannot essentialize Blackness, one cannot essentialize whiteness. White teachers must move
away from the external and refocus on the internal. This means teachers should not "always and
only be looking to people of color in [their] learning or thinking about race" (Tanner, 2019, p.
184) and cannot "ignore or look past the *internal* conflict at the core of racial identity… 'the
eternal battle by a self against itself in order to stop feeling what it is not supposed to feel:

forbidden desires and prohibited feelings that render one different' (Thandeka, 1999, as cited in

Tanner, 2019, p. 183).

Significance of the Project: Writing as a Way of Being

In the words of Yagelski (2009), writing "can give rise to a conception of the self as

autonomous and intellectual and thus may fundamentally change the relationship of humans to

the world around them" (p. 10). He goes on to say "therein lies the transformative power of

writing, for when writing is practiced as an act of being, it opens up possibilities for individual

and collective change...writing can become a vehicle to a deeper, more nuanced sense of

ourselves as beings in the world" (p. 8). Personal narrative writing is an excellent tool to use in

order to move away from the external and engage in this deep dive of the self. This can lead to a

transformation on the personal level that can lead to transformation outside of the personal.

In short, I wanted to discover the ways in which being White and being a part of a White

system of education impacts teachers personally and professionally and thus, how it impacts their

students and the greater school community. I wanted to identify specific ways that teachers can

engage with their whiteness that might provide positive results in the classroom. One of the ways

that I wanted to test how this can be done was through the writing of personal narratives and

having open conversations with White teachers where I asked them to think critically about their

whiteness. Transformation starts at the personal level. I wanted to work with teachers to do just

this so that it might become possible for them to transform their classrooms, their schools, and

their greater communities.

My hope was that if their reflections and conversations were truly authentic, the teachers

would take this new-found consciousness and put it into action by engaging in more sound and

impactful antiracist pedagogies, pedagogies that do not begin and end with a confession of

privilege but rather "interrupt relations of racial inequality by enabling people to identify, name, and challenge the norms, patterns, traditions, structures, and institutions that keep racism and white supremacy in place" (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 330). By reflecting deeply and critically regarding the way in which being White has impacted them personally and professionally, my hope was that the transformative quality of the act of writing would lead the teachers in my study to a more consistent consciousness of the way their whiteness impacts their students, their classroom, and their school.

Research Questions

The following research questions reflect the goals of this dissertation study, the problem of practice that grounds this study, and the theoretical underpinnings that guided this study:

1. How does writing personal narratives about race impact how White teachers process how their whiteness affects their personal experiences?

2. How does writing personal narratives about race impact how White teachers process how their whiteness affects their professional experiences in the classroom?

3. How does writing personal narratives about race affect the ability of White teachers to develop more holistic antiracist pedagogies?

4. How does participating in group meetings rooted in the discussion of their personal narratives about race impact the way White teachers process their whiteness personally and professionally?

Terminology

A common understanding of the following terms is critical to interpreting the various parts of this study:

1. **Critical Race Theory:** "the study and transformation of the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

2. **Critical Whiteness Studies:** "Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is a growing field of scholarship whose aim is to reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce white supremacy and privilege. CWS presumes a certain conception of racism that is connected to white supremacy. In advancing the importance of vigilance among White people, CWS examines the meaning of white privilege and white privilege pedagogy, as well as how white privilege is connected to complicity in racism" (Applebaum, 2016).

3. **Whiteness:** "a term [that captures] all of the dynamics that go into being defined and/or perceived as white and that create and reinforce White people as inherently superior through society's norms, traditions, and institutions. Whiteness grants material and psychological advantages (white privilege) that are often invisible and taken for granted by Whites" (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 356)

4. **White Supremacy:** The "all-encompassing centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as White, and the practices based on this assumption" (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 356)

5. **White Privilege:** "A sociological concept referring to advantages enjoyed and taken for granted by Whites that cannot be enjoyed and taken for granted by

people of color in the same context (government, community, workplace, schools, etc.)" (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 108).

6. **Antiracist:** "To be antiracist is to think nothing is behaviorally wrong or right -- inferior or superior -- with any of the racial groups. Whenever the antiracist sees individuals behaving positively or negatively, the antiracist sees exactly that: individuals behaving positively or negatively, not representatives of whole races. To be antiracist is to deracialize behavior, to remove the tattooed stereotype from every racialized body. Behavior is something humans do, not races do" (Kendi, 2019)

7. **Naming:** "...coming to an understanding, through language, of the worlds we inhabit, how they work, how they relate to each other, how they account for diversity, and how they might do this better" (Harris, 2004).

8. **Racism:** "A form of oppression in which one racial group dominates others… [this domination] is supported intentionally or unintentionally by institutional power and authority" (Diangelo, 2016, p. 108).

9. **Racial Competence:** "...having the skills and confidence to engage in healthy and reciprocal cross-racial relationships; to recognize and honor difference without judgement; to notice and analyze racial dynamics as they occur; to confront racism at the individual, group, and systems level; to cultivate support mechanisms for continuing to be involved in antiracist practice even when it is discouraging or conflictual; to speak one's mind and be open to feedback on one's ideas; to ask for feedback about one's ideas and work; and to raise race questions about oneself and one's practice" (Michael, 2015, p.5).

10. **Racial Self-Inquiry:** "…a process of constant engagement with a question, a commitment to sit with a difficult query and to keep asking over time…a rigorous and systematic process of research, experimentation, and community building around challenging dilemmas" (Michael, 2015, p.2). In this case, the "difficult query" and "challenging dilemma" is that of one's racial identity.

11. **Positive White Racial Identity:** "…does not mean feeling good about being White…it means having an understanding of what it means to be White in a society that historically, contemporarily, and systemically favored whiteness above other races" (Michael, 2015, p. 4).

Theoretical Framework

My research is grounded largely in the field of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), a field that aims to "reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce White supremacy and privilege" (Applebaum, 2016, p.1). Scholars in the field "seek to make explicit the ways in which whiteness is a determinant of social power and to demonstrate how whiteness works through its invisibility" (Applebaum, 2016, p. 2). While this field makes up the majority of the framework that informed my study, the field of Critical Race Theory (CRT) is part of my larger theoretical framework as well. CRT scholars seek to "study and transform the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). Seeing as CWS developed out of the field of CRT, it too is an integral part of my theoretical framework.

Methodologically speaking, my study is framed by the process of narrative inquiry. I asked my participants to engage in narrative self-inquiry, specifically a type of racial storytelling (Johnson, 2017) where they were asked to tell the story of how their race has impacted and continues to impact them personally and professionally. I recounted these racial stories and the

stories of their experiences in the study by utilizing narrative inquiry. These methodologies

framed my study because at the core of the study lie the acts of "living, telling, retelling, and

reliving" (Clandednin, 2013, p. 34).

Lastly, in the act of writing personal narratives, my study is framed by the theory that

writing has the potential to lead to personal transformation for the writer and thus, a

transformation of the world that surrounds the writer (Yagelski, 2009). Engaging with the genre

of personal narrative can allow writers to come to a better understanding of the impact that

transcendent experiences have had in their lives (Raab, 2014). In the context of my study, I

believe that the penning of authentic and reflective personal narratives can result in White

teachers coming to a fuller understanding of their racial selves and can strengthen their racial

competency. This will improve not only their role as an educator, but also the various roles they

play in their lives outside of their classrooms.

This is but a brief description of the theoretical framework that guided my study. The

subsequent literature review fleshes out the various parts of my theoretical framework in much

greater detail where I will position my study in the broader scope of the research of the authors

cited above in conjunction with many others.

Situating the Study in the Current Sociopolitical Context

It is imperative that I situate my study in the current sociopolitical context in order to best

address the various issues that come with doing this work. The sociopolitical tensions that

accompany doing race work in education are framed by the broader tensions of race in America.

The fields of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies are under siege by the political

right. The right deems the fields no more than liberal poison that create more racial division than

racial unity. The right stands firmly by the idea of colorblindness, that the way to rid our county

of racism is by not seeing color at all in an attempt to treat people equally. They say that any

theories like Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies do the exact opposite by

defining people by their racial identities. In this way, advancing these fields of study is more

important than ever. It is the colorblind ideology that allows white supremacy to go unnoticed,

unnamed, and remain an invisible structure that normalizes whiteness. To not see color is to

willfully and purposefully deny the presence of whiteness and the inequitable systems that come

with it.

I also recognize that there are those who believe that any study of whiteness only further

centralizes whiteness in ways that could potentially do more harm to communities of color and

further entrench white dominance. However, I argue that in order to dismantle systems of white

dominance, we must be able to name whiteness as a racial and sociopolitical identity. This

should include putting it on display as something to be studied as a means to work toward a more

equitable society without centering whiteness as the reference point for all things "normal."

Ironically, we have to analyze the ways that whiteness has been the reference point for an

"normal," "American" way of life in order to dismantle it as a reference point at all.

Lastly, I recognize the complex issues that come with White people doing any work at all

in any field that focuses on race. There is no doubt that the work of White people should always

be accompanied by and in partnership with scholars of color who have lived racial experiences

that White scholars simply have not lived. But while it cannot be denied that progress that has

been made with regard to race in America has often been the result of the fearless leadership of

people of color, this progress was also made in partnership with many White people. To deny

White people entry into the study of and conversations about race is dangerous in a few ways.

First, it denies White people potential opportunities to see the historical and current implications

of their racial identity and transform their perspectives in order to work toward a more equitable

world. White people must see the often invisible ways they have been in power, have remained

in power, and the inequities that stem from being in power in order to even begin addressing

these inequities. Secondly, denying White people the ability to do race work would not allow for

the kinds of cross-racial partnerships that are necessary to create actionable and sustainable

change on the grounds of race.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This literature review provides an in-depth discussion of the theories, concepts, and methodologies that guided my study while I position my study in the broader scope of the existing research. In terms of organizational structure, the first half of the literature review consists of a discussion of critical race theory and critical whiteness studies, the two major frameworks that grounded my study on a theoretical level. I give an overview of the major aims of the theories. I then move to a discussion of the major concepts/assumptions that undergird the theories. Lastly, I review research that applies the concepts/assumptions of the theories to the field of education specifically.

The second half of the literature review consists of a discussion of research regarding the methodological approaches I took in conducting this study. I discuss the process of self-inquiry, specifically the act of racial storytelling (Johnson 2017). Seeing as this is a process, I asked my participants to engage with in a rather in-depth way. I then discuss the methodology of narrative inquiry which I utilized in recounting the personal and professional stories my participants shared regarding their race as well as the stories of my participants as they related to their experiences in being part of my study. I end the literature review by discussing research that suggests the act of writing has the potential to be transformative for the writer on a personal level and thus comes also with the potential for the writer to change the world around them.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) originated in the 1970s when "a number of lawyers activists, and legal scholars across the country realized, more or less simultaneously, that the head advances of the civil rights era of the 1960s had stalled and, in many respects, were being rolled back" (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 4). Seminal works like "Serving Two Masters:

Integration Ideals and Client Interests in School Desegregation Litigation" (Bell, 1976),"Brown

v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma" (Bell, 1980), and "Legitimizing

Racial Discrimination through Antidiscrimination Law: A Critical Review of Supreme Court

Doctrine" (Freeman, 1978) set the stage for what would become a flourishing movement where

scholars aimed to "study and transform the relationship among race, racism, and power"

(Delgado and Stefancic, 2017, p. 3). Delgado and Stefancic, (2017) summarize the major tenets

that most CRT practitioners would agree on:

1. Racism is ordinary, not aberrational

2. We live in a society that privileges White over Color. Thus, racism advances
   White elites (materially) and the White working class (psychically)

3. Race is a product of social thought and relation

4. Different minority groups have been racialized at different times throughout
   history by dominant society to suit their purposes.

5. Every person has a multiplicity of identities (political, ethnic, cultural, gender,
   sexuality, socioeconomic class, etc.) that work together, compete, overlap, etc. In
   this way, CRT is rooted in intersectionality.

6. Minority status brings with it a presumed competence to speak about race and
   racism

The field of CRT came to take hold across a wide range of disciplines including that of

education. CRT as a pedagogical practice aims to help students "achieve a critical understanding

of the role of race and racism in society" (Ledesma & Calderon, 2015, p. 210), in order to

"empower students of color while dismantling notions of colorblindness, meritocracy, deficit

thinking, linguicism, and other forms of subordination" (p. 208). CRT educational theorists see

"the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White

supremacist master script" (Ladson-Billings, p. 18, 1998). In this way, CRT educational theorists

see education as yet another massive system that maintains and perpetuates a White supremacist

ideology through the tools unique to its discipline like curriculum, student discipline,

achievement tests, school funding, etc.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is a "growing field of scholarship whose aim is to

reveal the invisible structures that produce and reproduce White supremacy and privilege.

Scholars in the field seek to make explicit the ways in which whiteness is a determinant of social

power and to demonstrate how whiteness works through its invisibility" (Applebaum, 2016, pp.

1-2). I briefly outlined the field of CRT and its major tenets because the field of CWS grew out

of the field of CRT; the field of CWS utilizes the major assumptions of CRT as a basis for its

own areas of exploration. While CWS is the primary theoretical framework that I utilized to

guide my dissertation study, CRT provides the groundwork for the field of CWS, thus it must be

considered a part of my broader theoretical framework.

CWS took hold in the 1990s with the work of scholars like David Roediger (1991),

Peggy McIntosh (1988), and Ruth Frankenburg (1993) (as cited in Leonardo 2009). This first

wave of CWS focused heavily on the concept of White privilege. While a discussion of privilege

must be a part of any discussion of whiteness, it is not the only part of whiteness. In recent years,

this second wave of CWS has shown that a confession of white privilege is not the end game; it

is not the antiracist act in itself. Contemporary CWS scholars believe that there must be a shift

away from this first wave of CWS that focused so much on confessions of White privilege. A

second-wave CWS "does not totalize, reduce, or essentialize White identities to these important,

however partial, understandings" (Jupp et al, 2016, p. 1154). While understanding and discussing one's privilege is important on some level and is perhaps an entry point, "unfortunately, such confessions contribute little to dismantling the system of oppression that is the condition of privilege" (Applebaum, 2016, p. 9). This second wave of CWS aims to focus more specifically on "making whiteness visible to everyone...[historicizing] the term...[showing] how the trope emerges in the seventeenth century, how it changes over time and place, and how it gets embodied differently within different bodies within different contexts" (Kennedy et al., 2005, p. 366). This more nuanced and complex approach to the study of whiteness leads to a more authentically antiracist society.

While the white-led CWS movement of the 1990s created a more formal collection of ideologies that came to form the movement, this was hardly the first time anyone theorized whiteness. Before moving into a more robust discussion of the concerns of CWS scholars, it is important to discuss the movement's roots in the scholarship of Black theorists and writers. Veronica T. Watson, in her book *The Souls of White Folk: African American Writers Theorize Whiteness* (2013), artfully chronicles the tradition "within African American literature in which authors explore Whiteness as a racialized subjectivity" (p. 5). In her book, Watson shows how the work of thinkers such as W.E.B. Dubois, Charles Chestnutt, James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison (to name merely a few) were some of the first to discuss whiteness and its implications in critical ways, thus laying the groundwork for what would become the CWS movement.

Baldwin discussed the necessity for the White man to be "released from the tyranny of his mirror" (*The Fire Next Time,* 1993, p. 95) which he seems unprepared to do because the White man does not "believe my version of the story, believe that it happened... [and] in order to

avoid believing that, they have set up in themselves a fantastic system of evasions, denials, and justifications, which system is about to destroy their grasp of reality, which is another way of saying their moral sense" ("The White Problem," 1964, as cited in Watson, 2013 p. 15). Dubois said, "We who are dark can see America in a way that White Americans cannot" ("Criteria of Negro Art, 1926, as cited in Watson, 2013, p. 3). In *Black Skin, White Masks,* Frantz Fanon said, "what is called the black soul is a construction of white folk" (2008, p. xviii). Toni Morrison asked the question, "What happens to the writerly imagination of a black author who is at some level *always* conscious of representing one's own race to, or in spite of, a race of readers that understands itself to be 'universal' or 'race-free' " (1992, xi.) The words of these Black writers and so many others have "helped us to understand Whiteness more deeply and fully than perhaps we thought possible" (Watson, 2013, p. 11). In this way, the field of CWS owes a great amount of debt to the great Black thinkers who have been theorizing whiteness for years but whose ideas concerning whiteness make up the foundation of CWS.

Whiteness and White Racial Identity

While there is a myriad of definitions for whiteness, I will use the one offered by Robin DiAngelo (2016) as I find that it speaks to the multiplicity of layers of White identity. She says whiteness is "a term [that captures] all of the dynamics that go into being defined and/or perceived as White and that create and reinforce White people as inherently superior through society's norms, traditions, and institutions. Whiteness grants material and psychological advantages (White privilege) that are often invisible and taken for granted by Whites" (p. 356). Worth noting in this definition is the word "perceived." In other words, someone who does not define themselves as White may indeed reap all the benefits of whiteness if society views them

as White. These shifting views of what it means to be White makes whiteness difficult to pin down and articulate in full.

There is no doubt that White people's inability to readily see the privileges afforded to them just for being White is incredibly problematic. But another aspect of Whiteness that poses problems between White people and people of color and leads to the invisibility of whiteness is the degree to which White people often ignore whiteness as a racial category in full, that somehow being White equates to being "raceless" and any other person of color is "filled with race." CWS scholars and practitioners aim to make visible the intricate ways that whiteness as a racial identity plays in shaping the lives of White people. This allows White people to see how they "fit into the larger conversation about race" (Michael, 2015, p. 3). Critical to the field of CWS is the understanding that White people do indeed have a racial identity and that having this racial identity affects the way White people interact with the world and, in turn, the way that the world interacts with them.

The Normalization of Whiteness, White Supremacy, and White Privilege

Ruth Frankenburg (1993), a pioneer of CWS, further articulates the ultimate dangers of White people characterizing their whiteness as "raceless" and "cultureless." To deny the culture of whiteness and whiteness as a racial identity results in the perpetuation of White domination and the use of whiteness as the point of comparison for what is deemed "normal" in American society. Frankenburg suggests that we must engage in discussions about whiteness as a culture and racial identity with a deep-rooted history in order to "dislodge the claims to rightful dominance" (p. 633) that White people wittingly and unwittingly make. This dominance leads to the notion that whiteness should be the reference point to which everything else is compared. In

this way, people of color are not only people of color; they are also "un-white." In their being

defined by what they are not (White) they come to be characterized as the abnormal "Other."

When Frankenburg talks about dominance, she is speaking to the dominance that results

from the deeply-entrenched ideology of White supremacy that has come to characterize

American society and positions whiteness as the "normal" standard against which everything

else is compared. In her essay "Representing Whiteness in the Black Imagination" (1992), bell

hooks discusses the term White supremacy, a term that she sees as much more useful to use

when describing the way that people of color experience the world. She says, "In a white

supremacist society, white people can 'safely' imagine that they are invisible to black people

since the power they have historically asserted, and even no collectively assert over black people,

accorded them the right to control the black gaze" (p. 340). In hooks' view, White supremacy

does not always take the face of Ku Klux Klan members marching, White nationalists gathering

to threaten Black Lives Matter supporters with guns, or White terrorists storming the Capitol.

While these examples are certainly overt acts of White supremacy, the ways a country built on

the premise of White supremacy expresses this ideology is not always so obvious.

In this way, White supremacy becomes a term that reflects the "all-encompassing

centrality and assumed superiority of people defined and perceived as white, and the practices

based on this assumption" (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 356). In citing Charles W. Mills' *The Racial

Contract* (1997), Robin DiAngelo says that Mills describes White supremacy as "the unnamed

political system that has made the modern world what it is today" (DiAngelo, p. 146). In

allowing this ideology of White supremacy to go unnamed and unchecked for centuries, a

pervasive system of "White domination" was created that is held up by an "assumed [White]

superiority that legitimizes it" (DiAngelo, p. 147). These unchallenged assumptions of White

superiority are built into the fabric of American society in many subtle ways, thus resulting in the general acceptance of whiteness as the "normal" standard for living. It is critical to understand the sweeping magnitude of the system of domination that has created White supremacy throughout the course of history in order to fully utilize the lens of CWS.

Peggy McIntosh's essay titled "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies," (1988) is recognized as a seminal essay in the development of the concept of White privilege. In describing the concept of White privilege, McIntosh uses the metaphor of a knapsack. She says,

> I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank checks" (1988, p. 2).

On one hand, this definition is useful as it shows the invisible nature of the many privileges of White people. Thinking critically about these invisible privileges is necessary in order for a White person to start to see the degree to which their racial identity affects the way they experience the world. However, McIntosh's definition is potentially damaging in its use of the words like "unearned," "oblivious," and "weightless." These words come across as rather passive. In one way, I suppose this makes sense seeing as she is describing the phenomena of an invisible set of privileges afforded to a certain group of people. However, in the passivity of these terms also lies something dangerous: the assumption that these privileges were not the result of anything being violently stripped from or done unto another group in order to attain them.

I chose to discuss the concepts of White supremacy and White domination before delving into the concept of White privilege for this exact reason; the concept of White privilege is inextricably tied to the concepts of white supremacy and white domination. In his book *Race, Whiteness, and Education* (2009)*,* Zeus Leonardo says, "...the conditions of white supremacy make white privilege possible...in order for white racial hegemony to saturate everyday life, it has to be secured by a process of domination…" (p. 75). Leonardo's concern is that discourses of White privilege often "obscure the subject of domination...because the situation is described almost as happening without the knowledge of whites" (p. 76). To return to McIntosh's metaphor of the knapsack, I would argue that just because privileges are "invisible" to someone does not mean that they were attained without any action or force. Leonardo echoes this point saying, "Privilege is the daily cognate of structural domination. Without securing the latter, the former is not activated" (p. 88). While I have discussed the issue with discourses of white privilege potentially ignoring the white supremacy and white domination that results in the privilege on a general level in this section, I will discuss the impact this issue has in the field of education, namely in the field of antiracist education in the subsequent section.

Antiracist Education and Critical Whiteness Studies

Ibram X. Kendi defines the term antiracist as

...[thinking] nothing is behaviorally wrong or right -- inferior or superior -- with any of the racial groups. Whenever the antiracist sees individuals behaving positively or negatively, the antiracist sees exactly that: individuals behaving positively or negatively, not representatives of whole races. To be antiracist is to deracialize behavior, to remove the tattooed stereotype from every racialized body. Behavior is something humans do, not races do (Kendi, 2019).

Antiracist education is not just about creating a multicultural classroom (Michael, 2015). While

this is an important part of antiracist education, it is not the entirety of antiracist education. To

return to McIntosh's knapsack metaphor, nor should the end game for antiracist education be a

pedagogy of privilege. A pedagogy that does not go beyond white privilege and investigate the

systems of domination that allow for the privilege in the first place risks focusing exclusively on

the individual. This focus on the individual "obscures the relational dimensions of privilege"

(Applebaum, 2016, p. 7). This means that in focusing on white privilege on the individual level,

a pedagogy of white privilege does not name the intricate ways that Whites are "interdependent

upon the constitution of racialization of others through unjust social and historical processes"

(p.7). In the same way that discourses on white privilege can result in a limited view of White

racial identity on a general level (due to the potential of ignoring White supremacy and White

domination as prerequisites for privilege), pedagogies that start and end with White privilege can

also be incomplete if not damaging. There is no doubt that White privilege must be discussed as

part of an antiracist education. However, it should never be discussed without also discussing the

complex ways that allow the privilege to be and the active ways in which the privilege is

perpetuated.

     Robin DiAngelo defines antiracist education as "an educational approach that goes

beyond tolerating or celebrating racial diversity and addresses racism as a system of unequal

power between whites and people of color" (2016, p. 330). She goes on to say that the goals of

antiracist education should be to "identify, name, and challenge the norms, patterns, traditions,

structures, and institutions that keep racism and white supremacy in place" (p. 330). It is clear in

these statements that centralizing whiteness is one of the keys to engaging in holistic antiracist

pedagogies. "Centralizing" here does not mean making whiteness the rightful center of the

universe; it means being critical of whiteness as the central location for racism and domination of

minority groups. In citing Gilborn (2005), Bonilla-Silva (2001), and Mills (1997), Leonardo says

that White supremacy has only recently come to be seen as a "social system that upholds, reifies,

and reinforces the superiority of whites" (2009, p. 127). It makes sense then, as with any social

system, that White supremacy affects a wide-range of arenas. Education is not exempt from the

dangerous implications of White supremacy. In this way, it is clear to see the usefulness of CWS

as part of an antiracist educational model. Engaging in conversations in school about the vast

implications of whiteness allows students and teachers to have a fuller understanding of the

nature of racism in general but also allows them to see the ways that whiteness dominates the

American education system.

So what are the ultimate goals of studying whiteness as a means to foster an authentically

antiracist educational setting? Grioux (1997) says

> Analyzing whiteness opens a theoretical space for teachers and students to articulate how
>
> their own racial identities have been shaped within a broader racist culture and what
>
> responsibilities they might assume for living in a present in which Whites are accorded
>
> privileges and opportunities (though in complex and different ways) largely at the
>
> expense of other racial groups (p. 314).

In their review of antiracist studies in education from 2000-2015, Lynch, Swartz and Isaacs

(2017) found that there were consistent aims in these studies: "(1) identifying or making visible

systemic oppression, (2) challenging denial of [White] complicity in such oppression; and (3)

ultimately transforming structural inequalities" (p. 135). They also found that these studies of

antiracist education went beyond simply creating multicultural awareness or diversifying

curriculum, nor did they promote a color-blind ideology by means of assimilation. These studies

were unique in that they sought a "dismantling of the systems, structures, and institutions that keep racism in place" (p. 140). In this way, the authors found that across 15 years of scholarship in the field of antiracist education, an examination of whiteness and its implications was at the core.

Critical Whiteness Studies and Teacher Identity

I worked with teachers for my dissertation study. Thus, I focused on scholarship that places White teachers' conceptions of their whiteness at the center for this portion of this literature review. Jupp, Berry, and Lensmire (2016) conducted an extensive study of what they called "second-wave" White teacher identity studies. They define the field of White teacher identity studies as "a multidimensional field studying the cultural production of race, whiteness, and White teacher identities that articulates complex historical and social forces along with related understandings of teaching and learning in context" (p. 1163). First-wave White teacher identity studies "produced representations of the race-evasive and privileged identities of White teachers," and they paid little attention to how "these representations would then help or hinder future work with White teachers" (p. 1176). However, in their analysis of 65 studies out of this second-wave of White teacher identity studies from 2004-2014, the researchers found that there was a "new emphases in relation to race-evasive identities, careful attention to the nuances and complexities of White race-visible identities, detailed accounts of the actual pedagogies and curricula that form the complex contexts of White teachers' identities…" (p. 1176). An investigation of this complexity of White identity is critical for White teachers who wish to engage in authentically antiracist pedagogies.

If the whiteness of teaching goes unexamined, White teachers will continue to reinforce the dominating racial ideologies of whiteness (Picower, 2009). In turn, this creates a situation

where faculty and students of color are continually called on to "shoulder the work of

antiracism" (Tanner, 2019, p. 195). White teachers must dive deeply into the self not only to

discover their privileges, for positioning a pedagogy of privilege as the end of the antiracist act

itself will ultimately undermine antiracism (Lensmire et al. 2013). But in this inquiry of the self,

White teachers cannot "fall back on their capacity to act as individuals, [thus] enabling them to

retreat from the tensions produced by whiteness" (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 284). White teachers

must seek to uncover the various parts of the complex system that give rise to the privileges they

enjoy. And they must see how this general societal system frames the education system as well, a

system of which they are an intricate part. Using CWS as a roadmap toward an authentically

antiracist education means asking White teachers to *constantly* name and reflect on the various

ways their racial identity affects their personal experiences, their experiences in the classroom,

and the experiences of their students.

An Approach to Racial Self-Inquiry for White Teachers

What does this investigation of whiteness on the part of White teachers actually look

like? Whether explicitly or implicitly stated, the literature I have reviewed heavily favors

Johnson's (2017) model of racial storytelling. While Johnson used this method to highlight his

experiences as a Black male, Tanner used the model to "follow the lead of scholars of Color to

engage with racial storytelling to resist white supremacy, even as I'm wary of reaffirming

whiteness" (2019, p. 185). Tanner is certainly aware of the implications of utilizing the racial

storytelling method of a Black man to tell the story of himself, a White man. However, Tanner

also recognizes that "White people are haunted by race, too, whether it is recognized or

not...therefore, I aim to tell honest, racial stories to grapple with the specters of my own racial

hauntings" (2019). In Johnson's words,

It is imperative for teachers to know themselves and understand how their racial past,

present, and future shape their beliefs, values, and the multiple decisions they will make

as teachers… as the majority of incoming education students are still white, it is crucial to

analyze the impacts of whiteness. No white educator can simply ignore their own

positionality and how it relates to their experiences and their perspectives on institutions

(2017, pp. 494, 496).

This reflection of the racial self allows White teachers to see the ways they are personally

impacted by their whiteness and how their whiteness affects all aspects of their classroom.

Ali Michael (2015) would call this investigation of the racial self and the act of racial

storytelling parts of the process of self-inquiry, "a process of constant engagement with a

question, a commitment to sit with a difficult query and to keep asking over time" (p. 2). She

calls this a "rigorous and systematic process of research, experimentation, and community

building around challenging dilemmas" (p.2). Michael conducted a study of six White teachers

who participated in a race inquiry group. One of the main goals of this group was to help White

teachers develop a more positive racial identity for her White participants. Michael says that a

positive racial identity does not mean "feeling good about being White...it means having an

understanding about what it means to be White in a society that historically, contemporarily, and

systemically favored Whiteness above other races" (p. 4.). She goes on to say that "teachers

cannot support their students to have a positive racial identity unless they as teachers already

have a positive racial identity themselves" (p. 44). While it is not a perfect model because it does

not describe every kind of White person, Michael utilizes Helms' (1995) White racial identity

model to inform her understanding of her own development of a positive racial identity as well

as those of her participants. A second primary goal of her race inquiry group was to help her

White participants develop a stronger racial competence. She defines racial competence as

> "...having the skills and confidence to engage in healthy and reciprocal cross-racial
>
> relationships; to recognize and honor difference without judgement; to notice and analyze
>
> racial dynamics as they occur; to confront racism at the individual, group, and systems
>
> level; to cultivate support mechanisms for continuing to be involved in antiracist practice
>
> even when it is discouraging or conflictual; to speak one's mind and be open to feedback
>
> on one's ideas; to ask for feedback about one's ideas and work; and to raise race
>
> questions about oneself and one's practice" (p.5).

Developing a strong racial competence is intimately connected to the goal of developing a

positive racial identity.

The Transformative Power of Writing: Personal Narrative as a Tool for White Racial Self-Inquiry

My study is influenced heavily by the work of Ali Michael as I ran my own small race

inquiry group with the goals of studying the impact that participating in the group had on the

development of my participants' racial identity and racial competency. I also wanted to study

how the development of their racial identity and racial competency impacts their experience in

the classroom. Michael's data was largely made up of observations during meetings and

interview responses. I too facilitated group conversations regarding whiteness and race, took

field notes during these meetings, and interviewed participants after their engagement with the

study. However, I was particularly interested in studying the impact that the act of writing

personal narratives had on the development of my participants' racial identity and racial

competency.

Harris (2004) says that "the composing and recomposing of reality and the self through language that happens in personal essays, autobiographies, and memoirs---to name only a few genres---is critical work. A student's own essay is a site for critical pedagogy to be enacted and for critical consciousness and social critique to emerge" (p. 402). While Harris' focus is on the way that a teacher's engagement with student personal writing can be a place for teachers to actively engage in critical pedagogy with students, I argue that the same can be said for teachers working with other teachers. In this way, I asked my participants to write personal narratives over the course of a few months that called for them to consider the ways their whiteness has affected them personally and professionally. I asked them to write about the ways they are continuing to attempt to engage in more authentic antiracist pedagogy in their classrooms and to reflect on the results from a personal and professional stance. Lastly, I asked them to write about the role that our race inquiry group and the act of writing personal narratives played in the development of their racial identity and racial competency. How could the teachers in my study "come to an understanding, through language, of the worlds [they] inhabit, how they work, how they relate to each other, how they account for diversity, and how they might do this better" (p. 407)? How would my engagement with teachers and their personal narratives be a site for active antiracist practices?

The act of writing has the potential to be transformative for the writer and thus, potentially transformative for the world around the writer. Yagelski (2009) says that "writing enables a kind of conceptual and analytical thinking that can give rise to a conception of the self as autonomous and intellectual and thus may fundamentally change the relationship of humans to the world around them" (p. 10). In her study of five accomplished memoir writers, Diana Raab (2014) examined the way that writing memoir impacted the authors' ability to process their

transcendent experiences, or "an experience that goes beyond the ordinary" (p. 2). She found that memoir writing "led to a deeper understanding of the meaning of the transcendent experience and the role it played in their lives...writing about their lived experiences was a way for the participants to bring meaning into their lives" (pp. 18-19). The participants in Raab's study were "both transformed and empowered by the experience and process of writing a full-length memoir" (p. 19). Furthermore, the memoirists "connected with deeper reflections or illuminations about the [transcendent] experience and its role in the larger context of their lives, individually and in the universal perspective" (p. 19). In other words, the participants in the study found the act of personal writing to be personally transformative and thus found themselves able to apply what they learned through this transformation to the world around them.

    While I did not ask my participants to write full-blown memoirs, I still aimed to examine the impact that the act of writing a personal narrative had on teachers as they explored their whiteness. Would the teachers in my study come to see their personal narratives as a way to "reaffirm and proclaim [their] being in the here and now" (Yagelski, 2009, p. 17)? Would the penning of the personal narrative result in personal transformation? If so, would this personal transformation result in the teacher's ability to transform their classrooms and greater school community? These are the questions I sought to address regarding the role that authoring personal narratives might play in helping White teachers develop a more positive racial identity and a stronger racial competence.

Narrative Inquiry as an Approach for the Researcher of White Teacher Racial Identity

    The teachers in my study engaged in deep self-inquiry made up of personal narratives, group conversations, and one-on-one interviews with me. However, as the researcher, I too had to find the appropriate avenue for telling the story of my participants' experiences in being a part

of the study as a means to relay tangible results to my reader. In this way, I utilized a narrative

inquiry approach to study the experiences of my participants. Jean Clandinin (2013) defines

narrative inquiry as "an approach to the study of human lives conceived as a way of honoring

lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding" (p.17). In citing her

previous work with Connelly (2000), Clandinin further describe the process of narrative inquiry

saying that

> ...it is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series
>
> of places, and in social interaction with milieus...an inquirer enters this matrix in the
>
> midst and processes in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living
>
> and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people's lives, both individual
>
> and social (2016, p. 20).

Even in the construction of the interview questions is the researcher actively involved in the

inquiry process since in creating the interview questions "the researcher becomes an integral and

visible part of the research and results...in this way, the interview questions are as important as

the participant's responses" (Raab, 2014, p.4). In a narrative inquiry study, collaboration

between researcher and participants occurs at all levels.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter I discuss the research design and methodological practices that were required to address the research questions that related to the puzzle of practice. I begin by discussing narrative inquiry, the methodology I utilized to tell the story of my participants in this study. I also highlight the connection between narrative inquiry and action research. As discussed in chapter two, writing can translate to a way of being. This change is at the heart of action research. I then go on to discuss the setting of the study, the participants who partook in the study, my data collection and analysis procedures, my role as the researcher in the study, the validity of the data, the limitations of the research design, and any ethical concerns in the research design.

The Connection Between Narrative Inquiry Action Research

The research design of this study was in the tradition of narrative inquiry. This methodology made most sense for my study because of its inherent fluidity. Narrative inquiry is "not a set of procedures or linear steps to be followed but a relational inquiry methodology that is open to where the stories of participants' experience take each researcher" (Clandenin, 2013, p. 33). At the core of my study were the acts of "living, telling, retelling, and reliving" (p. 34). My participants told their personal and professional stories of White racial identity. They retold these stories (and told new ones) in our race inquiry group meetings. They told the story of their lived experience of being in the race inquiry group and the story of how being in the group affected how they relived their experiences personally and professionally. They told the story of how the act of writing personal narratives impacted the development of their racial identity and racial competency. Lastly, I told the story of the totality of these experiences of my participants

throughout the course of my study. In light of the multitude of directions these stories could have gone, narrative inquiry was the most appropriate methodological model for my study.

However, this dissertation also aimed to create change in the contexts of the participants be it in their personal lives, in their classrooms, or in their school. In this, I see the research design of narrative inquiry as a means to engage in action research as well. The telling and retelling of the stories of one's life as part of the narrative inquiry process can indeed lead to real change. Pushor and Clandinin (2009) discuss the interconnectedness between narrative inquiry and action research saying,

> These ideas of story living and telling, retelling and reliving are central features in
> [Clandinin and Connelly's], and our, particular view of narrative inquiry. For them, the
> inquiry into narrative, stories lived and told, creates spaces, gaps, which allow for change.
> Within their conceptualization, there are clear connections between narrative inquiry and
> a broad view of action research. (p. 292).

While I recognize the dominant research design of this study is that of narrative inquiry, I also cannot deny the connection between the stories my participants told as part of the narrative inquiry process and the actionable change that can come from engaging in this self-inquiry.

Research Methods

Setting

The setting of my study was my place of work. The school is a charter high school for the arts located in Eastern Pennsylvania. The students at the school are predominantly White (66.7% of the population), and the teachers are almost exclusively white. 8.8% of the students are Black, 13.7% are Hispanic, and 8.2% identify as being multiracial. 33.4% of the students are categorized as economically disadvantaged (PA Future Ready Index, 2018). In many ways, the

school is a reflection of America: a White-dominated setting where somehow whiteness and its

effects remain almost invisible.

Description of Participants

All participants signed a consent form (see Appendix B) that outlined the details and

expectations of them for the study. I recruited two White participants for my study because the

focus of my study was on how White teachers process the ways in which their whiteness

contextualizes their personal and professional worldviews. While this was a small sample, the

participants were chosen very carefully. I wanted to capture as many variables as possible in my

chosen participants as they related to gender and their content area.

1. Alex is a male core discipline teacher who has taught at the school for 7 years. He

   was a new father at the time of this study. He cited always being willing to learn more

   about the implications of his racial identity.

2. Anna is a female arts discipline instructor who has been at the school for 16 years.

   She taught in multiple capacities throughout the course of her career including

   collegiately and in private settings. She is a mother of three who described herself as

   the most racially-aware member of her department at the school. She also cited

   having a willingness to learn more about the implications of her racial identity.

I primarily chose these two participants in order to have a male and female perspective and

because one teaches a core discipline subject and the other teaches and artistic discipline at the

school. I also chose both participants because they expressed an interest in doing this kind of

White racial inquiry work and are veteran teachers. Both participants saw themselves as

educators who were aware of racial issues in the classroom and who felt they had done work to

make their classrooms more equitable.

Data Collection Procedures

Seeing as this was a case study of the experiences of teachers engaging in narrative racial inquiry and the goal was to create thick descriptions of participant experience gathered from multiple in-depth data sources, I kept my number of participants rather low. The bulk of my data was gathered from the writing of my participants as well as observations and interviews with them. All participant data was saved to my personal Google Drive in folders and were only be seen by me. I will delete the folders in a reasonable amount of time. Further description of these data sources appears in the next sub sections.

The rationale behind using multiple methods to collect data was to gauge how the various methods interact/build off one another and to uncover what realizations of my participants come by engaging in each respective context (alone in their writing, in a group setting, one-on-one with me at the end of the study). What results were unique to my participants engaging in these questions about race alone in their writing? What results were unique to my participants working through these questions together as they discuss their writings? What results were unique to my participants having the opportunity to look back on their experiences in the study as a whole and reflect on them via the exit interview? For example, what they articulated in the first section of their personal narratives and first meeting may not have represented their feelings after completing the study in full. They may have come to more multifaceted/detailed/complex conclusions that they could not come to earlier in the study. The exit interview allowed the opportunity for my participants to tell the stories of their experience in the study in full after all of the writings and meetings were completed.

While the questions I mention above do not necessarily represent my primary research questions, they are questions I was be able to speak to in the results and discussion portion of this

dissertation by utilizing various data collection methods. Through collecting data in multiple

ways, I was able to better speak to any growth/transformation/shifting of ideologies that occurred

in my participants by the end of the study as well as speak to the specific environments from

which these transformative moments were born. Another reason for utilizing these three data

collection methods was the potential to validate data through triangulation. While the different

collection methods might have offered different results depending on the method utilized, I was

also be able to speak to the similar patterns I observed in the data across the three data sources

via triangulation.

Personal Narratives

I asked my participants to write in-depth personal narratives that consisted of four

primary sections. I offered participants some writing prompts to consider in order to ground their

writing in specific details. I summarize these sections below but offer the more detailed writing

assignments in Appendix C. These sections correlated strongly with the research questions listed

in Chapter I.

1. **How has my whiteness affected/contextualized my experiences on a personal**

   level?: In this section, participants recounted memories from their lives that affected

   the degree to which they became aware of their whiteness. They discussed why they

   chose to refer to these memories and how they affected their personal worldviews

   moving forward regarding race and how being White impacts them and the lives of

   others.

2. **How has my whiteness affected/contextualized my experiences on a professional**

   level as a teacher? In this section, participants connected these personal epiphanies

   regarding their whiteness to their experiences in the classroom. How is the education

system dominated by whiteness? How does being White affect the way they teach?

How does being White affect the way they interact with their students? How do they

think being White affects the way their students respond to them?

3. **How can I employ more holistic antiracist pedagogies?** In this section,

    participants described ways they sought not only to speak to White privilege in their

    classrooms, but also ways to challenge the White-dominated systems in place that

    allow for these privileges in the first place. How will they make whiteness visible in

    their classrooms? How will they challenge their White students to speak to race in the

    same ways they expect their students of color to speak to race?

4. **How did reflecting on my whiteness through writing and discussion impact me**

    personally and professionally? In this final section, participants discussed how they

    were impacted by the experience of reflecting on their whiteness and discussing these

    reflections with colleagues in our meetings after the writing of each section. Did they

    have any epiphanies in doing this work? Did they find anything that surprised them?

    Did the experience change the way they saw themselves in relation to the world

    around them? Did the experience change the way they thought about their role(s) in

    the classroom?

The writing of this personal narrative was scaffolded so that participants engaged with only one

section at a time. Participants were given each section of the personal narrative at the beginning

of the month and had three weeks to draft each section. I then took a few days to read that

particular section of each participant.

Race Inquiry Group Meetings

Participants then met with me as a group in the final week of the month to discuss their writing experiences and what they discovered. We met for anywhere between 40 minutes and an hour depending on how the conversation was unfolding. These group meetings were more conversational and less structured. Though the conversation flowed freely, we asked the same two questions as part of every group meeting:

1. What was your overall experience in writing this section?

2. Were there any specific epiphanies you came to in writing this section that you would like to share?

The purpose of holding these meetings was two-fold. First, it gave participants the opportunity to expand on the thoughts they articulated in their narratives. Secondly, it created an environment that functioned as a community of writers and antiracist practitioners. In allowing the participants to recount their stories together and share ideas, I wanted to observe the degree to which the group came to further develop a sense of shared goals and responsibilities as antiracist educators. I was interested to see how my participants articulated how the group meetings that occurred after drafting each section of their personal narratives impacted their subsequent writings and reflections.

Exit Interviews

I also performed an exit interview with each participant individually as this one-on-one context provided more data regarding how the participants characterized their experience in the study and what personal and professional revelations they came to. These exit interviews were fully structured where all participants responded to the same set of questions. I met virtually with

each participant for roughly 15 minutes each to conduct these interviews. Please see Appendix D

for this exit interview protocol.

Data Analysis Procedures

Each of my research questions were embedded in the sections/prompts of the personal

narratives that I asked my participants to write. Each conversation allowed for further

exploration of my research questions. In this way, I used inductive coding to code my participant

responses for each section of their narrative. I also used inductive coding to organize my

observation data and the exit interview data. Based on the coding of these responses from the

written narratives, group meetings, and interviews, I identified themes that helped provide thick

descriptions that characterized the degree to which my participants believed their whiteness

impacts them personally and professionally. I also aimed to provide thick descriptions that

characterize the degree to which my participants felt the process of writing personal narratives

and engaging in open discourse about their whiteness impacts them personally and

professionally.

Researcher Role

While the group meetings were facilitated by me, I was mainly there to observe and take

notes on how the conversations unfolded. In an attempt to stay as neutral as possible, I began

each meeting by asking "Are there any specific epiphanies or realizations that you would like to

mention that stemmed from your writing?" It was my participants' writing itself that best

protected the study from biased results. While I did give the participants various possible writing

prompts, I did not tell them they had to write about anything. It was their choice as to the

direction they took their writing. And since their conversations were based on what they wrote

prior to my involvement with them in the meetings, I played little part in affecting any of the

results. It is true that new data was collected from the transcripts during these meetings. But again, this data came from the building off and expansion of ideas they had already wrote about in their narratives and were simply fleshed out in more detail through their conversations together. I paid close attention to avoid guiding my participants in any specific direction during their discussions. I allowed the conversations to unfold between the two of them as I took notes on the various directions they took the conversation. However, I did share experiences of my own to create a deep sense of trust and community within the group.

Validity

I will be using Guba and Lincoln's (1985) criteria for the validity of qualitative data to discuss the validity of my data in this section.

Credibility

My data is credible as a result of my prolonged engagement with my participants. Not only have I known the participants as colleagues for quite some time, but I spent the summer months meeting with them multiple times over the course of hours to discuss their writing and other thoughts. The degree to which my participants trusted me positively impacted the trustworthiness of the data. My data also proved to be credible through triangulation. The major findings of the study came as the result of identifying common themes across the personal narrative data, group discussion data, and exit interview data.

Transferability

I provided thick and detailed descriptions of the lived experiences of my participants and of their experiences in the study. These thick descriptions allowed the reader to assess the degree to which any or all of the results of this study can be transferred to other contexts. "Context" in relation to this study has less to do with the place that the study took place and more to do with

the disposition of the participants at the beginning of the study. In other words, are the results of

this study transferable to other White educators who deem themselves racially aware and who

have a willingness to do this sort of work?

Dependability

I fully described all steps of the data collection and data analysis process and reported the

findings in a fully transparent fashion.

Confirmability

The sheer amount of qualitative data that was able to be triangulated from the three data

sources speaks to the confirmability of the data collected in this study. The personal narratives of

my two participants resulted in 38 pages of data. The transcripts from our four group meetings

resulted in 48 pages of data. Lastly, the transcripts of exit interviews I conducted with each of my

participants resulted in 8 pages of data. In total, 94 pages of data was collected from my two

participants.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation was the sample size of this study. A study of only two

participants is hardly a big enough sample to generalize a phenomenon. However, I do think

there is much to be learned from the in-depth descriptions of experience I was able to provide

through the case study design.

Another limitation of this study was the prior relationship I had with each of the

participants. I have worked with both of these individuals for quite some time, and we knew each

other fairly well. We spent time together in school and out of school on occasion, though we

never discussed anything related to the subject matter of this study in any personal way until this

study was conducted. These prior relationships can be seen as strengths of the study seeing as

they may have allowed for my participants to feel immediately more comfortable doing the work of the study with someone they trusted. However, these relationships could also be seen as limitations to the study. It is not lost on me that my relatively close relationship with these individuals could have impacted the honesty with which they wrote in their narratives and spoke during the group meetings and exit interviews. While I have no reason to suspect that my participants were not honest with me throughout the course of the study, it is worth noting here that it is possible that my prior relationship with the participants somehow impacted their responses.

Lastly, the length of time I had to conduct the study was a limitation. It certainly worked out well that my participants wrote and we met throughout the duration of the summer. I speak more to the benefit of this timing later in Chapter V of this dissertation. However, in an ideal situation, I would have been able to work with my participants throughout the duration of an entire academic year. Not only would this have given a broader view of their potential transformation, but it would have also allowed my participants to share stories from their classroom experiences as they continued to write their narratives and participate on our group meetings. Because the study was conducted over the summer, I was not able to assess the ways in which my participants were taking the work we were doing and applying it to their classroom contexts.

Ethical Concerns

In terms of ethical concerns, I do recognize the importance of creating an environment of trust within the group. In order for authentic writing and conversation to occur, I needed my participants to trust me and each other. I am fully aware that these writings and conversations that focus on race and identity are very personal and private in nature. I had to create an

environment that was characterized by reflection and growth, not judgment and

persecution. While I am a school leader at my place of work, I am not a direct superior to either

of my participants. In this way, there is not ethical concern present regarding this study

impacting my participants' teacher evaluations, promotions, etc.

Conclusion

This narrative inquiry study was completed from May through August with my two

participants. During that time, the participants wrote four sections of a personal narrative and met

with their participant peer and me for 40 minutes to an hour after drafting each section each

month. Each participant completed a 15-minute exit interview with me as well. The following

chapter speaks to my coding process which includes how I went about generating the themes that

became the major findings of the study. I identify possible biases in my coding process. I then

detail the results of the study by describing each theme that I formulated and the sub-

themes/codes that fell under each respective theme. I connect each of these themes directly to the

research questions of the study. I include a generous amount of participant quotes to support the

sub-themes, categories, and/or codes that came together to comprise the themes.

Chapter 4: Research Results

The data collected for this study consisted of the personal narratives of the participants (in four parts), the transcripts from our four group meetings, and the transcripts from each the exit interviews conducted with the participants. This chapter begins by describing the coding process I utilized to identify the major themes of the study as well as addresses potential biases in the coding of the data. I then define the major themes garnered from the data sources and offer detailed interpretations of these themes. These interpretations include direct quotes from the participants themselves that support the themes being addressed. Some of these quotes have been edited not in the way of content but rather grammatically in order to provide for more fluid reading.

Description of the Coding Process

I coded the vast majority of my data by utilizing the process of descriptive coding. Saldaña (2011) defines descriptive coding as "primarily nouns that simply summarize the topic of a datum. This coding approach is particularly useful when you have different types of data gathered for one study, such as interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and documents" (p. 104). This coding type made the most sense for my study as I had three sources of qualitative data in the written narratives, group meeting transcripts, and exit interview transcripts of my participants. I also utilized in vivo coding which Saldana describes as "[coding] based on the actual language used by the participant. What words or phrases you select as codes are those that seem to stand out as significant or summative of what's being said" (p. 99). In vivo coding was also a good match for my study because of the vast amount of direct participant language that comprised the entire data set.

My first round of coding produced 40 descriptive and in-vivo codes. My second round of

coding included reanalyzing my first-round codes and developing larger categories that the codes

fell under. Off these codes and categories, I began to generate emergent themes that ultimately

made up the results of the data. When my analysis was complete, I ended up with one major

theme related to my first research question, two major themes related to my second research

question, two major themes related to my third research question, and one major theme related to

my fourth research question for a total of six major themes.

Addressing Bias in Coding

Specifically related to this study, I was concerned with what I was asking my participants

to write about. While I only offered "suggested" prompts to my participants, it is possible that

how I structured the prompts led my participants down a particular path in their narratives.

However, I did go to great lengths to try to create prompts for writing that were more wide open

so that I did not have as much of a hand in what they decided to write about or how they went

about writing. For example, in the first section of their narratives, I asked my participants to

recount their first memories of race. This is a far different question than asking them to recount

their first memories of being White. While it goes without saying that I was hopeful that my

participants would explore the intricacies of their whiteness, I did not want to *tell* them to write

about being White from the start. It turned out that both of my participants did not speak about

being White when they recounted their first memories of race; they instead recounted memories

that dealt with people of color. I also used a researcher journal where I memoed about my

thoughts after our group meetings as well as my experiences while coding.

Any qualitative study comes with a certain degree of researcher bias. The way data is

collected and how the results are interpreted is solely at the digression of the researcher. There is

bound to be bias when only one person's perspective is at the center of data collection and analysis. Ultimately, however, the amount of participant quotes that I offer in my results section provides a high level of transparency regarding how I went about interpreting the data. My goal in doing this was not to deny any bias at all, but rather to create thick descriptions of participant experience in order to foster a general trustworthiness regarding the way I used the data to generate the major findings of the study.

Theme Related to Research Question #1

The following theme and sub-themes were identified from the data sources in relation to my first research question: How does writing personal narratives about race impact how White teachers process how their whiteness affects their personal experiences? This research question focused on how my participants reflected on the personal implications of race in the lives and how they have processed their racial identity throughout the course of their personal lives.

Whiteness as a Barrier to Developing Racial Competency in Personal Life

This theme consists of the ways that my participants described various aspects of whiteness and how they acted as barriers to the development of their racial competency throughout the course of their personal lives. While I did not directly ask them to discuss barriers to developing their racial competency, this is a theme that developed from what they shared in their writing and conversations. Overall, this theme is characterized by an asserted general lack of awareness on the part of my participants in regard to their racial identity, a lack of awareness largely the result of being White.

Lack of Awareness

Throughout the course of the study, and regardless of the particular section my participants were working on, they consistently referenced a general lack of awareness regarding

their racial identity and issues of race as a result of being White. Alex wrote, "...the question of race is about as scarce as a rain cloud in the Sahara. Today I recognize my young life as one of distinct privilege: my lack of any awareness of race as a construct or issue was a gift given by my skin." More specifically relating to education, Alex wrote, "Because the ride was made for me, I was oblivious to this until recently. The fact that I was oblivious while others desperately tried to fit into "white schooling" furthers the point that our system from the foundation is built to keep white people in power and whitewash all else." Anna mentioned "Because of my whiteness, I have never had to worry about the daily oppression of racism in my home country and while traveling in the places that I went to." She also cited what she deemed to be the biggest mistake of her early teaching career. She said, "The biggest mistake I made as a young teacher was thinking race was irrelevant." It is clear through these representative statements that lacking an awareness to their own racial identity negatively impacted my participants' ability to develop racial competency in their personal lives. While they do not explicitly speak to a lack of awareness being a barrier, it goes without saying that being unaware of something does not allow one to address it. In this way, being generally unaware of their racial identity acted as a barrier to developing a deeper understanding of the implications of this racial identity.

Public Racial Life vs. Private Racial Life

The tension between the public racial lives and private racial lives of my participants and their families also impacted the degree to which my participants were able to develop racial competency throughout the course of their lives. Anna discussed at length the discrepancy between her parents' professional lives and personal lives regarding race. She said,

"No matter what job I held over the years at the hospital, one recurring theme that came up was that my mom was the "nice administrator" who always helped people. She didn't

bring up race for the most part in all the years we worked there together. However, in her

time working in maternal child health, there were abandoned babies that she always

talked about wanting to adopt. She always exclaimed how adorable the "chocolate"

babies were and how she wanted to bring them home to give them a better life. I'm not

sure if she was serious but she often repeated how "cute the babies that black people

made" were. Unknowingly and unintended, I believe now that this was a form of

"positive racism" where one implies that all members of a group have some positive

characteristic...I do remember that if my dad had been drinking alcoholic beverages, he

would occasionally say the phrase 'Black is beautiful, tan is grand but white is the color

of American' which my mom would scold him for (with a smile on her face) and every

time he would say it, I would remark to him how inappropriate it was but I would also

giggle... I remember really being confused by her comment because my mom always

seemed ok with people of different colors and races. Not only that, she was usually their

advocate… I feel like there is such a two-faced thing with everything... there was such a

double standard in in my parents like my dad's life."

Anna went on to say that witnessing her parents act in racist ways in private made her do the

same at times, particularly with her groups of White friends. She said, "I am ashamed to admit

that I also remember telling racist jokes myself. I feel guilty even typing about the jokes I

told...my White majority friend group was completely comfortable contributing to the oppression

of another through our jokes. It didn't even cross our minds that it was wrong." Alex echoed

these sentiments regarding the telling of racist jokes saying, "…How many of those jokes were

made in the company of White people? And unfortunately, whether it was a joke about being gay

or being Black or whatever, those jokes were made consistently in a group of friends where you

felt safe and comfortable making those jokes." This push and pull between their private and public racial lives negatively impacted my participants' ability to develop a positive racial competency.

"Not Racist"

The belief that they were "not racist" negatively impacted my participants ability to process their racial identity and develop a stronger racial competency. While growing up, Alex recounted feeling that "I'm fairly positive I'm not a racist so I don't have to do anything else. Like I already knew where I was and that was it... I think about my experiences in college and I was like I like hip hop music and hip-hop culture. I voted for Barack Obama. I can't be racist. It was like all these things I was like putting it in my mind that were reasons why I'm doing enough and it was never enough." While Alex tied his "not racist" persona to having friends of Color and engaging with what he deemed to be the culture of people of color, Anna believed she could not be racist because of being in a romantic relationship with a person of Color earlier in her life. She stated, "I'm not racist because I've loved someone who's not White." Believing that they were not racist created an obstacle for my participants to more fully see how their racial identity functioned in their personal world and in the world around them.

Impact of their Upbringing

My participants discussed the degree to which the way they were raised impacted their beliefs about race. These beliefs made it difficult for them to process their racial identity in more complex ways. Alex said, "I had ingrained beliefs, but I never had to actively use them. It was a textbook topic, not something I confronted daily." Anna discussed the difficulty of trying to rid herself of dangerous racial stereotypes that were taught to her throughout her upbringing. She said, "I don't know if this is from my upbringing, but I became aware that I had a tendency to

make racializations throughout my life and I have to work hard to get away from those

stereotypes when they pop into my brain." Being raised to think about race in a certain way (or

not at all) impeded my participants' ability to further identify what being White meant to them

and the people around them.

Growing Up in White Communities

According to Alex and Anna, growing up in predominantly White communities

negatively impacted their ability to process their racial identity. Anna wrote, "My entire

neighborhood was White, my school was predominately White, all of my friends were White,

everyone in my dance class was White and everyone I associated with was White. I'm sure I

must have seen people of color outside of my mom's work, but they were so scarce and not

anyone I knew so I have no memory of being aware of race in my younger years except for my

time spent at the hospital." Alex said, "I think it's also important to note I grew up in White

suburbia. Safe, clean, unrestricted… my entire life has been like this cocoon of suburbia and it

sheltered me from all the issues around race." Growing up in predominantly White communities

made invisible to Alex and Anna the greater complexities and implications of being White.

Whiteness as Protection

Both Alex and Anna spoke to the notion that being White provided them protection from

negative circumstances, particularly with police officers. Alex recounted being in the car when

his wife was pulled over by a police officer. He remembered, "He's like this is just a warning,

this isn't anything, don't worry about it. Just please drive the speed limit, get home safe, good

luck with your child is coming. That's my experience with police my entire life. And that's not

fair. And the other thing is, I've made it a point over the last two or three years when I see

anyone pulled over, I look to see who they are. Are they Black? Are they a minority in some way

shape or form? And it's got to be 75% minority. And that's just my personal experience of seeing

it, and it's a constant reminder of the privilege I enjoy." Anna recounted an even more shocking

story where she put her hands on an officer. She said, "I slapped a police officer in the face and

said cuff me, I've been a bad girl. I mean what would that have been like if I wasn't a White

girl?" Going through life dodging negative outcomes just on the basis of being White kept

hidden the implications of their racial identity.

<div align="center">**Themes Related to Research Question #2**</div>

The following themes and sub-themes were identified from the data sources in relation to

my second research question: How does writing personal narratives about race impact how

White teachers process how their whiteness affects their professional experiences in the

classroom? This research question focused on how my participants reflected on the implications

of their race in their professional lives and how they have processed their racial identity in

relation to their role as a teacher throughout the course of their careers.

Whiteness as a Barrier to Developing Racial Competency in Relation to Education

After reflecting about their own experiences in school and as educators, both Alex and

Anna came to see whiteness as a barrier to their ability to develop racial competency specifically

as it relates to education. The sub-themes out of this more overarching theme speak to my

participants' belief that the blanket of whiteness that shrouds American education did not allow

them to develop a positive racial competency as it related to their schooling and their role as an

educator.

Experiences as a White Student

Alex and Anna discussed how being White in school made it difficult for them to see any

connection between whiteness and education. Anna wrote, "I have the privilege of being fearless

because I have never had to experience discrimination in the classroom because of my race. I

didn't realize what challenges my students of Color had to negotiate in predominantly White

academic environments. My students of Color have no choice but to think about and understand

race on a daily basis and it was my white privilege that kept me from seeing this for so long."

Alex said, "Through my own education both in primary and secondary school, I never needed to

reckon with my whiteness because being White meant I was the baseline, I was the neutral. So

from my point of view being White did not affect the way I learn or the way I teach. I didn't ever

need to address my whiteness because it was a net zero from my perspective. In fact, as a White

man I have never in my life experienced a feeling of otherness." Seeing White as "normal" in

school did not allow Alex and Anna to develop racial competency as it related to education.

Whiteness as the Educational Standard

Alex and Anna spoke to how the education system being structured in a way that

positions whiteness as the educational standard has impacted their ability to develop their racial

competency as it relates to schooling. Anna wrote, "Whiteness dictates the standard to which all

other behaviors are evaluated…It's very discouraging to work in an environment where

whiteness and Western norms are so heavily valued and anything else is strongly resisted and

even made fun of at times." Alex further elaborated on Anna's point writing,

> Education is a vast historical construct of classism and racism. It has been structured in a
>
> way to establish whiteness as the baseline, "the normal," and thus also establish anyone
>
> else as an "other." Its design allows the maintaining of the status quo. We don't teach
>
> history, we teach white history. We don't teach English, we teach white English. We
>
> don't teach health, we teach white health. If you are not white, you are simply a
>
> passenger on a ride not made for you. Whiteness is a slow, thick mist that strangles

everyone in education and attempts to fit all colors, shapes, and forms into its single box.

It lays over education like a malaise of complacency lulling White educators and students

into the false belief that whiteness is average and not different."

Spending their time learning and teaching in a way that makes whiteness the "norm" of

education negatively impacted Alex and Anna's ability to see their racial identity as having any

impact on the way they were schooled or how they educated their students.

Feelings of Not Doing Enough

This overarching theme consists of my participants' feelings of not doing enough to

address their whiteness and/or racism in their school and/or classrooms and the reasons for not

going further in developing this racial competency as it relates to their school/classrooms. The

feelings and of not doing enough created a general lack of motivation to further develop their

racial competency. The sub-themes that follow highlight the more specific feelings related to not

doing enough to address their whiteness and/or combat racism in their school and/or classrooms

and the more specific reasons for not doing more on these fronts.

Passivity

Alex and Anna recounted times in their professional careers as educators where they felt

they were too passive in addressing their whiteness and/or racial issues in their classroom. Alex

wrote,

> I presented myself as an ally, a compassionate sympathizer, but I did not recognize my
>
> own whiteness was actually a barrier to many of my students. I think what scares me
>
> more than anything is to think that I have contributed to the damaging mindset that
>
> whiteness is normal and all else because of my lack of awareness…I am angry but more
>
> than that I am sad. I am angry I worked in silence perpetuating a lie of white normality

for so long. I am sad that I probably hurt students without knowing along the way…my

complicity throughout my life in keeping Whites in power frustrates me to my core.

Anna commented that "The more I talk about it, the more embarrassed I am that it is this way

and that I haven't fought harder for a collective acknowledgement of this issue… While I do feel

I am far ahead of my peers in my diversity work, I have fallen short by only fighting small

battles, by being inconsistent, by drawing a line when things get too uncomfortable and by

staying silent when I should've spoken up." These feelings of anger, frustration, embarrassment,

guilt, and regret that came as a result of Alex and Anna's passivity in the face of racial issues

pushed them away from developing their racial competency.

Discouragement

Feeling discouraged impacted Alex and Anna's willingness to do more in the face of

whiteness and/or racism. Alex talked about the size of complexity of the problem when he said,

"The problem is so vast, and it is hard not to feel powerless." Where Alex's feeling of

discouragement came from the vastness of the problem, Anna's came from the unwillingness of

her peers to see the problem at all. She wrote, "I wish my peers would take time rooting out their

biases and be encouraged to make changes but if I'm being honest, the last 16 years haven't

given me much hope that they will…I am working hard to use this as motivation to be

encouraged to do more, instead of discouraged because it's so challenging." Feeling discouraged

left Alex and Anna unmotivated to do the work necessary to develop their racial competency so

that they could better navigate issues of whiteness and/or racism in their school and/or

classroom.

Fear of Social Repercussions

A fear of social repercussions regarding the addressing of whiteness and/or racism resulted in both Alex and Anna feeling like they did not do enough. Anna remembered an experience she had with a good friend and colleague that shook her. She said,

I remember being in our school's theater after one of our performances started, when a black family came into the audience late after the show had started. As they were finding their seats, one of my dearest friends/dance teacher peers turned to me and said 'they're on colored people time.' I could feel the blood rushing into my cheeks, I was speechless, yet I am ashamed to say, I just got quiet. It was an opportunity for me to call her out on her racist comment, yet I didn't. How is it that after all the work I have done to improve my racial awareness, I still struggle to speak up and face my peers when they say something racist?

Alex spoke more generally saying that "I don't want to get so afraid of ramifications that may or may not exist that I don't fully commit to being an ally and an agent of change." Both participants discussed a fear of the social repercussions that kept them from engaging with racial issues in a way that may have further developed their racial competency.

Ineffective Prior Professional Development Trainings

Alex and Anna discussed the ineffectiveness of prior professional development trainings as a reason for not doing enough in their school/classroom in relation to addressing whiteness and/or racism. Anna talked specifically to ineffectiveness of the large group setting for professional development trainings. She said, "So I would say the antiracist work I've done in the past has probably been myself in a group of 10 to 60 people. And what I realized is you're not as accountable that way." Alex said, "And I think that for me has made [the study] so much more

valuable than anything else I've done any training I've had at school, whether it's in a group

setting or something I have to, you know, a video I have to watch whatever…that all just

scratches such a big surface…I don't think enough of that work was real, was honest, was scary."

Both Alex and Anna saw ineffective professional development trainings as deterrents from doing

more critical racial competency work.

Themes Related to Research Question #3

The following theme and sub-themes were identified from the data sources in relation to

my third research question: How does writing personal narratives about race affect the ability of

White teachers to develop more holistic antiracist pedagogies? This research question focused on

how my participants discussed ways they planned to implement more authentic antiracist

practices in their classrooms after having reflected on the implications of their racial identity

personally and professionally in the prior two sections of their narratives.

Combatting the Whiteness of Education through Teacher Development

Alex and Anna's responses regarding the ways they thought they could create more

authentically antiracist classrooms fell into two major themes. This first theme consisted of their

responses that included what they thought could be done in the way of teacher development to

prepare the teacher to create a more authentically antiracist classroom.

Importance of Deep Critical Self-Reflection

Alex and Anna spoke at length about the integral role they felt that critical self-reflection

plays in a teacher's ability to develop racial competency and thus better lead an antiracist

classroom. Anna discussed not being given the opportunity to do deep reflection in prior

professional development trainings saying, "And so, in a way I think part of the reason why I

brushed off aspects of it was because we weren't digging deep enough into it and it wasn't

personal and I didn't care." Alex echoed these sentiments saying, "But I don't think that they help us reflect enough… this process of looking back, looking at my experience today and then looking at the future really helped to build my perspective on what it means to be an antiracist teacher and what that means in a school."

Importance of Small Group Discussions

Connected to the necessity for deep reflection that Alex and Anna discussed, they also spoke to the benefit of reflecting on their racial identity and other issues of race in the small group setting. Anna said, "And I think in this small setting where we had this opportunity to do this with the three of us is really helpful because the only work that we've done before on this at our job has been in a huge group setting where we break away in small groups. But they're not that small, and it's not the exploratory work, you know, maybe 20% of the depth of what of the hundred percent we're doing here." Alex too mentioned the benefit of engaging in small group discussions saying, " I think that we would benefit a lot more from this kind of smaller scale reflective practice of thinking about okay, well, how has my whiteness impacted things?"

Creating Actionable Items

Alex and Anna discussed the usefulness of creating a list of actionable items or daily reminders to keep themselves honest as antiracist educators. Anna included the list of Peggy McIntosh's (1988) knapsack of White privileges. She found this list in doing her own research outside of our inquiry group and said that it is something accessible that she could look at to check her White privilege in the classroom. Alex made his own list of actionable items saying,

> I found myself trying to create really actionable items. Because I think, in a lot of my
> writing so far, I tend to lean towards more like ideological stuff and like it's these broad
> statements of like I need to do better, but it's never actionable. So what I found myself

leaning towards this time was what can I actually do, like, day to day, minute to minute to

be actively antiracist to support my students of all shapes and sizes and colors."

Combatting the Whiteness of Education in the Classroom

While in the theme described above Alex and Anna discussed what they felt could be

done in the way of teacher development to prepare teachers to create more authentically

antiracist classrooms, their responses that make up this theme consist of the strategies they

planned to implement in their classrooms in order to foster an antiracist learning environment.

Building Relationships/Creating Community

Alex and Anna noted how integral it is to build meaningful relationships with their

students and build a sense of community in the classroom in order to create an antiracist

classroom. Alex discussed the importance of being honest with his students in relation to race as

part of building meaningful relationships with his students. Alex said, "I know I can be an agent

for real change and understanding, and I can start by being honest in my classroom about my

own whiteness and all the things I don't know. If nothing else, my eyes have been opened to

what I don't know and what I have taken for granted. That knowledge or lack thereof is

invaluable to becoming a true antiracist teacher." Anna mentioned the critical nature of building

a classroom community stating, "As mentioned in the above lesson plan, identity charts can

'build relationships, break down stereotypes, and start to build classroom community.' I feel this

will really help me evolve into the teacher I need to be in TODAY'S world."

Giving Students Opportunities to Discuss Race

Alex and Anna discussed the importance of offering students opportunities to discuss

race in the classroom. Alex wrote, "I want to make sure that my students of all races are aware of

the historical construction and limitations of the education system. I want to provide them with

knowledge and tools to address and overcome the shortcomings of the education system as it has been constructed." Alex went on to discuss how he needs to offer more opportunities to discuss race in the classroom that go beyond the surface. He went on to say,

> Over the last couple of years my passivity towards racial topics has been brought to my attention. In front of my students, I would address topics, I would describe things as "messed up" or "wrong," but I wouldn't push further or ask my students to take into account their own experiences or race. I figured being a conscientious ally would be enough to show my Black students I understood and my White students what they should care about. That was never enough, and I have done a disservice to all of my students by thinking this way.

Anna discussed ways to offer these opportunities through the discipline of dance saying, "I imagine them watching all of the movement projects that each group comes up with. This would lend itself to important conversations and multifaceted expression amongst my students. It will also help them feel more comfortable expressing similar emotions that may come up for them in their daily experiences." She went further to discuss the importance of giving students the power in the classroom to address issues of race saying, "In addition to teachers, the students have the power to address bias and racism in the dance studio."

Theme Related to Research Question #4

The following theme and sub-themes were identified from the data sources in relation to my fourth research question: How does participating in group meetings rooted in the discussion of their personal narratives about race impact the way White teachers process their whiteness personally and professionally? This research question focused on how my participants discussed

the degree to which the act of writing impacted their ability to process their racial identity and its

implications in various areas of their lives.

Writing as a Way of Seeing and Being

This theme speaks to the many ways that Alex and Anna saw writing as a powerful tool

to strengthen their racial competency. The sub-themes of this larger theme highlight the myriad

of ways that Alex and Anna believe deep reflective writing helped them to find a higher sense of

seeing and being in regard to their racial identity.

Increased Awareness

Alex and Anna discussed a general increase in awareness regarding the impact of their

racial identity through the act of writing. Alex said,

> My ability wasn't there, because I wasn't aware. My awareness of my own racial identity
>
> didn't exist in a lot of ways…part of this experience for me has been really for the first
>
> time in my life grappling with my own racial identity. For me, understanding that I have
>
> my own racial makeup and, and then mindset to overcome and to think about and to
>
> always take into account. That was the biggest breakthrough, maybe of this entire thing
>
> for me.

Anna said, "And it also brought an awareness, personally, professionally and generally to how

big the problem is and how strong there is how important it is to do something about it."

Depth of Understanding

Perhaps above all else, Alex and Anna cited coming to a deeper understanding of their

racial identity and its impact on them and the people around them through the act of writing.

Anna said, "As a result of our intimate group setting and writing in depth about race in all

aspects of my life, I now understand my personal and professional relationship with race on a

deeper level and am therefore able to make more substantial strides in tackling racial equity

issues in my personal and professional life." Alex elaborated on Anna's thoughts saying,

> The discussions and reflections I have taken part in through this have helped me dig past
>
> my "I'm not a racist" surface mindset and to the care of my white passivity and
>
> privilege…I started this process as a passive-minded faux antiracist who had read some
>
> books and started to tweak the things I teach. I needed to sit down and get in my feelings
>
> through reflection and conversation in order to understand the scope of my own
>
> relationship with race and my own whiteness.

Anna spoke to getting beyond the surface that Alex referenced above when she said,

> ...but when I started writing them all down. And then one would spark. Oh yeah, this
>
> happened. And that happened I was like, I didn't even get to some of the things that
>
> sparked me to write about, but I was like amazed by how much there was and so it really,
>
> you know, I knew racism is an issue in the world, and other places, and maybe I thought
>
> in the institution I work at like there's things, but I guess I didn't realize how prevalent it
>
> was or didn't want to realize how prevalent it was in my life… so, that in addition to
>
> being able to explore it more deeper than I ever have in the past. I also realize the power.

Alex spoke to this depth of experience further saying,

> And I think this process of writing down and really combing through my mind of my
>
> experiences with race has gotten me to a different level of understanding. It has allowed
>
> me to be honest in a way that I'm not normally honest… So, the act of writing in this kind
>
> of long form allowed me to be honest, and I think I called it at some points a reckoning
>
> like I was able to really grapple with my own feelings on race, my own thoughts on race
>
> and really think about how much I don't think about race when I should

Writing Created a Sense of Permanence/Reality

Alex and Anna spoke to how the act of writing created a sense of permanence that offered them more clarity in terms of seeing how their racial identity impacts themselves and the people around them. Anna said,

I think that things when they exist in your heart, emotions and like your head. No one has to know about them, if that makes sense or like, they can always live there and that safe zone. But it's more of like a literal existing thing when I take those thoughts out of my psyche and put them on paper, or in a computer, or like it makes it something that is real and brought into my conscious mind and not just, you know, only in my individual body, if that makes sense. So, I mean, it's in a way, it's like it's almost like I have all those thoughts and realizations in my hand. You know like holding it. And it's not just floating around in there and never dissected. Like I never tried to understand it. So, by taking it out, it helps me. It informs me in a way it wouldn't have informed me.. I think the biggest epiphany personally for me was that I'm sure I knew I had some work to do. But I didn't realize the extent of work for me on a personal level on a professional level but just generally how much the how much work there still is to do... it made it real for me.

Alex too spoke to the feeling that writing made his realizations more concrete. He said,

It makes me think about how many epiphanies I've had over the course of my life. And I've had so many. But the difference between most of them and a couple of them is making them real, because I have these fleeting epiphanies that I'm like, I understand something for a moment and then if I haven't written it down or done something with it, it goes away and if you ask me in a day or a week or whatever, I won't remember that epiphany. This process helped me to make concrete. Many epiphanies about race that

normally would have been fleeting thoughts. And, you know, that has to make me a

better person, a better educator and help me and my students and anyone else…I'll have

these, these moments of clarity. But a lot of the problem for me is remembering them. A

lot of them happen. I have this like beautiful moment of like clarity and then it fades

away. So the act of writing for me makes things a little more permanent. It allows me to

slow things down and really go over the ideas and make that breakthrough that can be

more permanent, so I don't just have that thought and then it fades away and then like two

days later and like I had a really good thought on this topic but it's gone now. No, I feel

really confident that these changes that I'm making in my mindset. And my

understanding of race and whiteness are far more permanent because of the writing

process.

Writing as a Tool of Accountability

Alex and Anna discussed how the act of writing and seeing their thoughts on paper made

them feel like they needed to hold themselves more accountable in regard to their racial identity

and other issues of race in their personal and professional lives. Alex said, "And I think this

process has allowed me to see actual methods for accountability that I don't just have...I shouldn't

just cruise and assume that I'm doing enough." Anna spoke to the overwhelming feeling that

came with reading all of the issues of race that surround her saying,

But then, like kind of this epiphany of being like, okay, all these things are happening

professionally around me and by not speaking up I'm just part of the problem. And I have

to do some work to figure out how I can, you know, be more inclined to speak up be

braver to speak up, and more equipped to speak up…

Writing as a Tool to Organize Thoughts

Alex and Anna talked about how writing gave them a structure to organize their thoughts. Anna said,

> The act of writing in this case, brought these occurrences to the forefront of my mind and organized my thoughts and feelings in a way that I am now able to better use them to inform my life in the future. You know, and it organized my thoughts in a way to understand the whole picture. I understood bits and pieces of it before, but I didn't realize.

While Alex never mentioned the word "organization specifically," he too spoke to the general notion that writing allowed him to see a fuller picture that he would not have otherwise seen. He said, "And I got to, you know, write it down and edit it and then go over it and like what am I missing. And that, that just it's such a different process."

Writing as Empowerment/Motivated to Action

Alex and Anna both discussed feeling empowered and motivated to action through the act of writing. Alex said,

> I feel so empowered by this process. I'm at the point where I don't want to write anymore. I want to enact change in my classroom, school, and life. I know I can be an agent for real change and understanding, and I can start by being honest in my classroom about my own whiteness and all the things I don't know. If nothing else, my eyes have been opened to what I don't know and what I have taken for granted. That knowledge or lack thereof is invaluable to becoming a true antiracist teacher.

Anna spoke to not only feeling more motivated and empowered to act through the process of writing, but she also spoke to how she feels more prepared to address issues of race in her personal and professional life. She said,

I also feel I am more prepared and more motivated to speak up in ways I have been

unable to do in the past. From all my soul searching, research and the work that these

writings allowed me to do, the importance of doing right by every person really revealed

itself to me and inspires me to do better. Just because I am not directly harmed by racism,

I truly understand the importance of fighting for those that are. I still have so much to

learn and so much more to do but I am so thankful for the insight and tools this

experience has given me. I feel so much more prepared and inspired to actively take a

stand against racism.

Benefits of Small Group Discussions

Alex and Anna spoke to the benefits of discussing their writing in small groups. Alex spoke to

the value of hearing other people's perspectives saying,

The beauty of the discussion aspect of it was hearing that secondary perspective on the

same topic opened up doors in my mind that were forgotten that I had no idea. I could

connect different things. Until, Anna would talk about something and all of a sudden a

light bulb again. These epiphany moments again would happen where it was like, 'Oh,

yeah, my whiteness is also impacting this aspect' or 'my experiences as a child really did

create this formative thing in my head that whiteness isn't a race and that I'm just normal

and average.' And I had all these epiphany moments, these aha moments after writing

because of the discussions we had.

Anna spoke to how the small group discussions allowed her to feel less alone in some of the

negative feelings regarding racial issues that she revisited through writing about her memories.

She said,

Well, I think it helped me to understand that I wasn't alone...you know, there's a shame

associated with things and decisions and thoughts you've had in my upbringing and past

and racism around me. But that I'm not alone that, you know, a lot of us have experienced

that. All of us has experienced it in some way, and that it's not about blame, it's about

understanding where things come from…so that really helped me and it validated my

feelings, you know, to be able to share it with people who were receptive in conversation

and who were willing to go beyond those lines again, like, you know. I think in the past

some of the discussions I've had are very surface level and safe. And since the people that

you know, you and Alex, when I was talking to you were willing to go past certain lines

and past surface level, and talk really honest, and it was, you know, an intimate small

group.

She also spoke to how the small group discussions made her feel more accountable. She said,

This is the first time I did antiracist work in a small/intimate group and as a result-there

was no way to hide from the work that needed to be done. I couldn't avoid the hard

questions because there were only two of us answering them. I knew that discussion

would follow within our group and that I would make up 1/3rd of that discussion. I think

this was key in motivating me to examine my relationship to race so intimately and

thoroughly rather than only on the surface like I had done in my past work.

Summary of Results

The extensive qualitative data gathered from this study resulted in a rich and detailed

descriptions of the experiences of the participants. The results of the data analysis show that

engaging in the process of narrative writing and participating in group discussions about their

writing positively impacted my participants' ability to process their racial identity. Data related

to the first research question bore out the theme of "Whiteness as a Barrier to Developing Racial Competency in Personal Life." Participants cited the many ways that being White negatively impacted their ability to process their racial identity throughout the course of their personal lives. A discussion of the invisibility and normalization of whiteness was clear here, two direct ties to one of my theoretical frameworks in critical whiteness studies. These two concepts were also highlighted in the first theme that came from the data collected in relation to the second research question: "Whiteness as a Barrier to Racial Competency in Education." Here, the participants discussed the degree to which whiteness is seen as the educational standard, a standard that remains largely invisible and was to them as students. This impacted their ability to process the impact of their racial identity as they became educators. In the second theme out of the second research question, "Feelings of Not Doing Enough," the participants commented on the many ways they were deterred from exploring their racial identity as educators including a feeling of guilt that came with being passive on racial issues and a fear of backlash from peers.

The data related to the third research question resulted in two themes: "Combatting the Whiteness of Education through Teacher Development" and "Combatting the Whiteness of Education in the Classroom." In relation to the first theme, the participants discussed various ways that they felt teachers could go about becoming more authentically antiracist educators which included the importance of engaging in deep reflection, discussing their thoughts in small groups, and creating lists of actionable items/daily reminders. In relation to the second theme, the participants shared the ways they go about creating a more equitable and antiracist environment for their students in the classroom through building relationships, creating a sense of community, and giving students the opportunity to discuss race in the classroom. Lastly, the theme of "Writing as a Way of Being and Seeing" resulted from the data collected in relation to the fourth

research question. The participants spoke at length about how the act of writing positively

impacted their ability to process their racial identity by increasing their awareness, providing a

deeper reflective experience, better organizing their thoughts, creating accountability, and

motivating them to action. They also spoke to the benefits of talking about this writing in small

groups and how these discussions came to strengthen their racial competency as well. In short,

these results align with my theoretical framework of critical whiteness studies as specifically

applied to the field of education as they show the positive impact that can come from White

teachers deeply examining their racial identities.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the coding processes that accompanied the analysis of my

participant data. A thorough description of the experiences of the participants was crafted

through the presentation of the results that included detailed quotes from each participant. The

quotes were tied directly to various themes that came from the data and to the research questions

that guided the study. Chapter V will discuss the results in more detail and include how the

results can be used to assert implications for theory, practice, and policy. I will also make

suggestions for future research based on the results of the study, provide a further discussion of

the limitations of the study gleaned upon completion, and outline goals for a potential

professional practice product that stem from the results of this study.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

This study explored the ways that writing personal narratives about their racial identity and engaging in small group discussions about this writing impacted the ability for two White educators to strengthen their racial competency. The participants began by writing about the implications of their race in their personal lives. They then transitioned to applying these experiences to their professional lives as educators. After considering these personal and professional implications, they then wrote about ways that they thought they could take these realizations and use them to create more authentically antiracist pedagogical practices. Lastly, the participants discussed the impact that writing had on their ability to increase their racial awareness and strengthen their racial competency. This chapter discusses implications for theory, implications for educator development, the limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, outlines goals for a potential professional practice product that stem from the results of this study, and the overall impact this study had on me as the researcher.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study as they relate to theoretical implications correlate with the frameworks discussed in the literature review. Major theoretical concepts out of the field of critical whiteness studies were discussed by my participants in their personal narratives, group discussions, and exit interviews. My participants also spoke to the power of racial self-inquiry as well as the transformative power of writing in general. The implications for these theoretical dispositions will be discussed further in this section.

Critical Whiteness Studies in Education

My participants spoke to many of the central concepts of critical whiteness studies throughout the course of the study, namely the invisibility of whiteness, the normalization of

whiteness, White supremacy, and White privilege. These concepts had implications for my

participants in their personal and professional lives.

The Invisibility of Whiteness

As discussed in the literature review, the field of critical whiteness studies focuses

heavily on the invisible systems and structures that support White supremacy. Because whiteness

is purposefully made to stay invisible in order to maintain a largely unquestioned dominance, it

makes sense then that what it means to be White and the implications of whiteness often remain

invisible to White people as individuals. Alex and Anna spoke to this notion throughout the

course of the study. In nearly every piece of writing and group discussion, they spoke to having a

complete lack of awareness regarding their racial identity and its impact on them and the world

around them. In short, they spoke at length to the invisibility of whiteness; in being White and

enjoying its privileges, what it actually meant to be White remained invisible to them.

I do want to challenge this idea of the invisibility of whiteness, however. While it is clear

that Alex and Anna did not do much critical thinking about their whiteness throughout the course

of their lives, I am not so sure that this means that whiteness and its implications were always

invisible to them. It is clear through their discussion of moments from their past that Alex and

Anna were able to identify and discuss at length instances where whiteness acted as a negative

force in their lives and in the lives of people they interacted with. There is no doubt that the act

of writing about these moments helped them to name issues of whiteness that they otherwise

would not have analyzed. I will discuss this in more depth a bit later. However, I am also hard-

pressed to believe that these issues were completely invisible to them when they occurred.

There is a difference between invisibility and willful ignorance. Alex and Anna even

spoke about thinking about the negative implications of whiteness at the time that some of the

events of their lives occurred. They just seemed to stop thinking at a certain point and moved on.

In this way, issues of whiteness were not invisible to them. Like Baldwin said, White people

have "set up in themselves a fantastic system of evasions, denials, and justifications, which

system is about to destroy their grasp of reality, which is another way of saying their moral

sense" ("The White Problem," 1964, as cited in Watson, 2013 p. 15). Evasions, denials, and

justifications are deliberate actions; they are not passive brushes with an invisible whiteness.

Alex and Anna discussed frequently the evasions, denials, and justifications they enacted in

order to *keep* the implications of whiteness invisible to them. It turns out that the implications of

whiteness were very much visible to Alex and Anna, and they worked rather hard to force them

into invisibility. When seen in this way, the very active role that White people play in creating

the illusion that whiteness is invisible makes the idea of the invisibility of whiteness all the more

offensive to people of color who see the very visible implications of whiteness in their lives on a

daily basis through their lying outside the boundaries of whiteness.

The Normalization of Whiteness

Intimately connected to the notion of the invisibility of whiteness is the concept of the

normalization of whiteness. As discussed in the literature review, the normalization of whiteness

is the phenomena where whiteness is used as the reference point for what is deemed "normal" in

any particular context. Alex and Anna spoke to the normalization of whiteness in their personal

lives, speaking again to their lack of awareness of their racial identity because they always saw

being White as just "normal." However, as they became a bit more racially aware and entered the

field of education, they saw how the schooling system also uses whiteness as the baseline for

curriculum, assessments, pedagogy, and other educational activities. For example, Anna noticed

that the dance curriculum privileged Western dance technique and that any suggestion by her to

expand the curriculum to more diverse forms of dancing were quickly shot down. Her peers saw Western dance as the "normal" and "correct" way to teach students proper dance technique.

Keffrelyn D. Brown speaks to these issues in her book *After the At-Risk Label: Reorientitng Educational Policy and Practice* (2016) where she demonstrates how the notion of educational "at-riskness," is a term often disproportionally reserved for students of Color. Brown artfully shows how those students who fall outside the confines of educational normalcy (White, middle-class, etc.) are stigmatized as "other" and made inferior through an assumed level of ability based on comparing the student to the baseline of whiteness. Alex and Anna highlighted the normalization of whiteness in education along curricular, pedagogical, and disciplinary lines as they discussed their experiences in being educated and in being educators.

Perceived "Wokeness"

Alex and Anna were not at a ground zero position when they entered this study. Both participants cited that they had thought about their racial identity and how it impacts their classrooms prior to being in the study. However, by the time the study ended, they were not as far along in their racial identity development as they had previously assumed. In other words, they found themselves to be much less "woke" than they initially believed. Merriam-Webster now has an entry for the slang term: "aware of and actively attentive to important facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice)." This definition is useful to describe Alex and Anna prior to the writing and discussion of their personal narratives. While they consistently admitted that they had more work to do, they also described feeling like they were more racially aware than that of many of their peers. However, by the end of the study, they discussed how "they felt like they were doing the work" but it was not until writing their

narratives and engaging in the group discussions that they realized how little work they had actually done.

Alex and Anna wore their "wokeness" as a badge of honor. Anna specifically saw herself as the "wokest" member of her department because of her experiences in other countries, learning about African dance, taking a class on James Baldwin, and dating a person of Color. Alex also admitted that he saw himself as a woke ally in more performative ways like listening to hip-hop music, having friends of Color, and voting for Barrack Obama. In this way, these personal experiences led Alex and Anna to feel like they were in a more racially aware position when they began teaching; they felt like they had less work to do than peers of theirs who did not have the experiences that they did. It was not until writing at length that they realized the surface-level nature of their racial awareness. I will discuss this idea of "liberal woke teachers" in a bit more detail later on in my suggestions for future research.

White-on-White Abuse

Alex and Anna talked about abuse or the fear of abused suffered at the hands of members of their White community which deterred them from continuing to build their racial competency throughout the course of their lives. Thandeka (1999) discusses the abuse and fear of abandonment suffered by White children as they learn to be White. She posits that children learn to be White through the tutelage of their parents and other White community members. This learning ultimately comes with the threat of being abandoned by their White communities which results in the child learning to maintain systems of whiteness for the sake of self-preservation. In short, Thandeka asserts that it is the desperate need to belong to their

White communities that results in White people perpetuating White supremacy and White

domination.

      The threat of abandonment by their White communities and the impact this had on

their ability to further develop their racial competency was discussed by Alex and Anna.

While not explicitly stated, Alex talked about his wife's beliefs that were contrary to his at

times regarding race and education. He said that his experience in the study made him see the

importance of opening a dialogue with her rather than just letting their differences go for the

sake of keeping the peace. Anna offered many instances of either being abused or fearing

abandonment by her White family and teaching peers. She discussed how her parents did not

support her relationship with a man of Color when she was in college and how this impacted

the relationship and her mental state. In her teaching career, she discussed many examples of

her peers being explicitly racist. However, Anna rarely addressed these issues with her peers

because she was afraid of how they would treat her as a result. Lastly, Anna talked about how

her peers were consistently dismissive of her suggestions to teach non-Western dance forms.

This resulted in her no longer trying to change the curriculum or doing smaller, less visible

projects with smaller groups of students.

      While not discussed by Alex and Anna, it is worth noting in this section that White-on-

White abuse has become prevalent in the antiracist community in recent years. As a result of

the presidency of Donald Trump, antiracist activists in a variety of fields have come to the

forefront in much more public ways to create environments of racial justice. However, in

taking on these antiracist causes and developing their antiracist identities, there are White

antiracists who have made a habit of abusing other White antiracists for not being antiracist

enough. Professor Loretta J. Ross defines this phenomenon as "call out culture." She says,

It's the tendency, which is unfortunate, for people to want to publicly shame and

humiliate people. And it's based on what they say, or what they look like, or what they

wear, or who they're hanging out with, or who they agree or disagree with. It's

attaching labels to people without really doing any kind of nuance (Scheimer &

Chakrabarti, 2020).

She goes on to say that when people call out each other when they have the same goals as part

of a movement, the movement becomes more like a cult. She says,

…so when we indulge in the callout culture within our own movement, mainly

because someone uses a word that we don't agree with, or they actually think that you

should be focusing on the climate, while I'm focusing on reproductive justice, while

I'm focused on racial justice, you're really trying to turn a movement — which is many

different people thinking different thoughts and moving in the same direction — into a

cult, which is many different people thinking the same thought and moving into a

direction. And so we are a movement. We're not a cult. So I describe as a cult both

places that don't allow dissent, that don't allow difference, that don't allow challenges,

and don't even welcome critical skepticism (Scheimer & Chakrabarti, 2020).

Tim Lensmire (2017) discusses this issue of antiracist call out culture as well. He writes,

I worry that too much of the work of white anti-racists in teacher education and

educational research doesn't actually escape this problem. Too often, instead of

mobilizing other white people for anti-racist action, we use them, scapegoat them, to

create our own anti-racist identities. I will let you sort out what proportion of anti-

racist work done by white people with other white people is scapegoating ritual; and

what proportion of this scapegoating –ironically, tragically – is driven by fears of

abandonment and desires for belonging (p. 9).

Again, while these issues of White antiracist on White antiracist abuse were not explicitly

discussed by Alex and Anna, it is an issue related to the ones they discussed in their narratives

and conversations. I will discuss this phenomenon in more detail in my suggestions for future

research as well.

Racial Self-Inquiry

The implications of engaging in racial self-inquiry to strengthen the racial competency

of the White educators in my study were rather apparent. In line with Johnson's (2017) theory

of racial storytelling, Alex and Anna's dive into their racial past allowed them to make clear

connections between their racial identity and the decisions they made and will make in the

classroom. The experiences of Alex and Anna in this study also spoke to Michael's (2015)

ideas about the importance of asking difficult questions of the self over an extended period of

time. While Alex and Anna engaged with these questions over the period of only four months,

this was the longest duration of time that they ever engaged with queries of racial identity and

participated in sustained conversations about racial identity. Alex and Anna both spoke to the

impact of thinking about these issues in a consistent way over time. They said this created a

practice for them that they hope will become a habit of reflecting daily about the ways in

which their racial identity impacts their classrooms.

The Transformative Power of Writing

Writing a story from one's life forces the writer to organize the details of the narrative in

a way that simply thinking about the story or retelling the story orally does not allow. When I

think back to stories from my life, nothing in my brain is terribly linear. There are linear

moments, but when it comes to thinking about a story or telling a story aloud, my brain quickly

filters through a series of moments, blips on the radar of my life, and the resulting story is what I

made of those moments at that particular time. Chances are, because there would be no record of

what I thought or said about the story, the next time I told it, it might look or sound quite

different. Writing forces the writer to create a cohesive story that at least for that particular piece

of writing, remains unchanged.

The second feature of writing that lends itself to transformation for the writer is that there

is a certain permanence to writing that is not present in thinking or speaking. I have had too

many fleeting epiphanies in my life to count. I witness something and I tell myself I will

remember it because it has changed me; I will act differently and see the world more clearly

from here on out because of this epiphany. But no sooner do I think about these things that I find

myself making the same mistake or going back to my old ways. However, in the random

moments that I have written about these epiphanies, forced myself to put onto paper the degree

to which I have been moved, had a change of heart, saw the world in a new way, there was a

much better chance that I remained transformed. Where thinking or speaking about a moment

that changed me often results in a temporary transformation, writing about a moment that

changed me (even less formally as in journal form) resulted in a more permanent transformation.

If I ever forgot about what this moment did for my outlook on living, all I needed to do was look

back at my writing. Writing grounds the plot points of one's transformation. It makes them more

real and unable to be ignored.

Lastly, the act of writing forces the writer to sit with their thoughts much longer and

consider them more critically than the act of thinking or speaking. Having to work through how

one wants to convey a story in writing is a laborious task, one that inevitably results in having to

sit with one's thoughts a lot longer than most people want to. I am ashamed at the number of times that I have shot off at the mouth with an ill-pondered thought, the implications of which I had no idea. As I look back on my life, I often wonder about things I may have never said (or may have said in a different way) had I written them down first. Conversely, I often think about writing things I would never say aloud and have no interest in thinking about how they impact my life and the lives of people around me. While writing these things out might be a painful and scary process, it is in the physical act of writing a part of a story, erasing that part of the story, rewriting that part of the story, having to sit longer with that part of the story, and ultimately committing to the page that part of the story that a more fully-realized mirror to the self is created.

Writing was the main tool utilized by Alex and Anna to engage in racial self-inquiry. In this way, there were also theoretical implications with regard to the act of writing as a means to strengthen the racial competency of White teachers. The following sections detail how the act of writing impacted Alex and Anna's ability to process their racial realities in relation to the features of transformative writing described above.

Increased Awareness and Understanding: Writing as a Way of Seeing

Writing in a critical and in-depth fashion about their racial identity allowed Alex and Anna to see the impact of their racial identity in their personal and professional lives in ways they had not seen before. In line with Harris (2004), Alex and Anna came to a deeper understanding of the impact that their race has on their personal and professional worlds through the written word. The results of this study are also supported by the work of Raab (2014). Raab discussed how writing memoirs about their experiences resulted in bringing a deeper meaning to the lives of her participants. Alex and Anna spoke to this idea throughout the course of the study.

They asserted that they would never have made the connections about their lives that they did if they had just thought about their experiences instead of writing about them. Their writing was a cite to better organize experiences from their lives which allowed them to make connections between experiences they had not made before. These connections unveiled to them deeper meanings for their lives as their racial experiences came to present themselves as much more nuanced than they had originally thought prior to putting pen to paper. I call this increased awareness and depth of understanding about the implications of their racial identity as an enhanced way of seeing their worlds and how they interact with them as White people.

Increased Motivation to Act: Writing as a Way of Being

Where increased awareness and understanding correlates to a way of seeing, acting on this newfound awareness and understanding results in a new way of being. The increased motivation to act on their discoveries of self was a result of Alex and Anna's writing process. Yagelski (2009) notes the potential for writing to be an agent of individual and collective change for the writer if done authentically and honestly. Both Alex and Anna spoke to an excitement for what comes next once the study ended. They wanted to take what they learned about themselves personally and professionally regarding their racial identities and apply this new knowledge to their lives in order to create change in their lives and in the lives of the people around them, namely their students. Good teachers are change agents. They come into the profession believing they can change the students in their classrooms and thus change the world. Alex and Anna are good teachers who wholeheartedly believe this as well. However, they came to realize through their writing that one cannot change the world if they do not do the hard work of changing themselves. The disciplined practice of constant self-reflection is required in order to consider the ways in which one needs to change as an individual so that they can change the world.

Personal narrative writing allows the writer to come to better ontological cognizance. This personal writing gives the writer the ability to see who they are, why they are, what they want out of life, and what one might need to change in order to attain this. It is only possible to change the world if one changes oneself as an individual first. Alex and Anna came to realize this, and it was the act of writing that allowed them to think more deeply about ontological shifts that could lead to change outside of themselves.

Implications for Teacher Development

The results of this study also spoke to implications for teacher development. Alex and Anna made many comparisons to their experiences in the study to prior teacher development trainings. This section further details why Alex and Anna felt their experiences in the study were more beneficial to their development as educators in comparison to their participation in other trainings on racial identity in the past.

The Time to Write: The Use of Prolonged Reflective Writing

In many professional development trainings for teachers, there is little time to reflect in meaningful ways. Because these trainings are often expensive, school administrators try to get as much "accomplished" as possible in these trainings. Many times, the result of this is a surface-level training marked by surface-level teacher reflection at best. Not to mention that the teachers sitting in these trainings are in the midst of a school year where they are most likely behind on lesson planning, grading, and other areas of teacher preparation. This combination of rushed training and a group of teachers whose minds are elsewhere makes for an experience that lacks depth and does not promote authentic change.

Alex and Anna wrote and spoke about how beneficial it was to them to have the time to engage in the writing process in a thorough way. Because we began the study at the end of the

school year and carried it through the summer, Alex and Anna felt much more capable of

dedicating meaningful time to their writing and our conversations. They did not feel rushed or

overwhelmed because they had a month to write each section of their narrative without having to

focus on their teaching at the same time. The results of this study were clear: engaging in

prolonged writing and discussion sessions over the summer benefited Alex and Anna in ways

that professional development during the school year did not. I argue that giving teachers the

opportunity to do trainings on racial identity over the summer will result in a more meaningful

experience for the teachers. Many teachers are required to attain a certain number of professional

development hours per year. If teachers could apply these summer hours to the school year, they

not only would have an incentive to use the flex professional development time that they attained

over the summer to prep, plan, or grade during the school year, but the result of doing the

training over the summer might result in a more authentic learning experience as well. I will

discuss this idea in my suggestions for further research later on in this chapter.

A Space to Share: The Use of Small Group Discussions

Not only is there little time afforded to teachers in many professional development

trainings, but there is also little opportunity to engage in meaningful small group discussions.

Yes, breakout sessions are a common trait of professional development trainings. But these

sessions run for 15 minutes at the most before teachers head back to the larger group. Teachers

are also often paired with faculty and staff members that they do not know well enough to be

vulnerable. Teachers may even be asked to engage in different small groups throughout the

duration of the session, so there is no way to build even a little trust with the same group of

people throughout the course of the training. These characteristics all come together to create

small group settings that lack authentic and meaningful conversations.

Alex and Anna discussed in great detail to the benefits of our small group discussions. They both liked that we had an hour or so slated for each meeting. Because our group was only three people, this allowed everyone's voice to be heard and responded to in authentic ways. They both said that the small group also created a sense of accountability that having this experience in a larger group would not have created. They knew that they were going to make up a third of the conversation and that they were going to be expected to speak to the writing that they did over the course of the month. Lastly, they felt that the environment we created as a group allowed them to be vulnerable and honest which helped lead them to a greater potential for personal change. This trust was not built in one session, however. This trust was built over time as we met more and more. This sustained time to meet with the same group of people is not typically a part of professional development trainings, but it was something that both Alex and Anna came to appreciate and cited as being integral to their development throughout the duration of the study. I will speak possible future research on sustained small group meetings later in this chapter.

Scaffolded Race Inquiry Groups

Teachers come to professional development trainings with a certain set of experiences and awareness regarding the topics being covered in the training. For example, some teachers may have already had the introductory training on the slate for that particular professional development day. This results in a waste of time for the teacher and a tough day for the presenter if the majority of the faculty and staff had done their training previously. This notion is no different for equity, diversity, inclusion, and racial identity development trainings.

In order for any training to be meaningful for the participants, the administration who books the training and the presenter must know their audience. The presenter needs to know what their audience already knows in order to respect the time of the teachers and create the most

meaningful experience. Alex and Anna spoke to how they felt we were not doing any surface-level work from the start, something they felt they did time and time again in prior professional development trainings. This was because I knew my audience. I knew the trainings Alex and Anna had done in the past and had a general feel for the knowledge they were brining to the study. The results of this study showed the benefits of scaffolding professional development training depending on what the teachers already know coming into the training. For example, if a staff of 200 teachers is about to participate in an introductory equity training, it might be worth figuring out who did similar trainings in the past and creating groups of teachers to do different activities based on their prior professional development experiences. We differentiate instruction for students, but we rarely do this for teachers in professional development trainings. I will discuss this as a potential area for future research later in this chapter.

Limitations and Challenges

With a study like this one that requires a generous amount of writing and time on the part of the participants, one might expect a limitation to be the degree to which participants would take the writing and conversation seriously. In other words, would the researcher receive qualitative data that could speak thoroughly to the experience of the participants? However, this was not the case in this study. The writing was honest, authentic, cogent, and thorough which allowed me to formulate thick descriptions of the experiences of my participants. As I stated in the discussion above, I argue that engaging with this work over the summer reduced the chances of thoroughness of qualitative data being a limitation of the study.

The greatest limitation to this study was the small sample size. Obviously, two participants do not provide enough data to make any generalizable claims. While this was not the goal of this study, I do understand that two participants may provide a limited view of the

research questions at hand. I also understand that the rich data I collected from these two

participants in particular could have been the result of where they were in the process of racial

identity development to begin with. Alex and Anna both admitted they had much more work to

do, but they were certainly further along in at least pondering questions about their racial identity

than others might have been. The results of this study might look very different if it was done

with participants who did not think much about these questions at all prior to being in the study.

Another limitation of the study might be my relationship with the participants. As stated

in Chapter III, I was not a superior to Alex or Anna, nor was I even a member of either of their

departments. However, I have known them for a long time, and we were friendly colleagues. In

many ways, I chose them for this reason. I knew that I would need to start the study with

participants who trusted me to a decent degree because of the tight timeline for the study. I

recognize that had I not had a prior relationship with my participants, I would have had to spend

a lot more time building trust. I also know that the quality of the data may have been impacted

had I selected participants who did not know me and thus, did not trust me as much from the

outset.

Suggestions for Future Research

My first suggestion for future research is to further investigate the efficacy of

professional development done with teachers over the summer. This could be researched

generally or be specifically related to the efficacy of professional development on racial identity

when done over the summer. If writing personal narratives is a part of the training, it would also

be useful to compare the quality of the narratives when written during the summer as opposed to

those written during the school year.

Aside from this suggestion regarding the timing of professional development, my other

suggestions for future research relate specifically to whiteness in education and partnering with

non-White communities in doing antiracist work in educational settings. I suggest further

research be done with White teachers who define themselves as "woke" or feel that they have

done a decent amount of work in the realm of racial identity development. How do the

dispositions of these teachers impact their ability to continue learning about their racial identity?

Secondly, I suggest that more research be done on the relationships between educators who

define themselves as antiracist. How do antiracist educators treat other antiracist educators and

how does this impact the culture of a school that is attempting to create an environment of

antiracism? I suggest further research be done on the efficacy of sustained White race inquiry

groups. By sustained I mean groups who meet over a long period of time, engage in critical

work, and whose members remain largely stable. What is the personal and professional impact of

White people who are a part of these more sustained race inquiry groups? I also suggest that

research more research be conducted regarding the impact that narrative writing might have on

strengthening the racial competency of pre-service teachers.

Lastly, I suggest that more research be conducted on the role that non-White communities

play in White educators doing antiracist work in their educational settings. While it is imperative

that White people take leadership roles in dismantling whiteness in education, it is also critical

for them to partner with non-White communities to do achieve their goals. Research on the

impact that partnering with non-White communities has on addressing whiteness in educational

settings is not only theoretically important but could also result in the creation of practical and

successful models for doing cross-racial antiracist work in various educational settings

Potential Professional Practice Product: Integration of Critical Reflection on White Racial Identity into Professional Development Training and Implementing District-Wide White Racial Inquiry Groups

White teachers must strengthen their racial competency through deep self-reflection in order to navigate issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and race in their classrooms. This reflection of the racial self allows White teachers to see the ways they are personally impacted by their whiteness and thus, how their whiteness affects all aspects of their classroom. As a potential professional practice product, I aim to incorporate this critical reflection of White teachers into the current equity, diversity, and inclusion professional development plan of my district as well as create White affinity groups across the district where White teachers reflect and discuss the impact of their whiteness. Below is a potential action plan to achieve the goals of this professional practice product.

Goals and Objectives

Mission

To make Whiteness and its impacts on education visible through deep reflections of the self and teacher pedagogies to foster an equitable and inclusive learning community.

Vision

1. Reflect deeply about the impact of race in the personal lives of White teachers

2. Reflect deeply about how the way race plays a part in the personal lives of teachers affects what and how they teach.

3. Off these reflections, have White teachers identify and implement antiracist strategies in the classroom and in the school.

Values

1. Uncover the invisibility of whiteness and systemic oppression in education by making conversations about race in the school the norm, not the exception.

2. Challenge the denial of white complicity in education by ushering White teachers to engage in personal and professional reflections about how they may unwittingly contribute to upholding these systems of oppression in their classrooms.

3. As a school, move beyond pedagogies of white privilege and develop more multifaceted antiracist pedagogies by asking teachers to be critical of the systems that allow for White privilege in the first place.

Goals

1. Assess current equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) professional development trainings and look for gaps in White teacher identity work

2. Develop reflective activities that ask White teachers to consider the impact their race has on their personal lives and the lives of their students

3. Implement these activities throughout the course of the year as part of the greater EDI professional development trainings

4. Develop smaller White racial inquiry groups across the district that meet consistently and align with the mission, vision, and goals of the action plan.

5. Collect data from the EDI professional development training and race inquiry groups in order to measure the impact of the critical self-reflection on the lives of the White teachers and their classrooms.

Action Steps and Time Frame

JUNE 2022

Hold a meeting of the district EDI Committee where committee members brainstorm ways to add discussions/activities to EDI professional development that focus on strengthening the racial competency of white teachers. Members should take note of the importance of providing sufficient **time** for this authentic critical self-inquiry of White teachers. Committee should identify facilitators for professional development. A draft of this plan is due at the end of July.

JULY 2022

District EDI Committee reviews draft of EDI professional development plan. Further suggestions/alterations are discussed at this meeting. Final plan is adopted at the end of the month by the school board.

AUGUST 2022

First activities on White teacher identity occur during "Back to School Week" for teachers. Distribute survey at end of session.

SEPTEMBER 2022

District EDI Committee reviews survey results from initial White teacher identity session. The committee will use this data to better inform how to go about structuring the race inquiry groups for White teachers.

OCTOBER 2022

District EDI committee begins development of district-wide race inquiry groups for White teachers. The committee will create a call for volunteers and identify faculty and staff who would be interested in helping to create the groups and/or being a part of the groups.

NOVEMBER 2022:

District EDI committee meets with race inquiry committee to develop timeline for meetings, meeting activities, and participant survey.

DECEMBER 2022:

District EDI committee and race inquiry committee meet to adopt race inquiry group model. Schedule for meetings is sent out to participants prior to winter break

JANUARY 2023

First race inquiry group is held across the district. Meetings occur once per month until the end of the year. Summer meetings are offered but not required. Any summer meetings will count toward continued education hours.

MAY 2023

Survey is distributed to race inquiry group members across the district. Survey is due the first week in June.

JUNE 2023

District EDI committee and race inquiry group committee meet to review and assess survey results. Results are used to gauge the impact that participating in the race inquiry groups had on the White teachers personally and pedagogically.

Responsible Parties

Ultimately, the responsible party for this district-wide action plan is the superintendent of the district. The supervisor of professional development for the district will also play a pivotal role in rolling out the new professional development and race inquiry groups as the person in charge of organizing educational programs for teachers. However, all members of the district EDI committee and members of the race inquiry group committee will be responsible for the implementation of the professional development training and the running of the race inquiry groups.

Evaluation and Accountability Measures

There will be two evaluative measures distributed throughout the course of this action plan. The first will be a survey given after the initial professional development training that exposes White teachers to racial identity work. This survey will be used to gauge the initial impact of this work on the teachers. What did they think worked? What did not work? What resources are needed to improve the experience? Did they have any major epiphanies during the training? The results of the survey will be utilized to structure and develop the White race inquiry groups across the district.

The second evaluative measure will be a survey distributed to race inquiry group members at the end of their participation in the White race inquiry groups. This survey will be designed to measure the impact that being in the race inquiry groups and engaging in the various activities of the groups had on the White teachers personally and professionally.

Conclusion

I began this research journey as a result of being challenged by Jessica, one of my Black students. As I said to begin this dissertation, I was saddened by the thought of failing Jessica and so many others who looked up to me as an ally. But if I am being honest with myself, that sadness was not my initial reaction. My initial reaction was anger. "How could she challenge me this way when I am one of the only teachers sticking my neck out to do this work!" I thought to myself. "And I *am* doing the work," I went on in my head, quickly taking inventory of all the authors of Color and from diverse positionalities that I taught in this student's class. It was not until meeting with Jessica that my selfish, defensive anger turned to gratitude. She told me that she felt like I was one of the only teachers she had that she could push to be more cognizant about my impact as a White educator. Her email was not a way to call me out; it was a way to show me how much she trusted me. She said that it was her trust in me and in how she knew I would go about learning from my experience with her that made her feel comfortable sending the email in the first place. And she was right. I did go on a journey to learn more about White teachers like me who think they are doing the work but still have more work to do. White teachers like me who try to do the right thing but still make mistakes. White teachers like me who think they are impervious to the negative effects of whiteness because they teach diverse authors and talk about race in the classroom at times.

I wanted to learn more about White teachers like me, which is why I chose Alex and Anna for this study. I knew they thought highly of the equity work they did as White educators. I wanted to give them the opportunity to think even more critically about their race and its effects, just like I was forced to do through being challenged by my Black student. I saw so many of my feelings as a White educator who is trying to do antiracist work reflected in the writing and

conversations of Alex and Anna. I like to believe that through their writing and our group

meetings, Alex and Anna came to a better understanding of how their whiteness has impacted

them, continues to impact them, and will continue to impact them personally and professionally

for the rest of their lives. The space we created to discuss these issues of whiteness allowed Alex

and Anna to further strengthen a racial competency, a competency they thought they had a firm

grasp on but realized was not as firm as they thought. My hope is that this dissertation study

provides a model for doing racial identity work with White teachers, particularly those who saw

themselves as racially-conscious White educators in the first place.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

Thank you for your consideration in being a part of my research study. This study is being

conducted through Kutztown University's Doctorate in Transformational Teaching and Learning

Program. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether

or not you want to participate in the study. The University requires that you give your signed

agreement if you choose to participate.

This study is being conducted by Paul Walsh

Title of the Study:

"Writing Through Whiteness: Using Personal Narratives to Strengthen the Racial Competency of

White Teachers"

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research study is to examine how writing personal narratives impacts the

way White teachers process their experiences of whiteness on a personal and professional level.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do three primary tasks:

1. Write a personal narrative where you investigate how being White impacts your
   experiences personally and professionally

2. Participate in group meetings where we discuss the discoveries made in your writing
   along with any other subjects that arise as a result

3. Participate in an exit interview where you will be asked to reflect on your experience in
   the study.

This study will take place over the course of roughly four months (approximately June, July, August, and September).

Risks or Discomforts, and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has the following risks and/or discomforts:

1. Any emotion that comes with the telling of personal stories that have impacted you

The benefits to participation are:

1. Engaging in what will hopefully be authentic and healthy personal reflection that results personal transformation and more sound antiracist pedagogical practices

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

Records will be kept private and will be handled in a confidential manner to the extent provided by law. In any report or presentation, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a research study participant. You will remain anonymous throughout the entirety of my study.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is:

Paul Walsh

Artistic Director of the Literary Arts

321 East Third Street

Bethlehem, PA 18015

pwalsh@charterarts.org

(610) 751-2977

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later regarding the research

study, you may contact the researcher listed above. If you have any questions or concerns about

the rights of research participants, please contact the IRB Committee at Kutztown University at

484-646-4167.

Future Research Studies:

 Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information or identifiable

biospecimens and that, after such removal, the information or biospecimens could be used for

future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without

additional informed consent from you if this might be a possibility.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the information described above and have received a copy of this information. I have

asked questions I had regarding the research study and have received answers to my

satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

_____

                    Signature of Participant   Date

APPENDIX B

PERSONAL NARRATIVE SECTIONS AND POSSIBLE WRITING PROMPTS

SECTION ONE: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON RACE (HOW HAS MY WHITENESS AFFECTED/CONTECTUALIZED BY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES?)

The focus of this first section of your personal narrative will be on your personal experiences with race throughout the course of your life. Please do not discuss your professional experiences just yet. You will focus your writing efforts on your professional life (your personal experiences certainly impact your professional experiences as well) in a subsequent section of your personal narrative.

You might consider some of the questions/prompts that appear below. This list is by no means exhaustive nor does it comprise of anything you *must* write about. Though, you may find yourself writing through all of the questions/prompts.

- Recount the first time that you remember recognizing race as a social construct generally.
  - Why did you remember this event and choose to write about it?
- Recount the first time you remember recognizing your whiteness.
  - Why did you remember this event and choose to write about it?
- Recount other events from your life that centered on race.
  - What was the event? Something you witnessed? Something you experienced? A conversation you had with someone?
  - What did you take away from these events? How did they impact the way you process/relate the world around you as a White person?
  - Why did you remember these events and choose to write about them?

SECTION TWO: PROFESSIONAL REFLECTIONS ON RACE (HOW HAS MY

WHITENESS AFFECTED/CONTEXTUALIZED MY EXPERIENCES AS A

TEACHER?)

In this second section of your personal narrative, you should try to connect your personal

experiences and epiphanies from section one regarding race and your whiteness to your thoughts

on education as a whole and your specific experiences in the classroom. You might consider

some of the questions/prompts that appear below. This list is by no means exhaustive nor does it

comprise of anything you *must* write about. Though, you may find yourself writing through all of

the questions/prompts.

- Is the education system dominated by whiteness? If so, how? What are the

  effects of this?

  o Think about all aspects of education here (discipline, curriculum,

    pedagogy, etc).

- How does being White affect the way you teach?

- How does being White affect the way you interact with your students?

- How do you think being White affects the way your students respond to you?

- Feel free to tell your stories of specific experiences with students to illustrate

  your points.

SECTION THREE: REFLECTIONS ON ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGY (HOW CAN I

DEVELOP MORE HOLISTIC ANTIRACIST PEDAGOGIES?)

In this section, you should describe the ways you aim to develop sound antiracist

pedagogies in your classroom. Do not worry about "getting it right" here; this is all about

exploration and getting a bit vulnerable in this discussion of your pedagogy. Feel free to discuss

any lessons, discussions, or activities you might want to try. You might consider some of the questions/prompts that appear below. This list is by no means exhaustive nor does it comprise of anything you *must* write about. Though, you may find yourself writing through all of the questions/prompts.

- How will you make whiteness visible in your classroom?

- How will you challenge your White students to speak to race in the same ways you expect your students of color to speak to race?

- While it is important to discuss White privilege in your classroom, how will you also discuss the White supremacy and White domination that allows for these privileges in the first place?

- Are there any specific experiences with students that brought you to any of the pedagogical goals you discussed in any of the above prompts?

SECTION FOUR: REFLECTIONS ON THE ACT OF WRITING AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS (HOW DID REFLECTING ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF YOUR WHITENESS THROUGH WRITING AND DISCUSSION IMPACT YOU PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY?)

In this final section, you should discuss how you were impacted by the experience of reflecting on your whiteness and discussing these reflections with colleagues in our meetings after the writing of each section. You might consider some of the questions/prompts that appear below. This list is by no means exhaustive nor does it comprise of anything you *must* write about. Though, you may find yourself writing through all of the questions/prompts.

- Did you have any epiphanies that came through the act of writing your personal narrative?

- Did you have any epiphanies that came through discussing your writing with your colleagues in our group meetings?

- How did the act of writing impact your ability to process your racial identity?

- How did participating in our group meetings impact your ability to process your racial identity?

- Did you find anything that surprised you?

- Did the experience of writing and discussing your writing change the way you see yourself in relation to the world around you?

- Did the experience change the way you think about your role(s) in the classroom?

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT EXIT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, _____. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview

and for partaking in my study as part of my doctoral research. As you know having been a part of

my study, I am hoping to identify how writing personal narratives impacts the ability of White

teachers to understand the implications of their whiteness on a personal and professional level.

The purpose of this interview is for you to describe your experiences in writing your personal

narrative as well as your experience in being a part of the study in general.

If it is allowable to you, I would like to record our interview. This will allow me to go

back to your responses in the event that I missed particular details of our conversation.

Recording the interview will also allow me to be completely attentive to you as I will not have to

worry about taking comprehensive notes throughout the duration of the interview. Be assured

that your responses will remain fully confidential. If any of this interview is utilized in my

dissertation, you will be anonymized. There will be no reference to you as an individual except

for any non- identifiable information that might be pertinent to the study (number of years

teaching in general, number of years teaching at the school, subject taught, etc.)

Before we begin, please take the time to critically read the preamble above and consider

if you have any questions for me. I want you to feel comfortable and able to speak honestly with

me. If you agree to the guidelines of the interview, please sign your name and date on the lines

below. Once you sign and return the form to me, I will start the recorder. The interview will then

begin.

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: _____

DATE OF INTERVIEW: _____

Q1. How would you characterize your comfort level and ability to discuss your racial identity prior to being a part of our race inquiry group?

Q2. How would you characterize your comfort level and ability to discuss your racial identity after being a part of our race inquiry group?

Q3. Did you have any personal epiphanies throughout the course of your time in our race inquiry group?

Q4: Did you have any epiphanies as a teacher and your pedagogical practices throughout the course of your time in our race inquiry group?

Q5. How did the act of writing your personal narrative impact your ability to process the ways your racial identity affects your experiences and the experiences of others in your personal and professional life?

Q6. How did participating in group discussions impact your ability to process the ways your racial identity affects your experiences and the experiences of others in your personal and professional life?

Q7. Is there anything else that I did not ask that you feel is important to speak to regarding your participation in our race inquiry group and/or the process of writing your personal narrative?