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WHITE WOMEN DOING RACISM: A CRITICAL NARRATIVE INQUIRY OF WHITE WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF COLLEGE

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES

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DEDICATION

For Em and Beck, Andrew, Duck and Deuce, and future generations of kids:

May you find ways of living out liberation, love, and answerability that the rest of us can't yet imagine.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is not mine. It is not *my* work, as much as the academy is structured to insist that it is and convince me - and you - that it is. This is the work of many, of many friends and family, of the communities of resistance that have historically made a way out of no way in the United States, and of the communities that have wreaked havoc through violent domination in many forms. Part of my family came by the land it farms by taking up residence in what is now eastern Colorado after the Pawnee and Cheyenne had been massacred. Others were hillbillies in southwest Missouri whom I am sure participated in the racist violence of the slave-holding South. I am a product of this violence, massacre, and colonization. I also experience love in these families, and the complexities of getting older and unraveling the myths we have been told and tell ourselves.

I also come to this dissertation because of the generations of black, brown, and queer educators who created resistant spaces of learning for themselves, for others, and for me. The spaces folks have created that have shaped and transformed me have traceable roots to the Freedom Schools of the south, the Highlander School (now Highlander Research and Education Center), and myriad homes, workplaces, and community spots where people gathered to learn and unlearn for freedom.

I sit at all these intersections. This dissertation is my working through them in community with others. I do this work both for the communities that birthed and raised me, and also for the communities that continue to help me to undo the tangle of racism, settler colonialism, sexism, heterosexism, patriarchy, ablism, and classism that I was raised in. It is for every person whom I have hurt with my “nice white lady” racism, for

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ABSTRACT

College campuses continue to be inequitable spaces for students as access and experiences are stratified by race, gender, and class, among other social categories. As access to higher education has broadened, white women have gained access in greater percentages than most other race-gender groups; they are the most numerically represented in higher education as a whole, while their access to high status majors and elite institutions continues to lag behind that of white men. We also know, however, that white women have played historically significant and specific roles in the maintenance of racially unjust systems. We know very little, however, about how their experiences as students on college campuses contributed to or shaped their ways of doing racism. Undoubtedly, experiences of patriarchy, as well as heterosexism, classism, ablism and other oppressions shaped their ways of participating as white women in the racial order. This study asks the following questions as a way to better understand intersecting dynamics of power in higher education and white women's experiences of and participation in these dynamics of oppression:

- In what ways do undergraduate white women experience college?
- In what ways do white women do racism while in college?
- What college experiences shape and support the ways that white women learn and do racism?

I use critical narrative inquiry, involving a two-stage interview process using open-ended interviews and photo elicitation. Four resonant threads echo through the narratives highlighting the ways that whiteness shapes their storied experiences: 1) desires for comfort and niceness, 2) silences and narratives shifts, 3) entitlements to

space, and 4) aims for an unattainable ideal. These threads are supported by participants' engagement in high impact educational practices (HIPs), uncovering the ways that (HIPs) serve as gendered curricula of white ignorance. This study suggests the decolonial frame and practice of answerability (Patel, 2016) as a way to reconceptualize not only high impact educational practices, but structures and practices as a whole within post-secondary education.

CHAPTER 1

> "As black feminists we are made constantly and painfully aware of how little effort white women have made to understand and combat their racism, which requires among other things that they have a more than superficial comprehension of race, color, and black history and culture. Eliminating racism (among white women) is by definition work for white women to do, but we will continue to speak to and demand accountability on this issue." (Combahee River Collective, 1977/1995, p. 239)

Scene 1

When I got off the plane for a layover in Dallas, TX, I turned on my phone and it started buzzing incessantly. After we'd boarded our flight home from a higher education conference, a video had gone viral, one from OU, one that revealed what really happens amongst white fraternity men in formal suits, fueled by drinking, racial segregation, and white supremacist, patriarchal culture and histories of domination as they are passed down within organizations. Passed down on college campuses. Hateful. Violent. Celebratory. Racist. My heart sunk. I could hardly catch my breath. I noticed white women standing by on the bus, consenting, participating. As a former undergraduate student at a predominantly white college, I could have been on that bus or similar busses. I knew how those white women got there. And I wondered what they were thinking as their backs, arms, hair, and faces were shown.

These thoughts took a back seat to my concern for my colleagues of color – one a woman of color – with whom I was traveling. I could see the unspeakable hurt,

exhaustion, and pain she was feeling even as she took deep "keep it together" breaths and responded to students and fellow staff of color who were reaching out for support, needing her comfort, her shared anger, her time, her energy, her self.

We didn't have shared experiences of that video, of watching it for the first time, or of dealing with the campus aftermath. Neither had we shared the experiences of our campus up to that point. We were positioned differently, groomed differently, heard differently, seen differently. I could've been one of the young women on the bus. She was being sung about … and then being asked to labor to help a campus "heal" from its racist shame and violence. White women showed up in her office to process, to cry, to express their aghast surprise. White women were participating in the violence on the bus, and expecting her to make them feel better.

Scene 2

Meanwhile, I was reading in the news about Abigail Fisher's continuing quest to dismantle affirmative action in college admissions at the University of Texas, and beyond. She claims that she was denied admission because she was white, despite evidence that in the same year students of color with higher test scores were also denied admission to UT and white students with lower scores were admitted via the holistic admissions process (Hannah-Jones, 2013). She said, "There were people in my class with lower grades who weren't in all the activities I was in, who were being accepted into UT, and the only other difference between us was the color of our skin" (Bouie, 2015, par. 1). I was troubled by questions that keep stirring around in my mind. What causes someone like Abigail Fisher to feel entitled to an elite college education to such a degree that she (and the political-legal machine surrounding her) thinks she should

be admitted over students of color despite *grades and test scores. Even more, what causes her to work to dismantle the very system by which most white women have gained access to higher education and professional work that would have been inaccessible to their mothers decades earlier? How does a white woman like Abigail Fisher learn the colorblind racism that seeps not only into her rhetoric, but also her actions and her understanding of the world and her place in it? And how has her college experience (now that she is a graduate of Louisiana State University) played a role in this? I can't shake these questions. And I also don't quite have answers. Sure I know much of the research about racial formation, colorblind racism, racial ideology development, racial identity development. But none of this seems to fully capture the heart of the ways I sense – as a white woman – that white women are positioned and socialized via schooling and higher education to participate in systems of domination.*

Introduction

The history of higher education in the US attests to the system's exclusivity and role in maintaining elite dominance (Wilder, 2013; Wright, 1988). Even as higher education institutions in the US moved toward increased access and democratization, the system of higher education itself continues to be stratified by race, by class, and by gender (Astin & Oseguera, 2004; Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Ross et al., 2012). A growing body of research across disciplines explores and critiques systemic factors contributing to continued inequities in higher education. We know that white, middle and upper class cisgendered, able men find their way to and through college with greater ease than students of color, than poor students, than students with disabilities, queer students, than trans and gender queer students (Astin & Oseguera, 2004;

Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Ross et al., 2012; Renn, 2010; Nicolazzo, 2015). We also know that white women now go to college in greater numbers than any other race-gender group, being more represented in college as a whole than other groups (DiPrete & Buchmann, 2013). Higher education research reflects very little, however, about the ways that institutions position white women to maintain inequitable systems, or the everyday practices by which this positioning, and participating, happens. Research is beginning to articulate more about how white women as teachers in K-12 education and post-secondary education maintain inequitable classroom spaces (Warren, 2014; Charbeneau, 2009; Hancock & Warren, 2017). Education research as a whole, however, delves very little into how institutions educate and socialize white women into what Collins (2000) calls "the matrix of domination."

We also know this: white[1] women[2] come in many different shapes and forms. We are poor and we are rich. We are teen moms. We are recovering addicts. We are queer. We are trans. We are straight. We are cis. We are first generation college students and seventh generation college students. We are Christian and atheist. We are survivors of sexual assault, and we are members of Greek letter organizations. What we share are experiences of being white women. Through this identity - as intersected by others - we experience both privilege and some measure (greater or lesser, depending on the intersections) of marginality. Those of us who go to college experience college as

[1] I do not capitalize the word "white" when used to describe people's racial identity even though the American Psychological Association recommends to do so. I follow Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) lead in capitalizing terms that denote people of particular cultural groups (e.g., Black students or Latin@ faculty), but do not capitalize "white" or "people of color," since they do not refer to a particular cultural group.

[2] I use the term woman as inclusive of any individual who self-identifies as a woman regardless of gender expression or past gender identification. This study recognizes gender as non-binary, fluid and performative, at the same time as it has material, social, and political effects (Butler, 2006; Nicolazzo, 2015).

white women. The ways we leverage our white womanhood, resist it, understand it, and perform it are different than white men. But when we go to college, we are being educated - and miseducated - in a life-long course of 'being white women.' And our experiences are always already tied to the experiences of women of color. Our white womanhood is understood always already[3] in relation to Black women, to Indigenous women, to Latinas, to Asian women (Collins, 2000; Palmer, 1983). White women became "true (white) women" via the enslavement of Black women, the genocide of Indigenous women, and the xenophobic, exclusion and marginalization of Latinas and immigrant women from east Asian countries (Collins, 2009; Painter, 2010). The histories we drag in our wake are histories of racism, of colonialism, of class oppression, as well as of sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism.

Research more often focuses on inequities connected to race, or gender, or class, but less often effectively explores the intersections of these systems of dominance and their effects on institutions and individual experiences (Crenshaw, 1991; Jones, 2014). Women of color have led the clarion call for more intersectional research, for the necessity of thinking and researching intersectionally if we are to find effective, sustainable, and more socially just means of engaging with people in education post

[3] As Yancy (2008) explains, "to be white in America is to be always already implicated in structures of power, which complicates what it means to be a white ally (or *alligare*, 'to bind to'). For even as whites fight on behalf of people of color, that is engage in acts that bind them to people of color, there is also a sense in which whites simultaneously 'bind to' structures of power. Some whites argue that white supremacy is something that existed in the past and that therefore, while there are still white people who are certainly prejudicial, the oppression of Black bodies no longer exists. … This functions to shift the emphasis away from many of my students' whiteness and how it implicates them in *present* structures of white power" (p. 235). Davidson (2010) further highlights the ways that controlling images (Collins, 2009) of Black women are "necessary for the continued functioning of white society" (p. 65).

high school. Much early intersectional research highlighted the ways systems - education, law, criminal justice - multiply marginalized women of color, while silencing and rendering their experiences invisible within public discourse and decision-making processes (Berry & Mizelle, 2006; Crenshaw, 1991; Wing, 2003). A growing body of research also engages in "researching up," or "researching elite individuals, groups and spaces in order to research the cultural practices, social relations, and material conditions that structure the daily experiences and expectations of powerful groups" (Roman in Bloom, 1998. See also Kezar, 2003 and Aguiar & Schneider, 2012.). This study explores the intersections of the up and down, the marginal and the dominant, as they show up in the storied lives of white undergraduate women on a historically and predominantly white college campus[4].

Significance of the Study

White women are the most represented group of students on our college campuses nation-wide. They graduate at greater rates than women of color do, and much greater rates than men of color do (Ross et al., 2012). We know that students of color face daily micro aggressions that lead to racial battle fatigue (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007), decreased academic performance because of stress and stereotype threat (Schmader, Johns & Forbes, 2008; Steele, 1997), lack of a sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012), and lack of mentoring and opportunities for positive engagement (Quaye & Harper, 2015; Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa & Lui, 2015). Historically and predominantly white institutions do not work for students of color, by and large. Most students of color graduate *despite* their experiences on these campuses

[4] I use the acronym HWI in this study to refer to institutions where white students constitute a numeric majority, but also to the historic roots of these current enrollment patterns in legally and socially enforced racial segregation.

(Harper, 2012; Pak, Maramba & Hernandez, 2014; Palmer, Wood, Dancy & Strayhorn, 2014). Sometimes at HWIs students of color are supported by multicultural centers, diversity education offices, bridge or mentoring programs, but the campuses themselves remain unwelcoming and hostile environments for these students. These same campuses, however, are places where white women find more pathways to engagement, and to graduation. They struggle to find their way into particular traditionally male-dominated and often high-paying fields (STEM), but compared to women of color, white women experience greater senses of belonging and engagement on most college campuses (Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa & Lui, 2015).

We ask "Why?" and the answer seems simple. Race privilege. But what does race privilege look and feel like via experience when it intersects with gender oppression and various other forms of privilege or marginalization (class, sexual orientation, gender expression or performance, ability)? How are these intersecting dynamics of power and privilege experienced by individual students? And what can individuals' experiences reveal to us about systemic and structural dynamics of higher education institutions? Even more, what can we learn from white women's experiences about how they do and learn to do racism as white women on a college campus? White women, after all, have historically, and contemporarily, played specific roles not only in maintaining white supremacy, but in maintaining white supremacist, capitalist, heteropatriarchy (hooks, 1994).

We need to look at the roles higher education institutions and their shaping of college experience play in the socialization of white women in white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. Women of color have long exposed the roles white women

have played in the marginalization and oppression of communities of color, especially women of color. White women have not heeded their call to dig deeper, to continue to uncover and expose how we as white women participate in hegemonic systems. And we have not interrogated how the college experience on an historically and predominantly white campus further structures and calcifies white women's participation in hegemonic structures.

While this study leaves room for the possibility also of white women's resistance of hegemonic systems and power dynamics, I recognize the ease with which these resistances - small though they often are - will make white women again into savior figures. As white women we too often allow our celebration of moments of resistance to cloud and hide the ways that even in our moments of resistance of racism, women of color are oppressed, further violated, and silenced. In this study I ask us to tarry (Yancy, 2008) with the discomfort, pain, and irresolvable nature of white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy as it exists on college campuses in the US.

Purpose of the Study

This project intends to shed light on systemic dynamics of power and privilege in higher education by taking a critical look at how white cisgender women undergraduate students story their lives in college in relation to and within intersecting systems of domination. I use theories and concepts developed primarily by women of color[5] to highlight the ways in which intersecting systems of domination – white

[5] I use the term "women of color" politically, to recognize expressions of solidarity among racially minoritized women in the US due to their multiply marginalized identities within this socio-political system. I do not use it biologically or to essentialize the experiences of women who are not white. As Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa & Lui (2015) and Roshanravan (2010) explain, the term is problematic for its re-centering of whiteness and

capitalist heteropatriarchy (hooks, 1994) – a) shape white women's experiences in college and b) depend on the participation of white women in these same systems. The ways that white women participate in white capitalist heteropatriarchy are distinct from the ways that white men and men of color participate (Frankenberg, 1993). In fact, college campuses are a primary site from which many white women learn and participate in such systems. In a broad way, this study explores what the stories white women tell about their experiences in college can tell us about intersecting systems of domination and the ways that they function, shaping experiences of higher education, opportunities, and access, for students who occupy both privileged and marginalized identities? More specifically, I ask the following questions:

- In what ways do undergraduate white women experience college?
- In what ways do white women do racism while in college?
- What college experiences shape and support the ways that white women learn and do racism?

While a growing body of research in Critical Whiteness Studies takes up questions about hegemonic whiteness and its structural dynamics of oppression (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016), most studies focus on white men (Cabrera, 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Hughey, 2010) or do not interrogate the intersections of race and gender at all (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). Two studies in higher education also explore the identity development of white women from critical perspectives, but neither looks at an intentionally diverse group of undergraduate white women in order to explore how college experiences shape how they learn and do racism (Linder, 2011; Robbins, 2012).

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exclusion of some groups of racially minoritized women, but also potentially useful for building bridges among women of color.

Theoretical concepts developed within communities of color, and specifically by women of color deeply inform this study: intersectionality, the matrix of domination, and critical conceptions of race and gender. My goal in doing this study as a white woman who went to college is to take a critical perspective informed by theories developed by women of color as I explore the college experiences of white women from an insider-without perspective (see Chapter 2). This is an 'undoing' and 'remaking' journey for me as a researcher, as a white woman, and as an educator. I do not pretend to be able to take an outsider-within perspective that Black women take (Collins, 2000). Instead, because I have access to white women college students in ways that women of color researchers may not, I want to use this access to hear, understand, and critique their experiences – and my experiences – in ways that will lead to a better understanding of the lived and storied experiences of systems of domination and contribute to the creation of more emancipatory and just educational spaces within and outside of formal higher education institutions. I use narrative inquiry because as a methodology it facilitates inquiry into the stories by which we live and can facilitate a dialectic inquiry between lived experience and the social structuring of lived experience. This methodology and theoretical framework allows for exploration of individually storied lives, as well as larger social stories (master narratives) in response to which we live and "story" our lives (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Chase, 2005).

There are many dilemmas inherent in my doing a study like this as a white woman. Key concerns include the following:

- Should I draw on the work of women of color to understand the experiences of white women? If so, how do I do this without appropriating their work and re-centering the experiences of white women?
- Will my voice and perspective on white women become louder, more visible, and more rewarded than women of color colleagues doing related work, despite the decades, even centuries, of work women of color have done to shed light on and resist (even survive) systems of oppression? How will I resist such dynamics in my writing, in my educational practice, and in my practice of living?
- How can a study focused on self-identified women by a cisgender woman resist falling into binary and fixed notions of gender?

The design of this study takes into account some aspects of these dilemmas; others arose on the periphery of the study that I address in my daily life and work as an educator and white woman. For this reason I keep in mind that I must engage in a continuous practice of reflexivity, guided by questions not only from woman-identified scholars of color (see Smith, 2012, p. 10), but also by my relationships with colleagues, friends, and members of communities of color with whom I have ties outside of academia. The process of critical narrative inquiry itself (outlined in Chapter 3) has been a collaborative process continually informed by mentors and colleagues of color who engage with me and my work despite the risks of working with a white woman, risks that this study highlights are real, material, and ongoing.

Key Concepts

The concept of interlocking and intersecting systems of power, what hooks (1994) calls the white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy, is a lynchpin concept for this study. While I describe the theoretical framework for the study in greater detail later, the concept of interlocking systems of power is important for understanding the history and current context of white women in higher education. Collins (2000) describes these interlocking systems of oppression, including their particular structure and organization, as the matrix of domination. Within this matrix of domination, race, class, and gender are intersecting categories of experience that "*simultaneously* structure the experiences of all people" (Andersen & Collins, 2013, p. 4). As Andersen & Collins (2013) describe, "This structural pattern affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges" (p. 4). The related concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) reminds us that oppressions cannot be reduced to individual components, but "work together in producing injustice" (Collins, 2000, p. 21). Intersectional paradigms, then, allow for inquiry into the particular forms that intersecting oppressions take at particular times in particular places for particular groups or individuals (Collins, 2000). Because of this, intersectional approaches are also historically grounded and contextually specific; the intersections of race, class, and gender – in addition to sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, religion, nationality, ability and other categories of experience – take varying forms in different societies, and connections among them can shift over time. Using these concepts, I aim to re-see and more deeply and complexly – intersectionally – understand the experiences of white women in college, and how they do racism.

While the concepts of the matrix of domination and the intersectionality of social structuring of individual experience provide cornerstones for this study, particular conceptions of race and gender also ground the work. I approach race as a cultural construct, fluid and changing over time (Painter, 2010), performatively constituted (Gillborn, 2005), with deep social causes, and social, material, political and psychological consequences (Lipsitz, 2011). Deliberate and conscious actions, over time, institutionalize group racial identities. These actions include not only the dissemination of cultural stories, but also the "creation of social structures that generate economic advantages for European Americans through the possessive investment in whiteness" (Lipsitz, 2006, p. 2). These stories and social structures are intimately connected and mutually constitutive. While honing in on race as one dimension of identity and social structuring is important for understanding its dynamics and the way it structures our lived experiences, we must also recognize that it is always inflected by other categories of experience such as gender, sexual orientation, class, age, ability, and religion, among others. These identities shape individuals' lived experiences of race through their structuring of social systems, as Andersen and Collins (2013) describe.

In much the same way that race is both socially constructed and materially and politically consequential, so is gender. This study conceptualizes gender as socially constructed through interactions with others (Ropers-Huilman, 2003) within hegemonic, specifically white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchal systems (Collins, 2000). It also conceptualizes gender as performative, and therefore fluid and non-binary (Butler, 2006). In this study, the term white woman represents any person who self-identifies as a white woman, regardless of gender performance or history of gender identification.

(See Nicolazzo (2015) for more on distinctions between gender identity, gender expression, and embodiment of gender.) The white women in this study might also have various ethnic identities (e.g. Italian, Brazilian, Greek, etc.) that inflect their racial identities, but I take self-identification as white and as woman as sufficient for participation in the study.

Conclusion

We know that white women are numerically the largest race-gender group on college campuses in the US. We also know that white women benefit from higher education policies and practices aimed at increased equity to a larger degree than women of color. White women graduate at higher rates than students of color, including women of color. Many things about the higher education system in the US work better for white women, and white women, in turn, often take a vested interest in the perpetuation of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. This dissertation investigates the links between these facts by exploring the lived experience of an intentionally diverse group of white women-identified students on an historically and predominantly white campus. Specifically, the study asks a) In what ways to undergraduate women experience college and b) How do white women learn and do racism.

Through the elicitation of narratives from participants, as well as my own narrative exploration of the inquiry process, I work toward a deeper understanding of both the individual and larger social and institutional narratives that shape white women's experiences of college and the ways in which they act in the world. When white women seek out women of color for comfort or for friendship after witnessing racist acts, what stories are they living by and living out? What stories are they ignoring

or dismissing? What stories are they silencing? What do they gain by living out certain stories and not others? How do they understand this? Come to terms with it? Or talk with each other about it? And how does their experience in college shape, transform, or solidify these stories? This dissertation seeks answers to these questions, and more. In Chapter 2, I review the literature on white women as students in higher education, as well as a range of theories that help us understand how white women do race-gender. I lay out a theoretical framework that grounds the study in long-standing traditions of scholarship and knowledge generated by women of color. In Chapter 3 I describe how critical narrative inquiry, with photo elicitation, offers a rich and rigorous methodology for studying white women undergraduate students' experiences in college and their ways of doing racism. Critical narrative inquiry offers a process for understanding in more detail and complexity not only the stories that white women tell about college life, but also the larger sociocultural narratives that shape their lived experiences of hierarchy within white supremacist, capitalist, heteropatriarchy. In Chapter 4 I share "resonant threads" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132) that ran through the stories participants told with me, as well as my own stories. These threads included feelings, silences and narrative shifts, entitlements to space, and desires for an ideal. I describe how these threads represent gendered ways of doing racism in college, and show how they are supported gendered curricula of white ignorance within high impact educational practices. In Chapter 5 I outline implications from this study for the intertwined endeavors of theory, research and praxis within higher education and beyond. What, after all, are white people's, particularly white cisgender women's, responsibilities for action and change? And how best are these responsibilities – or resonse-abilities –

approached given the horrible stubbornness of whiteness to recenter itself by dehumanizing people of color and claiming innocence?

Scene 3

Students accuse Yale SAE fraternity brother of saying 'white girls only' at party door

Washington Post, November 2, 2015

"(Sofia Petros-Gouin) wasn't surprised that the fraternity would be screening, or that pretty girls might have a better chance of getting in. But she was surprised by this: "A group of girls came up who were predominantly black and Hispanic," she said. "He held his hand up to their faces and said, 'No, we're only looking for white girls.' ... He pulled a blond girl up from the bottom of the stairs — over some people — pushed her inside and said, 'We are looking for white girls only, white girls only.' No brothers corrected him or said anything."

He repeated it, she said, and a group of women on the stairs raised their hands and kind of jumped up, wanting to get in. "He pulled that group up who volunteered because they were white, and said, 'Yeah, that's what we're looking for'" (Svrluga, 2015).

Chapter 2:

Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

This is a study about the ways that white cisgender women "story" their experiences in college and the ways that these experiences, as well as the stories by which white women understand them, are racialized and gendered. It is also a study of how white women do racism in ways that are particular to their social locations, in ways that are simultaneously raced and gendered, as well as classed, sexed, and shaped by ability and other social identities. White women's experiences of college are always-already entangled with their participation in and socialization into white womanhood. When we do not interrogate the intersections of race and gender dynamics for white women, we misunderstand and perpetuate the ways in which white, capitalist heteropatriarchy moves and is structured.[6] Much research on white privilege and white supremacy focuses on men either explicitly or implicitly. (See Chapter 1.) This reproduction of patriarchal dynamics distorts the nuanced and slippery ways in which racism works in tandem with other systems of domination. Such is often the case in research on race in higher education. Woman-identified scholars of color, however, have been calling out these injustices for some time. (See Chapter 1.)

For this reason, the theories and scholarship developed by women of color provide the cornerstone for this study of white women's experiences of college, and the particular ways that they do racism. This study examines the roles college experiences and higher education institutions play in the socialization of white women in white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. Women of color have long exposed the ways

[6] Crenshaw (2012) names these intersectional dimensions of social control for women of color "structural-dynamic discrimination" (p. 1427) in order to describe how both structures and shifting dynamics both play a role in the matrix of domination.

that white women marginalize and oppress communities of color, especially women of color. We as white women, however, have not heeded their call to dig deeper, to continue to uncover and expose how we participate in hegemonic systems, especially racism. And we have not interrogated how college experiences on predominantly and historically white campuses further structure and calcify our own participation in white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy as white women. This chapter lays groundwork for the study by giving a brief history of how particular white women gained access to college and then reviewing literature on how white women do race and gender. The final part of the chapter draws on the work of women of color, among others, to outline a theoretical framework for the study.

Literature Review

Historical Context: White Women Come to College

The history of white women's struggle for access to higher education attests to the negotiations and tensions of living at the intersections. For white women, this has meant negotiating dynamics of race privilege and gender oppression within capitalism, heterosexism, and colonialism. White women's history of involvement in higher education particularly illustrates these negotiations, and the tendency with which those who have access to systems of privilege leverage locations of privilege to advocate for their own access to systems that simultaneously oppress both themselves and others. Newman (1999) describes how white women gained political rights, particularly the right to vote, by leveraging racist and imperialist rhetorics. White middle class women's access to and participation in higher education was also predicated not only on racist,

imperialist logics about who deserved higher education and to what ends, but also on the dehumanization of communities of color, especially women of color.

Women – specifically white, middle class, cis-gender Christian women – first gained access to college amid a milieu of post-civil war reconstruction, and growing imperialist, nativist, and Manifest Destiny sentiments (Newman, 1999; Solomon, 1985). After the Civil War white, middle-class women struggled to gain voting rights and increased agency in the public, political, and economic spheres. They did so, however, by leveraging white supremacist ideologies and rhetorics to ultimately achieve enfranchisement and access to higher education at the cost of women of color. By positioning themselves as "civilizers" and "protectors" of people of color both in the US and abroad, white middle- and upper-class women argued for their right to vote and access to higher education. As Newman (1999) describes, "new social and political roles for white women as 'civilizers' of the race (strengthened) longstanding beliefs in (white) women's moral superiority" (p. 23), and therefore the necessity of their participation in the projects of 'nation building' (read: settler colonialism) and white supremacy.

While the tradition of education for elite and middle-class women via single-sex academies had begun in the northeast and midwestern US in the early 19th century, white women did not begin attending college in significant numbers until after the Civil War. During Reconstruction[7], white, middle class women began seeking college

[7] The Reconstruction era (1865-1877) generally refers to the time immediately following the US Civil War, when conditions were set by which the seceding Southern states would be readmitted to the Union. Conditions included acceptance of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the US Constitution, as well as protection of the rights of freed Black people to vote. The Freedman's Bureau was also established, though later dismantled as federal troops withdrew from Southern states and white supremacist terrorist organizations reasserted political

educations as means to social mobility, making a living outside of marriage, and expanded roles in the public sphere (Newman, 1999). Resistance to women's college education often came in the form of "scientific" evidence via biology and social evolutionism. Scientists like the famous father of social evolutionism, Herbert Spencer, claimed that women, especially women of the "higher races" (i.e. white), needed more "vital power" than men in order to biologically reproduce, and because of this they could not sustain intellectual growth, except at great risk to their reproductive systems (Newman, 1999). Such arguments were common, and wove together logics of race, sex, and gender domination with discourses of science via social evolutionism.

Even as white women countered these arguments to make the case that higher education was of value, they drew from and reinforced the logics and rhetoric of social evolutionism to "empower themselves as central players in civilization-work during the late nineteenth century" (Newman, 1999, p. 8). Specifically, white women made cases for themselves as "missionaries, explorers, ethnographers, and educators" (Newman, 1999, p. 20). They carved out new public spaces for their work and value that pressed against Victorian gender norms by consolidating and extending racist, imperialist, nativist ideologies and practices. They moved from a status of "protected" to "protector." As Newman (1999) describes, this was "one of the most effective ways that white, middle-class women began to assume political power without transgressing culturally prescribed notions of womanhood and civilized gender relations" (Newman, 1999, p. 86). Their advocacy for assimilation and civilizing missions – via settlement houses, boarding schools for indigenous children, and industrial schools for Black

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control of state and local governments. (See Anderson (1988), Watkins (2001), and Wormser (2002).)

students in the South – were considered "humane alternatives" to the violence that white male politicians, military leaders, and others had condoned as methods of colonizing the western US and the Philippines, perpetuating a share-cropping economy in the southern US, and closing west coast borders to Chinese and Japanese immigrants (Newman, 1999, p. 182).

White middle-class women built their authority not only on their track records of "success" in the work of colonization and racism, but also through expressions of sympathy and solidarity with these same communities whom they were culturally and materially ravaging. Newman (1999) explains:

> Although white women frequently expressed feelings of sympathy and solidarity with non-white, non-Christian others, these pronouncements also served to increase their own authority, both in relation to other groups of women, who had to uphold Christianity as a superior religion in order to gain access to the sisterhood, and in relation to white men, who were slowly having to acknowledge white women's claims to greater effectiveness in civilization work. (p. 8)

Colleges, then, became key institutional sites for educating white women into roles as "civilizers," via liberal education, and the roots of what would become areas of study such as education, social work, and anthropology. College was one place where white women were "professionalized" into imperialist, white supremacist gender roles.

Not only were white college-going women building their authority through the dehumanization of women of color, but white women's college educations depended on the physical labor and social and economic subjugation of women of color as maids,

servants, cooks, and child-rearers. Such social, economic, and educational subjugation was frequently enforced through violence. For example, mob violence destroyed Prudence Crandall's school for Black girls in 1833 Connecticut. As Evans (2007) describes, "If the climate in New England was hostile to the idea of educating African Americans, the rest of the country was downright murderous" (p. 21). In spite of this, a few Black women gained early access to college educations, especially in the west; Lucy Stanton and Mary Jane Patterson both graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio before the Civil War (Evans, 2007). Even then, however,

> Black women who were formally educated were indoctrinated into a specific type of knowledge: White missionaries provided instruction that was based on the assumption that Black people were savages in need of civilizing, natural slaves in need of morality, brutes and sexual deviants in need of purity, or all of the above. (Evans, 2007, p. 34; see also Anderson, 1988 and Watkins, 2001)

Indigenous women, too, were not only physically violated through schooling processes, especially through the boarding school and residential school era, but were also culturally, psychologically, and spiritually violated through the assimilationist practices of "Kill the Indian, save the man" policies (Adams, 1988; Churchill, 2004; Mihesuah, 2003). These policies not only aimed to strip indigenous people of their cultural, linguistic, and spiritual practices, but they also imposed patriarchal gender roles on indigenous women, their families, and communities (Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010). White women participated in these colonizing projects as teachers and missionaries, extending their participation in the public domain via their participation in the victimization and violation of communities of color.

The simple act of going to school could be an act of resistance against the racial and gender order for women of color, but Black and indigenous women also resisted the dominant curriculum and educational process in other ways. Evans (2007) describes how Black women in northern states "formed clubs to link their personal development to the larger causes of abolition, racial justice, temperance, women's rights, and equal access to resources (because) for African American women, activism was more a matter of racial-group survival than of a distal sense of benevolence" (Evans, 2007, p. 34). During Reconstruction in the southern US, freed women such as Mary Peake, Miss DeaVeaux[8], and hundreds of others played lead roles in the creation of common schools within Black communities, laying the foundation for universal education in the South (Anderson, 1988; Evans, 2007). Indigenous women also continued to play important roles as leaders and educators in their tribes and home communities (Mihesuah, 2003), despite the ravages of colonization and boarding school educations.

During the 20th century, the numbers of white women attending college ebbed and flowed. As Allan (2011) describes, "In the 1920's nearly half (47 percent) of college students were female, compared with only 30 percent from 1930 to 1950" (Allan, 2011). Most of these female college students were white (Evans, 2007). White women increasingly entered graduate school, as well, with numbers peaking in 1930 and staying steady through the 1940's. It wasn't until 1950 that the number of white women attaining graduate degrees dropped.

In Oklahoma, however, women of color – and people of color in general – were barred from education at white institutions, initially via the first bill passed by the

[8] Miss DeaVeaux is the name that Evans (2007) offers for a woman who began a school for Black people in Georgia in 1838 (p. 27).

Oklahoma State Senate, a segregationist bill that re-enacted Jim Crow in the state. Then later in 1941 when the state legislature made it a misdemeanor not only to teach in classrooms containing both African American and white students, but also to merely be a student in a "mixed-race classroom" (Henry, 1996, p. ix). Many native women in Oklahoma were educated in day schools and boarding schools, often run by mission arms of Christian churches, occasionally with the support of tribes themselves. These boarding school experiences were widely varied (Ellis, 2008; Churchill, 2004), but all had a goal of Christianization, assimilation, and the colonization of Indigenous communities and ways of life via education. The intersecting histories of eastern tribes, western plains tribes, Black enslavement, and the migration of freed Black people has been complicated, at best (Leiker, Warren, Watkins, 2007), but one thing is true: white supremacy and colonization, often enacted by white women through schooling processes, are responsible for the violence, broken relationships, and continuing inequities.

Across the US, (white) women who went to college were expected by many to devote their lives after college to a marriage and raising children (Solomon, 1985). Many, however, took up paid work, and the social pressures for white middle-class college women to give up paid work mounted. Of course, poor women, and many women of color, even those who had finished a college degree, had to work for pay, whether in professions or in other types of paid service work or labor (Solomon, 1985; Evans, 2007). And the pressures of white heteropatriarchy put all women who had to work – especially women of color – in an irresolvable dilemma: work to feed yourself and your family and be named an irresponsible mother, or do not take paid work and let

your children suffer. White college-educated women who chose to work for pay outside of the home continued to be accused of contributing to race suicide, while requirements of paid work outside the home for Black women were condemned and controlled by white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy through images devised by to dehumanize and oppress, to keep Black women in their circumscribed roles as mammies, matriarchs, welfare mothers, and Jezebels (Collins, 2009). Heteropatriarchy and white supremacy continued to place white, middle and upper class women in the role of race conservators and mothers of the (white) nation, while it put women of color in the position of primary teachers and ministers for their communities' own uplift. When women of color did not reach for or meet the ideal model of white womanhood (Christian, middle-class, and liberally educated), they were often denied access to education, demonized, or worse (Evans, 2007).

In Oklahoma in particular, women of color were denied access to the state's flagship school. Higher education institutions, in fact, were sectored and segregated from the beginning. The leading plank of an initial state constitution was total segregation of schools and transportation. Although this constitution was rejected, a similar constitution was accepted – minus the strong segregationist stance – and the state Senate's first action was to pass anti-Black, Jim Crow segregationist law. White women gained early entrance to the state's white public universities, the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University, but it was not until Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher brought suit against OU's College of Law that Black women were allowed to study as students on campus. Black women could attend Langston University, the public

historically Black land grant university, and Bacone College had long ties to the Cherokee and Muscogee Creek Nations.

This deep history of educational segregation, both formal and informal, continues to shape the experiences of women of color as they pursue higher education in Oklahoma. Fisher (1996) wrote of her experience as a law student once admitted to the University of Oklahoma College of Law:

> In all the time that I was there, I never quite escaped a feeling of isolation. The faculty was always fair, and my fellow students were generally friendly. Still, I felt that I was being observed across campus . . . watching to see if I succeeded as a student. Some persons honestly questioned the ability of blacks to cope and advance in a white academic arena…. Sitting in the large, unadorned rooms of Monnet Hall, I was alone. Law school is strenuous. It was more strenuous with the reality of aloneness. Sometimes I would go into an empty classroom to study. When the rooms were empty, I always sat in one of the front seats. As time for class approached and other students arrived, I would gather my notes and books and climb the rows up to the 'colored' seat. (p. 147)

Women of color on college campuses today often feel similarly isolated and observed, both invisible and hypervisible. And while white women may also feel marginalized in particular fields or pressured, isolated, and targeted because of their gender, they do not experience the weight of racism, and the historical sediments of the daily struggle of students like Fisher.

Today women in general are primarily clustered in majors in the health professions, education, and the social sciences (Carnevale, Strohl & Melton, 2011).

Unfortunately, most large scale quantitative analyses do not disaggregate by race *and* gender, so it is difficult to know how white women, Black women, Indigenous women, Asian American women, Latinas and others are currently distributed across the curriculum. We do know, however, that since the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, white women have benefitted most from higher education affirmative action policies (Ajinkya, 2012; Hochschild, 1999), as they are the most represented race-gender subgroup across higher education today. Despite this, they also most often serve as the faces and voices of anti-affirmative action movements (Daniels, 2014). The symbolism of white women such as Barbara Grutter, Jennifer Gratz, and Abigail Fisher as plaintiffs in anti-affirmative action cases raises a number of questions about the roles white women play in the maintenance of white privilege and white supremacy, as well as the role of higher education and the college experience in the socialization of white women in(to) hegemonic systems.

Current Context: White Women in College Today

Today white women are the most numerically represented at the bachelor's and master's degree levels within higher education in the US (US Department of Education, 2012). White women earn proportionately higher numbers of bachelor's, master's and professional degrees than women of color (Allan, 2011), although men – specifically white men – continue to earn a majority of degrees in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields, especially engineering and computer science, among others (Allan, 2011; National Science Foundation, 2007). As mentioned above, white women have benefitted most from affirmative action policies, but also serve as the faces of anti-affirmative action movements (Ajinkya, 2012; Hochschild, 1999). Colleges and

universities continue to be primary educational sites for white women entering professions, including professions that have historical roots in the "civilization work" of the 19th and early 20th century (education, social work, health professions, etc.) (Roger, 1998). And white women are proportionately more likely to pursue doctoral degrees than their African American and Latina counterparts (Allan, 2011).

Beyond scholarship on access and graduation, research on (white)[9] woman-identified students in higher education also addresses student experiences and campus climate, curricular issues, and policy (Allan, 2011). Issues affecting women as employees of higher education institutions, as faculty, and as leaders also affect woman-identified students and contribute to race-gender-class inequities and the (re)production of intersecting systems of domination (Baldwin & Griffin, 2015; De Welde & Stepnick, 2015; Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González & Harris, 2012; Sulé, 2011). Unfortunately, little scholarship explores the experiences of white women on college campuses with an eye toward their positioning and participation in white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy.

How White Women Do Race & Gender

Much recent literature concerning white women-identified students in higher education centers on identity development. While early theories of women's development primarily involved white, woman-identified college students, such theories did not explicitly interrogate race (Josselson, 1996; Gilligan, 1993), but instead focused on gender-focused moral and identity development. The implicit norming of whiteness in studies of women continued to contribute to the marginalization of women of color

[9] Historically most research on women in higher education has centered white women and treated their experiences as normative, further marginalizing women of color (Martínez Alemán, 2003).

and their experiences within higher education. As Robbins and Quaye (2014) describe of these early women's development models: "Racial privilege offers White women the freedom of 'choices not to speak' (Gilligan, 1993, p. x) about racism *or* sexism, and thus to perpetuate multiple silences that may do harm to all historically marginalized groups in higher education and student affairs" (p. 27).

Early theories of white racial identity development similarly did not account for intersections between race and gender or race, gender, sexuality, or class (Helms, 1997; Hardiman, 2001). They conceptualized racial identity development as linear and did not attend to the complexities of social context, much less intersections of race with other social identities. Even as these models have been refined, they remain linear, even when reconceptualized as status rather than stage models (Helms & Cook, 1999). These identity development models help us see white people as capable of change and offer a starting point for thinking about psychological experiences or interventions that may lead to antiracist change. They do not, however, account for the multiplicity and intersecting nature of identity.

More recent identity development models do take into account multiple and intersecting identities, considering contextual factors, as well as meaning-making (Abes, Jones & McEwan, 2007). Other models such as Watt's (2007) consider the multiplicity of privileged identities that students might hold, as well as challenges they face when confronting their own privilege. These models again help us understand the developmental processes of identity development or development toward the ability to take action for social justice. They continue to focus, however, primarily on the individual, and their identity, development, and/or meaning-making, rather than

considering the fullness of complexities of sociocultural, historical, political and economic context. Recently scholars such as Linder (2011, 2015) and Robbins (2012) have explored racial identity and identity development among white women – specifically antiracist feminists and white women in student affairs graduate programs. Their research helps us understand how racial identity is affected by gender identity and "multiple layers of social context" (Robbins, 2012). However, their research builds on prior research in counseling, psychology, and higher education-student affiars (HESA) and continues to focus on intrapersonal identity development.

While white racial identity development models have grown out of the fields of psychology and counseling, sociologists and social psychologists more often understand whiteness in terms of racial formation and white racial ideology. Omi and Winant (1986) conceptualize race and racial meanings as pervasive in US society, "extending from the shaping of individual racial identities to the structuring of collective political action on the terrain of the state" (p. 66). Hughey (2010) extends Omi and Winant's work, developing a conceptual framework of hegemonic whiteness where white identity formation is understood as "a cultural process in which (1) racist, reactionary and essentialist ideologies are used to demarcate inter-racial boundaries, and (2) performances of white racial identity that fail to meet those ideals are marginalized and stigmatized, thereby creating intra-racial distinctions within the category 'white'" (p. 1289). In higher education, Nolan Cabrera (2009, 2012a, 2012b) explores hegemonic whiteness in the identity formation of white males in college, exploring the intersections and compounded nature of multiple privileged identities. And most recently Cabrera, Franklin & Watson (2016) co-authored a report, through the Association for the Study

of Higher Education, on *Whiteness in Higher Education*. This report gives an overview of critical whiteness studies and its development and future directions in higher education. This critical, sociologically-grounded work, however, rarely considers the situatedness of white women nor the particular ways that gender identity, sexual orientation, class, or other social identities shape racial formation at the sub-group or individual levels.

Whereas areas of study historically dominated by white men and women have elided the particular social location and performance of white women, women of color have long offered insight and scholarship on white women's particular ways of participating in racism. From Lorde to Collins to Crenshaw, Black women have exposed the white, heterosexual, middle-class roots of the feminist movement in the US. Lorde (1984/2007) writes about white women and Black women's differing relationships to patriarchy, to capitalism, and to the intersections of white, capitalist, heteropatriarchy, as well as to aging and ageism. She writes of white women's propensity to guilt and of their fear of the anger of women of color in the face of racism. Collins (2000) traces the epistemological roots of Black feminist thought, shedding light how white women's race privilege and domination profoundly influences Black women's experiences of work, womanhood, motherhood, and love. And Crenshaw (1991) describes how white women's experiences of systems – whether the criminal justice system, domestic violence, or activist movements – are qualitatively different than those of women of color. Not only that, but she describes how white women define systems based on notions of empowerment that often, if not always, disempower women of color, putting them at risk and in danger (Crenshaw, 1991).

More recent work by women of color describes how white women deploy false victimization and tearfulness to oppress women of color in the workplace (Accapadi, 2007), how we engage in collaborations with women of color that are self-serving, wounding, and appropriative (Villegas & Ormond, 2012), and how we engage in defensiveness and denial when confronted by the experiences of women of color in the academy (Chamblee in Dace, 2012). Literature that focuses on how white women practice racism in higher education has primarily highlighted staff and faculty contexts and experiences (Charbeneau, 2009; Dace 2012; Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González & Harris, 2012; Yancy & Davidson, 2014). Linder (2011, 2015) and Robbins (2012) are recent exceptions. Through their work we begin to see in increasing detail the roles of guilt, shame, fear, racial dissonance and resistance in white women's racial identity formation and development.

Studies of whiteness from sociological and ethnographic perspectives also contribute to our understandings of white women's ways of doing racism. Such studies emphasize the material and discursive dimensions of whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006, 2011; Bonilla-Silva, 2014), especially as it intersects with gender (Frankenberg, 1993). As Frankenberg (1993) describes in her foundational study of white women, "White women are located in—and speak from—physical environments shaped by race (and) are also located in, and perceive our environments by means of, a set of discourses on race, culture, and society whose history spans this century and, beyond it, the broader sweep of Western expansion and colonialism" (p. 2). Race shapes white women's lives not only through their locations in "the materiality of the racial order" but also through their sense of self, other, identity, and worldview (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 239).

Frankenberg (1993) analyzes race and gender in the lives of white women on three levels: a) everyday life, b) social processes, and c) theoretical and substantive analysis of race, racism and colonialism in the US and beyond (p. 7). By doing so, she uncovers the nuances of the material structuring of daily life along lines of race and gender. She also identified four key discursive repertoires that white women use to talk about and understand race. "Color- and power-evasive" strategies were most common, but were also laced with elements of "essentialist racism" linked to European colonialism, Anglo settler colonialism, and segregation. Some white women also used "race-cognizant" repertoires that are linked to US liberation movements and broader global movements toward decolonization. While Frankenberg's (1993) findings related to race-gender experiences share connections with Bonilla-Silva's (2014) conceptualization of "the new racism," Lipsitz's (2011) focus on the materiality and spatiality of race, and Foster's (2013) and Hill's (2003) works on racism and discourse, she intentionally explores the raced, gendered, and classed intersections of experience for white women.

This study aims to build on the intersectional work of sociologists such as Frankenberg, as well as the intersectional critiques of women of color by exploring 'storied' lives of white cisgender women and their ways of doing racism college campuses. Ultimately this study aims to shed light on systemic and intersecting dynamics of power and privilege, working toward collective critical praxis in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical perspectives developed within communities of women of color – specifically the concepts of the matrix of domination, intersectionality, decolonization – provide the cornerstones for this study. Bringing these concepts together with a critical whiteness framework allows for an exploration of both the experiences and participation of white women within imperialist white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. In fact, the perspective and theories developed from the standpoint of women of color put white women's location within the matrix of domination in relief in ways that recognize simultaneous domination and subordination at the intersections of the systems within white women live and tell their stories. Women of color have always seen and understood white women in ways that white women themselves have not (Accapadi, 2007; Carby, 1982; Moraga & Anzaldua, 2015). Collins (2000) describes the "outsider-within" perspective that arose out of Black women's experiences in domestic and agricultural work in the US. Black women gained access to private, intimate spaces within white families, and saw white women's ways of living, thinking, and feeling in ways that white women did not. Rather than being an "outsider-within," I hold a position as insider-without in relation to this research study. I am a white cisgender woman who attended college, in fact lots of college even beyond my undergraduate degree. I participated in many of the activities and learning spaces about which participants in this study tell stories with me. I have also been embarking on a long journey to learn about my own whiteness and unlearn the racism I have been taught since childhood. This is a journey that is not and never will be finished, and this study is another point in my story and the stories I tell about myself. During the process

of this project, I have aimed to listen carefully to the stories white women undergraduate students tell me, bring these stories together with stories told about white women by women of color, and re-story our collective stories of white womanhood in college from a perspective informed by critical whiteness studies, intersectionality and understandings of the matrix of domination, and theories of colonization and decolonization.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical whiteness studies (CWS) understands whiteness as "a normative structure in society that marginalizes people of color and privileges white people" (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016, p. 18). Drawing on Omi and Winant (1994), as well as Cabrera, Franklin & Watson (2016), this study understands whiteness as having real, material impacts on people in the US and around the world. It is both discursive and ideological, and therefore critical whiteness studies "seeks to identify the contours of whiteness as a discourse while critically examining the material, psychological, emotional, and physical effects Whiteness has on People of Color" (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016, p. 19). Critical whiteness perspectives look beyond the "givens" of racial privilege and marginalization to focus on the direct processes that result in white domination. Leonardo (2009) articulates what this perspective looks like in education:

> a critical look at white privilege, or the analysis of white racial hegemony, must be complemented by an equally rigorous examination of white supremacy or the analysis of white racial domination … a critical pedagogy of white racial supremacy revolves less around the issue of unearned advantages, or the state of being dominant, and more around direct processes that secure domination and

the privileges associated with it. (Leonardo, 2009, p. 75)

Although critical whiteness studies – often traced to beginning with the work of W.E.B. DuBois's (1920) study "The Souls of White Folk" – seek to name in order to resist and dismantle white supremacy, few look at the ways that whiteness is inflected by simultaneous and intersecting experiences of marginalization. While a number of studies focus on white masculinities as hegemonic, few studies take up questions about the ways that women, trans and non-binary people's experiences of whiteness might shed further light on the ways that whiteness moves to dominate.

Intersectionality & the Matrix of Domination

Bringing understandings of intersecting systems of domination and marginalization together with critical focus on whiteness can help us better understand white domination and white supremacy as it moves along intersections of white domination with experiences of marginalization. Growing out of the tendency for critical race theory and white liberal feminism to ignore the experiences and voices of women of color, critical race feminism (CRF) and Black feminist thought offer frameworks for understanding the intersectional, interlocking nature of systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 2012). Patricia Hill Collins and Kimberle Crenshaw, among others, offer theories and analyses that shed light on the ways women of color are multiply marginalized within particular institutions and systems, including the legal system, social systems, and educational systems (Crenshaw, 2012; Anderson & Collins, 2012). Collins (2000) describes these interlocking systems of oppression, including their particular structure and organization, as the matrix of domination. Within this matrix of domination, race, class, and gender are intersecting categories of experience

that "*simultaneously* structure the experiences of all people" (Andersen & Collins, 2013, p. 4). As Anderson & Collins (2013) describe, "This structural pattern affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges" (p. 4). The related concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) reminds us that oppressions cannot be reduced to individual components, but "work together in producing injustice" (Collins, 2000, p. 21). Intersectional paradigms, then, allow for inquiry into the particular forms that intersecting oppressions take at particular times in particular places for particular groups or individuals (Collins, 2000). Because of this, intersectional approaches are also historically grounded and contextually specific; the intersections of race, class, and gender – in addition to sexuality, ethnicity, age, religion, nationality, ability and other categories of experience – take varying forms in different societies, and connections among them can shift over time.

In gathering and analyzing the narratives of white women about their experiences of college, I aim to understand identities and systems in an intersectional way, illuminating how "intersecting axes of power and inequality operate to our collective and individual disadvantage (and advantage) and how these very tools, these ways of knowing, may also constitute structures of knowledge production that can themselves be the object of intersectional critique" (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, p. 795-6). This study builds from the concept of the matrix of domination (Collins, 2000), emphasizing political and structural inequalities and their power dynamics. By using intersectionality as a framing concept, this study holds "a dual concern for resisting the systemic forces that significantly shape the differential life chances of intersection's

subjects and for reshaping modes of resistance beyond allegedly universal, single-axis approaches" (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, p. 800; see also Jones, 2014).

Even more, Black feminist scholars advocate for praxis as a key site of intersectional critique and intervention (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013). As Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) explain,

> What makes an analysis intersectional—whatever terms it deploys, whatever its iteration, whatever its field or discipline—is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power. This framing—conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power—emphasizes what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is. (p. 795)

Critical analysis of power dynamics and systems of oppression, after all, is not sufficient for change in those same systems (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, 2013, p. 794). Collins (2000) describes how the work of Black feminist thinkers has always been deeply connected to the everyday lives of Black women within Black communities, creating a dialectical relationship between scholarship and activism. It is from this rich intellectual position and history of activism that I want to understand the experiences of white women, especially white college women, in order to see their intersecting oppressions and privileges more clearly and critique the institutional and systemic conditions of higher education that shape white women's ways of doing racism on college campuses. This dissertation must also not only contribute toward critical praxis, but also be an enactment of critical praxis itself. Therefore, this concept of

intersectional praxis weaves through the methodology and methods, as well as the findings, conclusions, and implications of this study.

Although much research in higher education that takes an intersectional approach focuses on identity and identity development, Wijeyesinghe and Jones (2014) distinguish between identity and intersectionality. As they explain, "Intersectionality attends to identity by placing it within a macrolevel analysis" (p. 11). Núñez (2014) also describes in her review of higher education literature that there was "more empirical literature that focused on the descriptions of how multiple social identities influence agents' experiences within higher education, but less on how actors in higher education institutions themselves perpetuate dynamics of privilege or oppression" (p. 37). For this reason, this study focuses less on identity development and more on institutional and systemic dynamics of power as experienced by white women in college, and the ways that these dynamics of power shape white women's ways of doing racism.

Decolonization & Indigenous Women's Knowledge

The matrix of domination recognizes capitalism, racism, and heteropatriarchy's mutually constitutive nature. The work and thought of indigenous women sheds light on the position of white, elite, and college-educated women in the US within colonial processes, as well. As Smith (2012) asserts, "analysis of colonialism is a central tenet of indigenous feminism" (p. 153). While there is not one indigenous feminism (Mihesuah, 2003; Huhndorf & Suzack, 2010), this study takes into account the multiplicity of perspectives across indigenous women who have different histories, connections to each other, and connections with the land, but it also understands indigenous women's connectedness through experiences of colonization. An understanding, then, of the

processes and effects of colonization on indigenous communities and indigenous women, as well as white women's participation in them, also frame this study.

Smith (2012) describes that European imperialism, of the form that 'started' in the fifteenth century, tends to be used in at least four different forms: "(1) imperialism as economic expansion; (2) imperialism as the subjugation of 'others'; (3) imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realization; and (4) imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge" (p. 22). She argues that these forms should be seen as analyses that focus on different layers of imperialism, rather than contradictory. Imperialism understood as a series of developments leading to the economic expansion of Europe can be tied to the processes and projects of "'discovery,' conquest, exploitation, distribution, and appropriation" (Smith, 2012, p. 22). As Smith (2012) further explains, "Research within late-modern and late-colonial conditions continues relentlessly and brings with it a new wave of exploration, discovery, exploitation, and appropriation" (p. 25).

As Ritchie (2015) asserts, it is white people's responsibility to "un-know the privilege and comfort that we have taken for granted, to be willing to become vulnerable, to come from a place of 'right spirit,' and to apprentice ourselves as willing observers and learners, sharing responsibility for ongoing projects of decolonization in service of healing our relationships" (Ritchie, 2015, p. 88). I see this project as one that analyzes white women's experiences in college with an understanding of the centrality of processes of colonization to their experiences, as well as the experiences of women of color. White college-educated women in the US must ask ourselves how we have participated in and been complicit with colonization. In doing this, this study aims

toward counter-colonial praxis (Ritchie, 2015) and supporting indigenous led projects of decolonization that contribute to indigenous people's "reclaiming, reformulating and reconstituting indigenous cultures and languages" (Smith, 2012, Chapter 8).

Conclusion

Because much research on white privilege and white supremacy focuses on white men, either implicitly or explicitly, we have a limited understanding of the ways that white supremacy works in tandem with other systems of oppression like sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism and others. We also know that white women have played historically significant and specific roles in the maintenance of hegemonic systems. We know very little, however, about how their experiences as students on college campuses contributed to or shaped their ways of doing racism. Undoubtedly, experiences of patriarchy, as well as heterosexism, classism, ableism and other oppressions shaped their ways of participating as white women in the racial order. The following chapter outlines the methodology and methods for this study, especially as they are guided by concepts of whiteness, intersectionality and the matrix of domination, and decolonization.

CHAPTER 3

> *What makes an analysis intersectional—whatever terms it deploys, whatever its iteration, whatever its field or discipline—is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power. This framing—conceiving of categories not as distinct but as always permeated by other categories, fluid and changing, always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power—emphasizes what intersectionality does rather than what intersectionality is. (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, p. 795)*

> *In narrative inquiry, we try to understand the stories under or on the edges of stories lived and told, as no story stands on it's own but rather in relation to many others. (Downey & Clandinin, 2010, p. 387)*

This research study explores the stories white cisgender undergraduate live by in college. In particular, I puzzle narratively over the roles that college experiences and higher education institutions play in the socialization of white women in white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. Women of color have long exposed the ways that white women marginalize and oppress communities of color, especially women of color. We as white women, however, have not heeded their call to dig deeper, to continue to uncover and expose how we participate in hegemonic systems, especially racism. And we have not interrogated how college experiences on predominantly and historically white campuses further structure and calcify – story – our own participation in white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy as white women. For this reason, I ask the following research questions:

- In what ways do undergraduate white women experience college?
- In what ways do white women do racism while in college?
- What college experiences shape and support the ways that white women practice and (re)learn racism?

This purpose requires careful attention to the nuance and complexities of the lived experiences of privilege and marginality. I, therefore, approach this inquiry qualitatively, as "qualitative research (is) crucial for gaining access to nuanced interactions and social patterns in rich analytical detail" (Lee, 2015, p. 3). Answers to these research questions require a systematic focus both on the complexity of social interactions in daily life and also the meanings that participants themselves invest in these interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2). Understanding how white women experience college, and how they are socialized into and practice racism, requires attention to systemic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal power dynamics, as well as to the material structures and processes of colonization.

Why Narrative Inquiry

Narrative is a primary mode of meaning-making for humans. Through narrative we make meaning in retrospect; we order our past experiences and describe our self and place in the world (Chase, 2005). Narratives communicate a point of view, as well as emotions, thoughts, and interpretations and help us as human beings make sense of our experiences. Narratives are not proxy for experience itself, but through narrative we, as human beings, make meaning of our experiences. Narrative researchers recognize that stories are "both enabled and constrained by a range of social resources and circumstances" (Chase, 2005, p. 657). Narrative research, then, explores the dynamics and constructions of the meaning people make of their lives. Narrative inquiry is a particular form of narrative research, and as Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) describe, "the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals' experience but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are

constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (p. 42). A critical, sociologically-oriented narrative inquiry can work to "reveal the stranglehold of oppressive metanarratives (and) help to open up possibilities for social change" (Chase, 2005, p. 668).

In her recent work on decolonizing educational research, Patel describes how narratives can "enliven," "animate," and "cauterize" settler colonial logics and material practices. She also describes the necessity of pausing in order to "ascertain what structures, what inequitable structures, are enlivened by narratives, even and perhaps especially the progressive narratives" (Patel, 2016, p. 88). Edwards (2014) also describes the importance of story and narrative for resistance of domination and radical responses to injustice and oppression. As she notes, "Radicalism and love apart from narrated life stories is impotent" (Edwards, 2014, p. 25). These narrated life stories, however, must include narrated lives of people of color as "counter-hegemonic text" (Edwards, 2014, p. 25) or counter-stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) in order to make the "violence of White supremacy real, and its master narratives a lie. They also make mutual humanity through lives in relation essential" (Edwards, 2014, p. 25). This is intersectional research as Bowleg (2008) describes: the connecting of individual biography with structural inequality.

While this study seeks to better understand the stories white women live and tell about themselves, as well as the particular ways they learn and do racism in college, it also seeks to name and disrupt white supremacist capitalist patriarchy and processes of colonization. I bring narrative inquiry together with methods that allow for fuller consideration of how power and systems of domination shape relationships and narratives. Narrative inquiry, as developed by Clandinin and Connelly (1990) over

decades of practice, is relational and a "deeply ethical project" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30). The methods woven together below are informed by key theoretical and methodological concepts from critical whiteness studies, Critical Race Feminism (CRF), and Indigenous[10] thought, including *intersectionality*, *decolonization*, and *research as relational, historical, political and material*.

Intersectional Methods

As described in Chapter 2, the concept of intersectionality is intricately connected to Collins's (2000) concept of the matrix of domination. Intersectional research not only recognizes the interlocking, simultaneous and multiplicative nature of systems of oppression, but it also points toward and practices interventions in said systems. Other researchers might name these systems of interlocking oppressions hegemony (Apple, 2006, 2012; Giroux & Giroux, 2006). The concept of intersectionality, however, recognizes the particular ways in which multiply marginalized subjects are erased by hegemonic structures via their primary modes of representation and sites of power.

Researchers and scholars who approach their work intersectionally begin with a few key assumptions and commitments. First among them are the assumptions of simultaneity and multiplicity. As Landry (2007) describes, race, class and gender cannot be separated; they are simultaneous. Neither can they be treated in an additive way; instead their relationship is interactive and multiplicative. Hancock (2007) also offers six key assumptions for intersectional research:

[10] I follow the lead of Tuck and Yang (2012) and Patel (2016) in capitalizing Indigenous when referring to aboriginal groups affected by colonialism and imperialism in a global context.

1. “More than one category of difference (e.g., race gender, class) plays a role in examinations of complex political problems and processes.”
2. “Intersections of these categories are more than the sum of their parts.”
3. “Categories of difference are conceptualized as dynamic productions of individual and institutional factors. Such categories are simultaneously contested and enforced at the individual and institutional levels of analysis.”
4. “Each category of difference has within-group diversity that sheds light on the way we think of groups as actors in politics and on the potential outcomes of any particular political intervention.”
5. “An intersectional research project examines categories at multiple levels of analysis—not simply by adding together mutually exclusive analyses of the individual and institutional levels but by means of an integrative analysis of the interaction between the individual and institutional levels of the research question.”
6. “Intersectionality’s existence as a normative and empirical paradigm requires attention to both empirical and theoretical aspects of the research question. The conventional wisdom among intersectionality scholars considers multiple methods necessary and sufficient” (p. 251).

Such assumptions outline a particular standpoint (Collins, 2000) that offers not only to deepen our understandings of inequality and systems of domination, but also offers an altogether different framework for thinking about the world and social and individual experience. As MacKinnon (2013) describes, “capturing the synergistic relation between inequalities as grounded in the lived experience of hierarchy is changing not

only what people think about inequality but the way they think" (p. 1028). I engage in an effort to shift the way I think about experience – to approach this study from an intersectional frame – in order to engage critically as a white woman with the ways that white cisgender women story their lives, particularly their "lived experience of hierarchy," in college.

Some readers might ask whether or if a study using intersectionality theory can or should focus on white women. The framework of intersectionality, after all, was developed by women of color as a method, theory, and political practice for "'recovering' marginalized subjects' voices and experiences" (Nash, 2008, p. 10). (See also Crenshaw, 1991 and Collins, 2000.) The very concept of intersectionality grows out of the racist power dynamics present – and still operating – in feminist circles that marginalize the voices and experiences of women of color. My goal in this study is not to re-center the voices and experiences of white women in order to perpetuate mythical norms of white womanhood (Lorde, 1984/2007). Rather, it is to further critiques of intersecting systems of domination on college campuses and the roles that white women play in them.

Several scholars have begun to remark on the lack of literature addressing intersectionality in research methods and methodologies (Bowleg, 2008; Cuadraz & Uttal, 1999; Hancock, 2007; MacKinnon, 2013; Nash, 2008). Despite this, studies that engage methodological intersectionality remain scarce. Bowleg (2008), drawing on her disciplinary grounding in psychology, outlines three issues in particular that intersectionality researchers must grapple with: "developing questions to measure intersectionality, analyzing intersectionality data, and interpreting them" (p. 313). While

my intent in this qualitative study is not to measure, per se, I do heed Bowleg's (2008) call to attend carefully to the form questions take, to my approach to analysis, and to the importance of interpretation. In regards to developing intersectionally-oriented questions she notes that a key challenge involves "how to ask questions that are intersecting, interdependent, and mutually constitutive, without resorting, even inadvertently, to an additive approach" (p. 314). More specifically she outlines three lessons that reflection on her own previous research and analysis of other studies revealed: "(1) ask an additive question, get an additive answer; (2) the problem of attempting to measure intersectionality through addition; and (3) ask precisely what you want to know" (p. 314). To address this in my narrative interview protocol, I follow her suggestion of "invit(ing) the interviewee to discuss her identities and experiences however they best resonate with her" (p. 315).

Of course, there is no set of "perfect intersectional" questions (Bowleg, 2008). An intersectional approach must also shape the processes of 'data collection' and analysis. Bowleg (2008) notes that questions about intersectionality should focus on meaningful constructs such as stress, discrimination, and prejudice "rather than relying on demographic questions alone" because concepts such as race and class are socially constructed and "explain virtually nothing in and of themselves" (p. 316). Not only should questions focus on meaningful constructs in which race plays a part, but intersectionality researchers must analyze research findings within a macro sociohistorical context, bridging the context of the intersection of individual biography and structural inequality (Bowleg, 2008; Cuadraz and Uttal, 1999). Sometimes this requires making explicit the often implicit experiences of intersectionality, even when

they remain implicit for participants. As Bowleg (2008) explains, this is not a unique position for critical or other researchers, "Researchers who conduct community-based research with historically disenfranchised communities routinely confront the dilemma of '…connect[ing] theoretically, empirically, and politically troubling social/familial patterns with macrostructural shifts when our informants expressly do not make, or even refuse to make, the connections (Fine et al. 2000, p. 116)" (p. 322).

In addition to these considerations, narrative inquiry, when approached intersectionally, must take into account both the researcher and participants' intersecting identities and social positions in the process of "storying" lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). As researcher, I must attend to differences, tensions, and gaps in participants' narratives and my own reflexive process, as well as to questions that arise when I place participants' narratives in conversation with larger sociocultural historical narratives and the perspectives and theories developed within communities of women of color.

Methodology: Critical Narrative Inquiry

Because this study seeks to better understand white women's experiences of college, as well as the particular ways they learn and do racism in college, I propose to use critical narrative inquiry with photo elicitation as a way to engage with the ways that white women "story" their lives as a part of and in response to intersecting systems of domination. More specifically, I engage in *critical* narrative inquiry with photo elicitation and a recursive process of co-constructing narrative as a way to explore the ways that white women "story" their lives as a part of and in response to intersecting systems of domination. This methodology involves white women undergraduate student

participants in storytelling (via interviews) and "conversation partners" – specifically race conscious[1] women of color scholars – as collaborators in the narrative inquiry process. Because both I and participants are all white women, our ability to take a critical perspective on whiteness is limited, at best (Collins, 2000/2009; Mills, 2007; Matias, 2016). The perspectives – both lived and learned – of race-conscious women of color scholars are integral to this project both as academic work, and also as practice-oriented, justice-focused work (Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, 2013; Battiste, 2013). This is intensely personal/reflexive work for me as a white, cisgender, formally "schooled," settler/trespasser[1] educator and scholar, but it is also political, collective, material work. I drew on Kincheloe, McLaren and Steinberg's (2012) concept of bricolage as I stitched together methods of narrative inquiry and photo elicitation in a way that respected, and respects, "the complexity of the lived world and the complications of power" (p. 21).

Critical Qualitative Research

Intersectionality, having its roots in Black feminist thought and Critical Race Feminisms, is at its base critical. It is concerned not only with analyzing intersecting power dynamics and power structures, but also with taking action for equity – praxis – that benefits those who are most marginalized in society. Indigenous scholars like Smith (2012) also emphasize that research itself "is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized" (Smith, 2012, p. 8). Universities themselves and the histories of our disciplines and research methodologies are wrapped up in colonialism and the perpetuation of the matrix of domination. Because of this, this study recognizes that all research is political, and imbued with dynamics of power within social systems. It takes up a critical qualitative approach of

the kind that Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz and Gildersleeve (2012) advocate: "an inquiry practice that engages with and intervenes within the dominant discourses of our times" (p. 2). These dynamics of power, then, are woven through and influenced by the ways we understand, narrate, and make meaning of our lives.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry – especially a critical, sociologically-oriented narrative inquiry (Chase, 2005) – explores the dynamics and constructions of the meaning people make of their lives. It can work to "reveal the stranglehold of oppressive metanarratives (and) help to open up possibilities for social change" (Chase, 2005, p. 668). As Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) describe, "the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals' experience but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (p. 42).

Broadly speaking, narrative inquiry is "the study of experience as story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). As a methodology, it views the narratives people tell as retrospective meaning making, verbal action in the world, enabled and constrained by social resources and social location, and socially situated and interactive performances (Chase, 2005). More specifically, a sociological or critical approach to narrative inquiry maintains that "individuals' stories are constrained but not determined by hegemonic discourses." They also "provide a window to the contradictory and shifting nature of hegemonic discourses, which we tend to take for granted as stable monolithic forces" (p. 659). This study uses narrative inquiry as a methodology for exploring the interlocking and intersecting narratives that undergraduate white women use as they 'story' their experiences of college. Critical narrative inquiry pays attention

not only to the individuality of white women's narratives of their college experience, but also to the metanarratives, the social, cultural and institutional narratives that white women use to story their own experiences, especially in relation to others and the institution. In this way it attends to lived experience intersectionally, to the "lived experience of hierarchy" (MacKinnon, 2013, p. 1028), "bridging the context of the intersection of individual biography and structural inequality" (Bowleg, 2008). Combined with and critical understaning of whiteness, intersectionality, and decolonization, critical narrative inquiry offers a methodology for understanding institutional dynamics of power and privilege through the prism of student lived experiences.

This study explores not only white women's lived experience of college through critical narrative inquiry, but also the telling of stories amongst white women. Because these conversations happen between individuals with some measure of shared identity (between myself and participants as white cisgender women) they are both enabled and constrained by these shared identities. Any sense of shared-ness might enable a measure of trust and honesty, insider-ness, implicitness. This same sense of shared experience can also constrain conversations in that critical perspective is not a given. Researcher memo-ing helped me to attend to gaps and contradiction in the narratives, to tensions that arose because of shared and differing experiences, as well as to my own responses and reactions to participants' narratives. This method helped me gain at least partial insight into how white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy is reproduced amongst and by white women. It also potentially offers insight into possible points of resistance.

Positionality & Reflexivity

As mentioned earlier, I engage in a series of narrative interviews with participants, I also followed a recursive narrative process that involved constant connection of individual biography and structural inequality, as well as careful reflection on my own social positions as a researcher in relation to participants and the analytical process. As Emirbayer and Desmond (2012) note, an oversimplified notion and process of reflexivity can "mistake brief instances of self-evaluation with authentic practices of reflexivity" (p. 581, see also Salzman, 2002). Instead, I aimed to practice a more robust and recursive reflexivity, "working the hyphen" of insider-outsider by examining my social positions, personal and theoretical commitments, and my own experience of the research process throughout (Fine, 1994; Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2000). I specifically did this through memoing and dialogue with critical conversation partners, race-conscious women of color scholars. With these collaborators, I reflected on my interviewing, storying, and methodological processes at critical points.

As I kept memos, I held close the questions Smith (2012) raises from indigenous communities and activists: "Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated?" (p. 10). The form of the dissertation itself is a function of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. It is required to be written alone, for the benefit of one. Its audience is expressly academic (read: historically white, elite males), and its form is not often flexible enough to take into account the needs of communities, especially marginalized

communities, activists, or social change groups. With this in mind, I also let Smith's (2012) additional questions for researchers echo in my ear and my mind: "Is her spirit clear? Does he have a good heart? What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix our generator? Can they actually do anything?" (Smith, 2012, p. 10).

Given my socialization as a white woman who is privileged in many ways by historically and predominantly white institutions of higher education—as well as by U.S. schooling processes, in general—I step lightly and with great humility in beginning this project. While I may not be able to fix a generator, I do hope my dissertation "does something useful." I take seriously the responsibility for white scholars to critically investigate white supremacy's habits and structures, using reflexivity and analysis as a foundation for resistance, disruption, and action. This resistance and disruption must happen at the level of process (methodological praxis), and so I intentionally weave reflexive practices throughout the interview and analysis processes, including in ways that are not explicitly outlined by, but still congruent with critical narrative inquiry. Through this intentional weaving of critical reflection in conversation with other scholars (critical conversation partners), and the interview and analytic processes, I aim to create a space where my own race privilege can stand in solidarity with other scholar-activists and be a resource for resisting methodological racism and conservatism and contributing to liberatory educational praxis in higher education.

There is little doubt that my dissertation – research done by a white woman about white women – will be heard, accepted, and even applauded in ways that the

intellectual work of women of color is not. The history of white, elite academe is rife with stories of white people – men and women – 'discovering,' pillaging, and appropriating communities, customs, knowledge, even material resources that long had value, meaning, and truthfulness for others. I know this work could be seen in that light. And maybe that would be a true way of understanding this dissertation; I am a white woman, after all, who first encountered the work of Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Devon Mihesuah, Winona LaDuke, and Chandra Mohanty in graduate school. But for me this dissertation is one required piece of a praxis-centered research agenda that at its core works toward being anti-oppressive, collaborative, participatory, and engaged across community-university borders. Even as I write this, I realize that I professionally and materially gain not only from access I have to a doctoral program because of the long-standing oppression of women of color, but also from writing *this* dissertation, one that takes up issues of racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism using the work of women of color.

Through over ten years of full-time work in higher education I have seen the ways in which white women participate in racism via heteropatriarchy and classism. And I know I have participated myself. I have witnessed women of color around me – colleagues, friends, students – carry these wounds, bear up under these burdens, and continue to educate students, lead programs, and organize activist initiatives, despite the betrayals and violations of white women (as well as others). I have also seen women of color drop out of school, get fired or pushed out of positions, and get sick from stress and overwork while white women are fast-tracked, if not to upper administration, at least to middle-management and student service administration work, often to gate-

keeping and "care-taking" positions. I have seen how white women are silenced by institutions and organizations, and I have also seen white women silence women of color to their own benefit. This project aimed to name and uncover similar moves – in myself and others – as well as the ways white women's experiences as undergraduate students shape their participation in, or resistance of, white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. I committed not only to writing this dissertation in a way that centers the perspectives of women of color in order to critically explore white women's experiences and ways of doing racism, but also to engaging in research, scholarship, teaching, and activism beyond this dissertation that takes the lead and works to benefit of women of color and their communities.

A Lunchtime Lesson

As I started this project I struggled with how I could see my whiteness differently, and see through my whiteness differently, without being able to step outside of it. I usually do my best thinking and writing collaboratively, and so approaching a project like this "by myself" seemed not so much difficult because it was big and the thinking and personal work seemed daunting – I am generally ready for challenges like that – but also because individual work for which I take credit runs counter to the ethics I've developed as an educator, and maybe the ethics of the white, rural, working class community I grew up in. (Although let's unpack the intersections and the histories of colonization and racism there!) It also runs counter to the antiracist praxis I've been continually learning over the past, oh, 15 years. I know I have personal unlearning work to do as a white, cisgender, middle class, highly educated woman. But I also know I cannot do that work without being in relationship with people of color, and other

white people who are unlearning and divesting of whiteness. I couldn't quite conceptualize how to do this dissertation – engage this inquiry – without it being collaborative in some way. I also had ethical concerns about doing a dissertation about whiteness as a white woman, thereby leveraging my privilege two-fold (or more) in order to get a degree that would give me further access to power. It made intellectual, relational, and ethical sense to me that this should be a collaborative project. The rub was I was writing a dissertation that was supposed to be single-authored.

So, in conversation with others, I developed an idea to approach close colleagues of mine whom I knew as "race conscious" (Matias, 2016) women scholars of color. I wanted to see if and how they might be interested in collaborating with me on this project that would ultimately result in co-authored publications, presentations, and the like. I emailed them formally, included an abstract of the project and my commitments as a collaborator (Appendix D), and asked them if they had interest. They were all willing, so I invited them to lunch at my house. We ate tacos and talked. I shared some excerpts from the interview transcripts I'd been reading through and making notes on. The excerpts were familiar to all of them as women of color who taught on the same campus as these white undergraduate students. As they shared their reactions, how they felt in response, stories from their own classrooms, and their differing thoughts about what ways of being involved in the project felt comfortable or beneficial to them, I had growing ethical and personal concerns. I didn't feel right asking these colleagues and friends of mine to help with any analysis that would ultimately fall under my name. I could see them sharing stories in response that would stand separately in the dissertation as their own, but then their thinking, analysis and

theorizing would become subordinated to mine in the text. They also had differing feelings about the emotional and psychological trauma and burden that reading participants' stories would elicit for them.

After having further informal conversations with each of them separately – and knowing how much time they needed for their own studies and family life – I decided to approach my dissertation as self-work in preparation for collaborations that it would grow into after I "single-authored" my dissertation. I am still committed to and in conversation with these colleagues (and others) about collaborating and co-authoring in relation to this project in the future. And I intentionally had informal conversations with them and others about my analysis and process as I worked, trying to also be careful that I was contributing to their work and well-being in ways they needed, too. Ultimately, though I cannot escape the ethical dilemma that the form of the dissertation and the expectations of the dissertation process creates for me, and for critical whiteness and justice work. The form and process of a dissertation are so deeply embedded in the matrix of domination that there is no winning. I wonder if my dissertation is at best self-work in preparation for justice work that will take other forms, particularly collaborative forms, in the future. In all my relationships and work my whiteness is inescapable and makes me complicit. This dissertation is at one level – or many – my search for ways of answering, engaging, and disrupting this dilemma.

Praxis

Because my goal is to contribute to liberatory and racially just educational praxis, I take critical race feminists and indigenous scholars' call to praxis – to 'usefulness' – seriously. As Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) note, "Critical analysis

of institutional and discursive power is rarely a sufficient prophylactic against its reach" (p. 794). First, I considered issues of praxis within my methodology. As I interviewed white college women I engaged with them not as a distant and "objective" interviewer, but as another white woman. I answered questions when asked and shared my own experiences when important for "activating race" within the interviews (Frankenberg, 1993; O'Brien, 2011). Second, I also commit beyond methodology to critically engaging with white students on the campus where my research takes place, sharing what I learn with others locally, as well as within professional and scholarly networks. Also key to this counter-colonial and intersectional praxis is my need to remain connected to, to listen to, to take the lead of, and to consider foremost the well-being of women, trans folks, and communities of color, both locally and globally, in the process of this research (Ritchie, 2015; Smith, 2012; Mohanty, 2003).

Study Context & Methods

Study Context

All twelve participants in this study were white, cisgender women undergraduate students at the University of Oklahoma, a flagship research intensive institution in the south central US. Just over 27,000 students enroll on the main campus each fall, 21,000 of whom are undergraduate students. According to the most recent official enrollment data, nearly 30% of these undergraduate students officially identify as white women, whereas 2% officially identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native women, 2% as Asian women, nearly 3% as Black or African American women, .05% as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander women, and over 3% as bi- or multiracial women (University of Oklahoma, 2015). 2% of women-identified undergraduate students chose

not to report their race. 51% of the undergraduate student body officially identify as women (University of Oklahoma, 2015). Compared with the most recent census data for the overall population of Oklahoma, the university enrolls lower percentages of American Indian/Alaskan Native, Black/African American, and Hispanic students, while it enrolls slightly greater numbers of Asian-identified students and bi- or multiracial-identified students. We know that these data are not disaggregated in ways that help us see important issues of inequity, especially considering students from Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, issues of class that cut across racial and ethnic groups, or issues of diversity in gender identity and expression, among others. They do, however, give us a picture of a campus that remains predominantly white, and under-enrolls students of color, even in relation to the population of the state as a whole.

The university's history shapes and gives context to racial inequities in enrollment. The University of Oklahoma was founded in 1899, while what was to become the state of Oklahoma was still designated Indian Territory. The terrible and violent history of indigenous removal via the Trail of Tears and the Indian Wars are deeply embedded in the history of the state, and the institution of the flagship university[11]. From the founding of the state, Jim Crow laws also abounded. And the University itself remained open only to white students until Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher and George McLaurin brought suits against OU that were ultimately heard by the US Supreme Court, and decided in favor of students. This colonial and segregationist history continues to be represented on campus in the naming of buildings, photographs

[11] For more on these genocidal atrocities committed by the US government, see LaDuke (1984/2002) and Deloria and Lytle (2010).

that are displayed on campus, as well generational and systemic issues of access to the institution for people of color and poor people within the state.

Smith (2012) describes how such legacies affect institutions and the knowledge produced within them:

> Although colonial universities saw themselves as being part of an international community and inheritors of a legacy of Western knowledge, they were also part of the historical processes of imperialism. They were established as an essential part of the colonizing process, a bastion of civilization and a sign that a colony and its settlers had 'grown up.' Attempts to 'indigenize' colonial academic institutions and/or individual disciplines within them have been fraught with major struggles over what counts as knowledge, as language, as literature, as curriculum and as the role of intellectuals, and over the critical function of the concept of academic freedom" (p. 68).

More recently, explicitly racist incidents by white students on this campus have made national news, and students from marginalized groups – Black students, Indigenous students, and queer students – have begun to organize to demand the institution address daily microagressions, lack of representation among faculty and staff, hegemonic curricula, and lack of access for marginalized students to the institution itself, as well as resource distribution within the institution. In response, the institution has implemented a mandated five-hour first-year diversity experience based on the intergroup dialogue model, and individual colleges have begun to appoint administrative staff who are explicitly responsible for 'diversity' initiatives that vary in scope, degree, and definition.

This institution offers a rich context for studying white women in part because it is much like other predominantly white, public, research institutions. A strong majority of white women enroll in four-year, predominantly white institutions, much like this one. With few exceptions, white women who have influence and leadership roles in professional fields are educated and socialized into their roles at predominantly and historically white higher education institutions, often large publics like this one.

With that said, this study context is also unique for some of the historical and current contextual reasons mentioned above. The campus is seeing a growing number of student activist groups form, and their influence has increased the number and frequency of conversations about issues of equity, including race, ethnicity, sexual and gender identity. While these conversations may not reach all parts of campus in the same way, they have been visible in the student newspaper, in student government elections, and even the national news (Jones, 2015; Svrluga, 2015). This institution also has a particularly low recruitment and retention rate for women faculty, especially women faculty of color, and the upper administration is overwhelmingly white and male, meaning that white women undergraduate students have few women faculty to serve as mentors, and even fewer women faculty of color from whom they learn.

Participants

This study involved twelve women undergraduate students. All identified as white, and cisgender, and all were in their final year of their degree programs. Because of this, they had significant time and experiences on campus, both in general education courses, as well as advanced courses and experiences within their major. Their progression to senior status also indicates that these students were by and large

successful according to traditional measures of success. In addition to this, a majority of (7) participants identified as middle-class, three identified as working class, two as upper-middle class, one as wealthy and one as poor. Four participants marked more than one identifier for their "Family's Social Class" either because it changed over time, or because they felt as if their class identity and experience was "somewhere inbetween" two of the options. Additionally, most participants identified as straight (10); one identified as demisexual and another as bisexual. A majority of participants also attended predominantly white (10), mostly suburban (9) high schools. Participants were completing a range of majors, including music composition, international studies, African studies, linguistics, biology, environmental studies, public relations, and psychology.

Participants were recruited through a mass email system. A recruitment email describing the study was sent to all undergraduate students. Participants were also offered a giftcard as incentive for completing the study, which included one narrative interview and one photo elicitation interview. Over 150 undergraduate students filled out the recruitment survey. Of these, I identified all who had been enrolled for six semesters or more. I then randomly selected 20 from this group to invite for interviews. Twelve students participated in the first narrative one-with-one interviews. Of these twelve, six completed the second photo elicitation interview, which involved taking photos of campus prior to the interview.

Data Collection

Data included transcripts of 18 interviews with 12 participants. Each interview took between 40 minutes and 90 minutes; they totaled over 19 hours and 354

transcribed pages. Data also included 36 photos (6 each from 6 participants), 35 pages of researcher memos, and demographic information for each participant.

Photo elicitation. I used photo elicitation as a method for deepening both the narratives participants tell and systemic critique. Photo elicitation is a sociological version of visual research that uses photographs within qualitative interviews. Photo elicitation does more than offer a visual record of events or lives. Instead it adds a new dimension to qualitative methods, sometimes deepening interviews, focusing them, eliciting more detail, or drawing out different information altogether than in words-only interviews (Harper, 2002). This study used photo elicitation in order to deepen and focus the connections that participants made between identities, systems of power, and the college campus. It is congruent with critical narrative inquiry in that it can elicit and deepen narrative. Kim (2016) notes that the use of photography has value for "its potential to redirect, contest, and unlock the gaze in order to promote social awareness and justice" (p. 217). It is also participatory. As Harper (2002) describes "When two or more people discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together … an ideal model for research" (p. 23), especially research that engages praxis. It is also congruent with narrative inquiry, a methodology in which relationships are central (Clandinin, 2013). Although photo elicitation has not been widely used in higher education research, Metcalfe (2012) makes a call for its usefulness: "By drawing upon visual theorists and visual methods of analysis, another dimension can be added to more conventional sociological methods of research that are familiar to higher education scholars" (Metcalfe, 2012, p. 531). Both McGowan (2014) and Comeaux (2013) use photo elicitation specifically around issues of race and identity on college campuses.

The inclusion of photo elicitation as a method in this study deepened and extended the narratives of white college women. It evokes a different type of information (Harper, 2002); in this case it offered a way to explore how identity shapes not only participants' "views" of the world, but also how they experienced and made meaning of particular material forms in the world. By asking white college women to take pictures of places where they felt like they belonged, felt like an outsider, felt more and less powerful on campus, we gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of what it means to be a white woman on campus. When they tell stories about meaningful experiences on campus and take pictures of the material/historical locations that shape and texture these experiences, we gain a deeper and more sociohistorically contextualized understanding of these experiences. We also begin to see institutional dynamics of power and oppression through "the white gaze" (Yancy, 2008), or more particularly, through white undergraduate women's gazes. Although the photographs themselves are not included in this inquiry, they still deepened and nuanced the participants' storytelling, connecting stories with material places and histories. I plan to include analysis of the photographs as part of future inquiries connect to the larger project.

Interviews. Study participants engaged in a two-stage interview process. The first interview was a semi-structured narrative interview with broad questions that ask participants to tell stories of race, gender, and other salient identities on campus. (See Appendix A.) It moved through sets of questions, from very open-ended questions about experiences on campus, through questions that elicited stories about experiences of race, gender, and other identities on campus. The final sets of questions aimed to

elicit a) stories about raced-gendered expectations, performances, the social regulation of such, b) stories about relationships via the prism of friendship, and c) stories about opportunities on campus and their relationships to identity. These sets of questions were designed to elicit *stories* about white women's identities on campus in relation to others, to campus structures, to power dynamics, and to networks of power on campus. They were developed based on a review of literature on the ways white women experience race-gender and participate in hegemonic structures. Specifically, social expectations, relationships (both romantic and platonic), and the structuring of opportunity emerged from the literature as significant dimensions of white women's experiences of structural inequity. The questions are also intentionally designed to be open-ended enough that they allow participants to tell a variety of types of stories in which race-gender may not be central, but still implicitly play a part.

Between the first and second interviews participants were given specific prompts to take photographs of places where they experienced belonging and power, the lack thereof, and the salience of their identities as white women. These prompts were also developed in response to the review of literature and the importance of belonging, power dynamics, and intersecting identities both to white women's experiences in college and to the contributions of this study to the literature. The second interview elicited narratives centering on the photographs students have taken. (See Appendix B.) The structure of the second interview itself weaves together methods used in other photo elicitation studies (McGowan, 2013) with modifications that allow participants to 'story' their experiences in relation to the photographs, a key to narrative inquiry. The photographs not only connected participants' narratives with the

materiality of the campus, but also with the narratives that inhabit and circulate via material space, whether historically or otherwise. Participants were not always aware of these simultaneous narratives, but the photo elicitation interviews deepened not only the narratives participants themselves told, but also the analysis. The narrative inquiry process, therefore, was given additional critical and narrative depth via the layering of participants' narratives with these larger historical, sociological, and cultural narratives as elicited by their photos. As described earlier, both interviews were recorded and transcribed and photographs were collected from participants.

Post interview follow-up: Checking and calling in. After completing their interviews, participants were sent transcripts from their interviews and asked to provide correction, revision or additional elaboration. Only three participants responded. After "resonant threads" were identified through the narrative inquiry process, participants were sent a one-page summary of the tentative findings for this study and invited to respond either via email or a phone or video call with me. None have responded upon this writing.

Data Analysis

The narrative inquiry process involves a process of living, telling, retelling and reliving. People, after all, "*live* our stories and *tell* stories of their living" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 34). Narrative inquiry, then, includes a process of engaging in relationships with participants that allows for inquiry into their lived and told stories. The telling and retelling of stories between participants and researcher as co-participant, or co-narrator, also leads to the potential for *reliving,* a process of reimagining the ways in which

researcher and participants practice and relate to others (Clandinin, 2013). As Clandinin (2013) puts it,

> In the inquiry process, we work within the … narrative inquiry space to 'unpack' the lived and told stories. As we retell or inquire into stories, we may begin to relive the retold stories. We restory ourselves and perhaps begin to shift the institutional, social and cultural narratives in which we are embedded. (p. 34)

Whereas other qualitative method/ologies employ processes of coding and theming, narrative inquiry involves a different, but no less intentional and rigorous process of meaning- and knowledge-making. The "unpacking" of lived and told stories happens through an iterative and recursive process of *broadening*, *burrowing*, and *storying and restorying*. Broadening involves exploring broader contexts for participants' stories, looking for "the social, historical, or cultural milieus" in which (the) research takes place (Kim, 2016, p. 207). Burrowing, however, involves digging into, or immersing oneself in the details of lived and told stories from participants' points of view. The third part of the iterative process – storying and restorying – involves retelling stories "so that the significance of the lived experience of the participant comes to the fore" (Kim, 2016, p. 207).

In addition to this recursive process, narrative inquiry requires careful attention to three dimensions of lived experience: temporality, sociality, and place. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call these the three narrative inquiry commonplaces. The temporality commonplace involves an understanding that the events under study, as well as participants and researchers, are in "temporal transition" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006,

p. 479). As Clandinin (2013) describes, "Attending in temporal ways points inquirers toward the past, present, and future of people, places, things, and events under study" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 39). The sociality commonplace, however, requires simultaneous attention to both personal and social conditions (Clandinin, 2013), much as intersectional researchers connect individual biography with structural inequality (Bowleg, 2008). Personal conditions include "feelings, hopes desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480), while social conditions include cultural, social, institutional, familial, and linguistic narratives (Clandinin, 2013, p. 40). Finally, the place commonplace involves attending to "the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place" (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Clandinin echoes other cultural theorists and geographers[12] when she notes that "people, place and stories are inextricably linked" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 41). Narrative inquiry, then, involves thinking within the three commonplaces, or dimensions, of narrative inquiry simultaneously. Throughout the processes of broadening, burrowing, and storying and restorying, attention to these three commonplaces is interwoven.

As a white researcher in a colonized place[13] I am cognizant of Western notions of time, place, and progress as tools of colonization (Smith, 2012). As Smith (2012) describes "Different orientations towards time and space, different positioning within

[12] For discussion of the importance of temporality, sociality, and spatiality in human experience and organization, see Lefebvre (1991), Soja (1996). For foundational work on connections between space and place see Tuan (1977).

[13] The University of Oklahoma is a colonial institution both as an historically white institution and as predominantly white institution occupying indigenous land, specifically the ancestral and home land of first the Wichitas, Caddos, and Plains Apache, and later the Osage, Comanche, Kiowa and Pawnee (The American Indian Cultural Museum & Center, 2015). http://www.theamericanindiancenter.org/oklahoma-tribal-history

time and space, and different systems of language for making space and time 'real' underpin notions of past and present, of place and of relationships to land" (p. 57). I attend to my own sense of connections between the past, present, and future, as well as understandings of relationship and place, as shaped by colonialism. This attention to uncovering and naming colonial senses of time, sociality, and place deepen these three narrative commonplaces.

This study attends to all three narrative commonplaces using a process that moves from researcher engagement with participants in the field, to field texts, to interim research texts, to research texts. All of these texts are constructed recursively, and with attention to the three commonplaces. Typically, researchers co-construct narratives with participants as co-researchers in the narrative inquiry process. Because of ignorance that is part and parcel of whiteness, and because of the ethic of care I intended to enact both with participants and with communities of color who shared campus space with participants and me, I co-constructed interim research texts in conversation with texts written by women of color about white women, and in dialogue with my critical conversation partners. As Clandinin (2013) describes,

> It is only as we attend simultaneously to all three dimensions that we can come to understand in deeper and more complex ways the experiences relevant to our research puzzles. Only through attending to all dimensions can we see the disruptions, interruptions, silences, gaps, and incoherences in participants' and our shared experiences. (p. 50)

It was through dialogue with women of color – both written and in face-to-face conversations – that I was able to more carefully (though still not completely) see

disruptions, interruptions, silences, gaps, and incoherences that lead me to identify "resonant threads" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132) of gendered whiteness that ran among participants' and my own stories.

Whereas many qualitative methodologies employ some process of coding and theming, narrative researchers such as Gergen (2003) suggest that an "analytical method of deconstructing stories into coded piles" could undermine "the aim of the research" (p. 272). Instead of using a post-positivist method of coding and theming, I used a recursive process of broadening (attending to sociocultural, historical, political context), burrowing (digging deeply into each participants' individually storied lived experience), and storying and restorying (from field, to field texts, to interim research texts, to research text). During each phase I was careful to attend simultaneously to the three narrative commonplaces – temporality, sociality, and place – as well as to my relationships with participants and with the stories and storying processes as they emerge.

Although to some the narrative inquiry process seems somehow less "rigorous" or trustworthy than other methods of inquiry, I contend that this perception is based on our institutional, cultural and educational comfort with post-positivist modes of knowledge-making, inquiry and research (Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz and Gildersleeve, 2012). Clandinin (2013) describes that when researchers engage carefully with narrative inquiry, as opposed to narrative analysis, they "make all three dimensions of the inquiry space visible to public audiences and … make the complexity of storied lives visible. In this way, we avoid presenting smooth or cover stories" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 50). The composing, co-composing, and recomposing of texts makes visible the multiplicity in

stories, as well as the narrative coherence and/or lack of coherence in narratives. Because of its ability to make the complexities of lived experience visible, narrative inquiry as a method is appropriate for intersectional, praxis-focused research. It is also a trustworthy method/ology for "making the world visible in ways that implement the goals of social justice and radical, progressive democracy" (Denzin & Giardina (2010, p. 14).

Conclusion

If we are to resist and unravel the stranglehold of white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy on US higher education, we must continue to inquire into the power structures and everyday power dynamics of intersecting systems of oppression. Women of color thinkers and scholars have for centuries spoken and written with great insight about these very dynamics, but white women have a history of not only ignoring their calls, but also of actively silencing women of color through various modes of violence, and structural and dynamic maneuvering. This study aims to attend carefully to the theories and scholarship of women of color, especially as it relates to white women's participation in racism, to examine the experiences of white women undergraduate students on a college campus. The purpose of this critical narrative inquiry is multi-fold: a) to explore the nuances and complexities of storied experience at the intersection of privilege and oppression, b) to better understand the role of college campuses and college experiences in socializing white women into white supremacist heteropatriarchy, c) to better understand white women's particular ways of doing racism, and d) to identify possible points of and strategies for resistance of white capitalist heteropatriarchy among white women and others who occupy privileged

positions on college campuses. To do this, I weave together critical narrative inquiry with photo elicitation methods in order to dig into the everyday lived experiences of white women college students and the way they 'story' their lives in relation to structures of domination. These stories give us insight not only into the ways that white women students make meaning of their lives, but also into the meanings that shape their actions in the world. While this dissertation focuses on the experiences of white women undergraduate students, it sheds light also on the structures and systems which shape and are shaped by everyday living and 'storying,' the same structures and systems that silence and marginalize women of color. Ultimately this dissertation should contribute to movements for freedom and liberation within and beyond higher education.

CHAPTER 4

Resonant Threads of Whiteness

I weave together threads of narratives that run across the stories of my participants. As I identify the threads that run across, I see how whiteness operates in our narratives about ourselves as white women[14]. Often participants, when left to self-identify, identify as women, as students, with their major, as a first generation college student, as poor, as Christian or atheist. As I asked questions to get them and keep them talking, I had to pull hard at the thread of whiteness. It refused to come to the surface. Sometimes when it did, it elicited new thinking for the participants. At other times, it jolted the narrative to a halt, until participants could find another thread to grab onto – one unrelated to race – to begin weaving again. Some participants describe their whiteness as "normal" or even an emptiness, something nearly impossible to talk about, but their stories reveal how white women's deeply held feelings, values, and sense of self lead them to disconnect from women of color and participate in the violence of white domination.

Rather than offering narrative summaries or snapshots of each individual participant, I instead highlight resonant threads (Clandinin, 2013, p. 132) that run across participants' narratives and my own researcher memos. As part of the process of re-storying their narratives, I began to feel that the individual dimensions and intersections of each snapshot provided points of departure and distraction for white readers from the work of tarrying with whiteness (Yancy, 2008). As Yancy (2010) explains, white people often use complexity "to make the problem of racism disappear," which is an

[14] All participants in this story were cisgender women. When the term "woman" is used in this study, it is used to denote cisgender women and the privilege that accrues to cisgender people within gender binarist and transphobic culture and systems of domination, including college (Nicolazzo, 2016; Spade, 2015).

invalid use of complexity, especially when interrogating and transforming systems of oppression is the goal (p. 11). This, coupled with the fact that white cisgender women come to signify white innocence within the white, patriarchal imaginary (Collins, 2009; Davidson, 2010), make diversions especially likely and dangerous. By highlighting four resonant threads of whiteness in this chapter, I hope to begin a conversation grounded in the storied experience of white domination for white women, that once sufficiently grounded, can be made more complex in its interesections. White readers, however, must first tarry with white domination as it is inflected by gender for white, cisgender women, and its effects on individuals and communities of color.

Many of the narratives participants told "fit" the narratives we tell of "successful students" and "successful" practices in higher education. But when we pull out the threads of whiteness, of colonialism and imperialism, and trace the ways these are inflected by sexism, genderism, classism, ableism, and other systems of domination, we see how white women's experiences of college are normalized to provide cover for the perpetuation of imperialist, white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy.

Patricia Hill Collins (2009) writes, "the supposedly seamless web of economy, polity, and ideology function as a highly effective system of social control designed to keep African-American women in an assigned, subordinate, place. This larger system of oppression works to suppress the ideas of Black women intellectuals and to protect elite White male interests and worldviews" (p. 7). Here I ask what role white women play in weaving this seamless web on college campuses? And what role institutions of higher education play in supporting, structuring, teaching, and rewarding this practice of

weaving the imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy? More specifically, my research questions are

- In what ways do undergraduate white women experience college?
- In what ways do white women do racism while in college?
- What college experiences shape and support the ways that white women learn and do racism?

I approach this narratively, since it is through narrative that people make meaning of their lives (Chase, 2005). And it is these meanings that create the stories that we live out daily in our actions and relationships with others, with institutions, and with ourselves. Narratives, as Patel (2016) describes "enliven," "animate," and "cauterize" settler colonial logics and material practices[15] within the matrix of domination. Narratives can also be revised, can open opportunities for resistance and radical response to injustice and oppression. As Edwards describes, "Radicalism and love apart from narrated life stories is impotent" (Edwards, 2014, p. 25). These narrated life stories, however, must include narrated lives of people of color as "counter-hegemonic text" (Edwards, 2014, p. 25) or counter-stories (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) in order to make the "violence of White supremacy real, and its master narratives a lie. They also make mutual humanity through lives in relation essential" (Edwards, 2014, p. 25). Through narrative, then, we can realize the goal of intersectional research as Bowleg (2008) describes it: the connecting of individual biography with structural inequality.

[15] Settler colonialism is a process of direct global domination in which "colonialists emigrate with the express purpose of building a new community through territorial occupation" (Dancy, Edwards & Davis, n.d., p. 3). More specifically, settler colonialism in the US "seeks to turn Indigenous land into property and regards Black life as fungible" (Tuck, 2016, p. vxiii).

As participants told me stories of their lives and experiences during college, I heard their individual biographies. What remained mostly hidden and silenced were connections with structural inequality, with institutional power dynamics and inequities related to race. Relationships of domination with women of color were also implicit, coded, and normalized within their stories. This is whiteness and colonization at work. As Patel writes, coloniality "segments land, people, and relationships among them into strata" (Patel, 2016, p. 18) as part of the centuries-long project of "delineating statuses of humanity, and from those categories of human and not, the ability to own land and others" as well as the ability to know and own knowledge (Patel, 2016, p. 6, 34). This disconnection to segment and stratify people and property is evident in the stories participants told about themselves and others. Decolonial research, however, is fundamentally relational in regards to context, to people, to histories, and to land (Smith, 2012; Patel, 2016). It is also holistic, recognizing the intra-relatedness, understanding matter, being, and meaning as part of a broader ecology (Patel, 2016). Taking both Patel and Edwards's lead, I re-connect and re-story (Clandinin, 2012) participants' narratives by weaving them together with each other, and with the stories and perspectives of people of color, especially women of color, with the histories of the land on which these students and I are living and learning, and with the wider contexts in which we move. I do this in four acts that re-story participants' individual narratives collectively to bring to the surface themes that ran across their storied experiences: 1) feelings, 2) silences and narrative shifts, 3) entitlements to space, and 4) the unattainable ideal.

Thread 1: Feelings

Niceness

Participants in this study framed their stories with descriptions of the emotional spaces they valued. They most often valued feelings of appreciation and gratitude, "nice"-ness, supportiveness, and positivity. In general, they express desires to feel good, and comfortable.

> *I feel like I appreciate a lot of things. I like that in other people as well, when they have a sense of gratitude about them.* (Taylor)

> *We talk about a lot of really hot topics (in my ethics and world religions class), issues that you're always told you don't talk about those things in public. It's nice because in that type of setting, we're actually able to sit and debate and discuss but nobody gets overheated. We can have a civil discussion which I feel like nowadays that's very hard to find. Two weeks ago, we talked about death penalty as part of the lecture. Obviously some people are going to feel very strongly one way, some people are going to feel very strongly the other way and we can sit and we can voice our opinions and our arguments for it but at then at the end of class, it's still, "Hey, let's go grab a bite to eat." It's very civil and it's an interesting class so it's neat. I like it.* (Ann)

> Taylor also described studying abroad in Turkey getting sprayed with tear gas during political protests: *"For a second I was like, "Oh my gosh, what's going on?" I just let it be, because I felt so safe within the citizens. They were so curious of where we were from, and why we were there. Whenever they heard that we were from (this place that had just had a natural disaster), they were so supportive. It was like this empathy came out of them, for us. They were really nice people, it was really nice."*

As I listen to their stories, I hear strong desires for comfort and "being treated nicely," even – or especially – in situations that involve conflict across differences. For Ann this conflict takes place in a course that is different than any others she's taken in college as a senior majoring in environmental studies and biology. For Taylor, this moment of conflict and desire for safety (experienced as niceness and empathy toward

her) takes place in another country, specifically a predominantly Muslim country in Asia experiencing political conflict.

Participants often talked about conflict with roommates as significantly influencing their experiences as students, as well. Ann was especially detailed in her stories of roommate conflict, especially detailed *except* when it came to the role that race played. Between our first and second interviews Donald Trump was elected President, and the roommate conflict had escalated. In our first conversation Ann mentioned that she and her roommate had "debates" about Black Lives Matter "and this and this and that," but that "there wasn't ever any time where that stuff made us start being nasty in any way to each other, stopped talking." Instead, Ann attributed the conflict to the way that her roommates – whom she described, when prompted, as African American, Vietnamese, and white – "come home in the middle of the week drunk," are loud, and "don't respect my things." When we spoke after the election, however, the conflict had escalated with her Black roommate, who we'll call Patrisse. Ann described how both she and Patrisse had made Facebook posts about the election, but continued circling back to how Patrisse wouldn't let her use kitchen utensils, was ignoring her, and had not been caring to her after a family member died. Ann described that her own Facebook post said "congrats to our next President" while Patrisse's post said "If you voted for Trump, you're a bigot and I don't like you." Throughout her story, Ann focuses on her need for "positivity" and niceness, and on herself as nice, but consistently wronged:

> *(After the election) I was like, I have seen so much hate right now, more than I ever did throughout the election. I was like everybody is being awful to one another. If you didn't get what you wanted, tough luck, that's how life works, but you know what you can do. You can move on and if you've got a problem or*

something, make a change. Go out there and be a positive influence if you want to see a change made. … It would do our world a lot of good if everybody could just be nice to one another.

After arguing with Patrisse about kitchen utensils, Ann described: *she got in my face, and she put her finger in my face. She started going off. Basically she told me that I am a vile, hateful, terrible human being, all I do is spew hatred, 98% of the people that meet me hate me because I'm so awful. … I was like "I kept trying to be nice to you. Even in situations where you weren't nice to me, you weren't a friend to me, I still tried to be nice to you."*

I didn't even see you that whole week, other than one confrontation. It's like, I'm done. A lot of it had to do with the election. … It's like, I didn't even vote. It would be absentee voting for me and my mom had always told me that it was just a mess and more of a hassle than anything else, so I didn't even look into it. (Patrisse) told me that I'm a bigot and I'm a hateful human being. You're literally the only person that has ever said this to me in my whole life, so it doesn't bother me that you think this, because it's like I know that I'm not. If I was truly a bigot, I wouldn't have my diverse friend group that I have. If I was truly a bigot, why would I have wanted to be friends with you and live with you in the first place.

While Ann initially describes the roommate conflict as about rights to property use (kitchen wares), noise levels, and differences in sleep patterns, she also frames the argument in terms of "respect," but specifically in terms of her need for respect, her need to be liked, to be recognized as nice, and to have friends. Being called a bigot – first indirectly and then directly – was the final straw. And Ann's emotional response is to re-state her claim to niceness, to being a friend, and to having a "diverse friend group."

Ann expects Patrisse to treat her nicely and respectfully despite the fact that her political views dehumanize Patrisse. For Ann, friendship involves performances of niceness rather than shared humanity and solidarity. Collins (2009) anticipates Ann's response to Patrisse's voicing of her anger and frustration when she writes, Black women are "penalized if they do not appear warm and nurturing…Whites expect Black

women to exhibit deferential behavior and deeply resent those who do not" (Collins, 2009, p. 80-81). When Ann is forced to see herself through Patrisse's eyes, she refuses, and lashes back at Patrisse to reassert her vision of herself as a nice, "not biggotted" friend. She also excuses herself from political and personal responsibility for anything related to Donald Trump by explaining that she did not vote. Matias (2016) describes these performances of racial ignorance, helplessness, self-victimization and "blatant disrespect" as dimensions of white narcissism (p. 70-71).

Meanwhile, Patrisse continues not only to live and study in a predominantly white, racist, patriarchal institution (Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa, & Lui, 2014), but also with a roommate who refuses to listen to her perspective in an attempt to understand and instead feels victimized and exacts emotional punishment. As Accappadi (2007) explains, "when there is conflict among women, the norms under which these conflicts are managed are based on White societal norms…the White woman's reality is visible, acknowledged, and legitimized because of her tears, while a woman of color's reality, like her struggle, is invisible, overlooked, and pathologized based on the operating 'standard of humanity' (which is white)" (p. 210). When women of color speak their experience to white women, not only it is often perceived as anger when it is not, but also even when words are spoken in anger, they speak to humanity and possibility. Audre Lorde (1984/2007) makes clear the difference between words spoken in anger between gender marginalized folks and physical and existential trauma:

> if I speak to you in anger, at least I have spoken to you: I have not put a gun to your head and shot you down in the street; I have not looked at your bleeding sister's body and asked, "What did she do to deserve it?" This was the reaction

> of two white women to Mary Church Terrell's telling of the lynching of a pregnant Black woman whose baby was then torn from her body (in 1921). (p. 130)

The white women in this study mostly desired emotional and psychic comfort, feeling others' empathy, niceness, and gratitude, especially (or particularly) when it came from people of color or in more racially, ethnically and/or ideologically diverse settings than they were used to. When particular forms of "niceness" came from white men, especially older white men, participants sometimes framed it more skeptically as "coddling." They sensed it as both a response to their whiteness, their cisgender identities and performance, and their age.

> *I think there's a tendency to, I don't know, almost maybe not sometimes when you're not on campus I think there's a tendency of especially older men who are maybe of an older, different generation, to kind of see college aged women as, not stupid, but kind of needing to be coddled or needing to give them chivalry or kind of treat them differently, maybe speak to them slower. And I don't think it's because they actively think women are stupid, but.* (Kinsey)

> *I also feel like, in a way, people expect – as a feminine white woman, people feel like I almost need to be coddled and protected sometimes. ... It looks like maybe when I go to the library or there are police officers outside of our church, there's a police officer outside of the library, maybe they ... when I walk out the door, maybe they watch a little closer to make sure no one's going to ... jump at me than they do when it's somebody else or a teenage boy or whatever.* (Heather)

Rather than feeling watched and targeted as if she were a threat, Heather felt watched in protection. But in protection of what? Or of whom? Apparently someone who might "jump at her." Historically, white men looked to protect white, cisgender (cis) women from the advances – violent, sexual, real or imagined – of Black men. This "protection" provided cover and rationale for the terrorization via lynching of Black men and by proxy entire Black communities. Statistically, however, white college

women are more likely to be assaulted, stalked, and/or raped by white men whom they know (Gross, Winslett, Roberts & Gohm, 2006) than strangers in front of a church or library. While white, cis college women perceive this surveillance as coddling, Black and brown people across the gender spectrum experience this surveillance as the precursor to violence, incarceration, and the result of their always-already criminalization under colonialist, white supremacist, heteropatriarchy.

The white women participating in this study were most aware of this "coddling" and "protection" off campus, as these examples show. But what does this look like on campus? While participants did not articulate their treatment on campus as coddling, and did not talk about encounters with police on campus, many participants talked about being singled out for opportunities such as research with professors, individual mentoring from faculty, and peer educator opportunities because they were identified as "good students." These opportunities seemed normal to most of them, however, even expected. And when other white women were given these opportunities over them, most participants felt unjustly excluded. Women of color as students, however, are regularly "positioned as less than and not deserving of respect" on campus (Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa, & Lui, 2014). And the notions of womanhood that frame cisgender white women as worthy of protection and opportunities as "good students" depend on constructions of Black, Latinx, and Asian womanhood as deviant and exoticized. As Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa & Lui (2014) explain, "Many women of color traverse the college campus having the construction of (exoticized) stereotypes placed upon them by peers, administrators, and professors. These constructs grow increasingly hard to navigate for women of color and eventually

seep into their collegiate experience, which influences outcomes such as engagement and identity development" (p. 42). Not only do other white women undergraduate students aim microagressions at women of color, but they also feel less personal responsibility to intervene even when women of color – particularly Black women – are facing potential sexual assault (Katz, Merillees, Hoxmeier & Motisi, 2017).

Fear

This desiring of appreciation, gratitude, empathy and niceness - especially when extended to oneself in racially and ethnically diverse situations – belies a fear that often went unnamed in participants' stories. These fears were voiced by a couple of participants, however. Lindsey describes her feelings of offense and being attacked when her whiteness was highlighted: "I think I didn't used to think about the fact that I'm white until I think I got into college and got involved in social justice issues and started thinking about privilege and understanding what that was without immediately getting offended and feeling personally attacked." She also described two occasions on which she was particularly aware of her whiteness because of her fear in new situations with Black people. She also processes being aware of this fear as racist, "questioning (her) feelings and feeling guilty for them."

> *It was an awful story. I was on a bus heading to San Antonio to see my boyfriend. I had had a big fight with my parents because they're crazy and don't approve of my life choices, so I was leaving after Christmas, changing plans and decided to just hop on a bus to see my boyfriend and hang out with his more stable family. I had never ridden a public bus before so when I got on there it was this double decker and everything just felt sketchy, but bus stations in Baton Rouge, Louisiana are really sketchy, but I was the only white person on the top of the double decker and I just felt so unsafe.*
>
> *It was supposed to be a ride all through the night. It left at like 11 a.m. and I was supposed to get to San Antonio the next morning. I didn't sleep a wink. I was up freaking out the whole night, and not just because I was scared, but I*

was just like, "Why am I scared? I call myself a social justice activist. Why does this scare me? Yeah, there are a lot of African-American families. Look, they've got kids. They're just trying to get somewhere just like me and they're probably just as miserable and not wanting to be on this bus. Why do I feel scared?" It's funny because when I had headed over there my brother was driving me to the bus station. He was like, "Wow, look at all these ghetto people," and like this kind of racist stuff that my family has. They're not overtly racist, but it's there. I was kind of on the bus just thinking about that and feeling scared and feeling really guilty for feeling scared the whole time and yeah, I didn't know how to deal with that.

When I was in New York there's a lot of sketchy people that just kind of lurk around and I felt really unsafe. One night I was walking through a park with a friend of mine that I had met on the trip and there was like this group of, I think they were … It was really dark, but I think they were mostly just a group of black men just standing really close to us and just getting too close to our space and I felt so uncomfortable, but then also thinking, "Am I being paranoid? Am I being racist? Is this internalized racism? Why am I feeling scared?" and I did ask the girl who was with me, who was African American. I was just like, "Hey, did those guys kind of creep you out?" and she said, "Yeah, but you get used to it," so like, "Okay, at least I know it is sketchy, but it's just normal in New York."

Yeah, I have to kind of negotiate that with myself sometimes like, "What do I do when I feel scared when I see these groups of people which are kind of acting sketchy, but how much of that is internalized racism and this thug stereotype and how much of it is … Because on the bus I knew it was just internalized racism. I was not in any danger. I was just trying to get to San Antonio, but in other situations I'm like, I don't know, so I deal with that a lot, like questioning my feelings and feeling guilty for them.

Here Lindsey grapples with her dual oppressed/oppressor identity (Accapadi, 2007). She uses the word "sketchy" multiple times, seemly to denote and "off" feeling and a fear associated mostly with Black folks. She has a choice to make as she recognizes the emotional dimensions of her white racism, while also recognizing her potential as a target of oppression and violence from white patriarchy. How will she act on these emotions? Which ones does she question, grapple with, and work to transform in an effort to use her self in social and racial justice efforts?

Linder (2016) describes a cyclical process white women go through as they develop identities that support them in antiracist feminist activism; the process involves guilt and shame, fears of appearing racist, and ultimately distancing from whiteness by engaging in action. As Lindsey questions herself and navigates the emotional terrain of imperialist white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy as a white cisgender, enabled woman. However, women and female-identified people of color navigate a different terrain, one filled with violence, erasure, and the compounded trauma of living at the intersections of multiple, intersecting systems of domination (Andersen & Collins, 2013).

Audre Lorde (1984/2007) describes the insidious risk of guilt, however, for white women: "Guilt is not a response to anger; it is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication; it becomes a device to protect ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness" (p. 130). Ultimately white guilt, when unaddressed, covers for white fragility, re-centering white people – especially cis white women – and their race-gender psychopathologies (Matias, 2016) that erase and violate people of color, especially those multiply marginalized by interlocking systems of oppression.

While I listened to participants describe their desires for comfortability and nice-ness extended to them, occasionally their fears and guilt, what I did not hear loudly in their stories was grief for what they had lost by virtue of being white or anger at injustice that targets students of color for the benefit of white people (Matias, 2016). On

three occasions participants told unelicited stories of witnessing systemic, implicit and explicit racism: a) being with a boyfriend who is regularly profiled as Latino and pulled over and harassed by police officers; b) getting selected for a retention committee that includes only white, class privileged student and staff voices, and c) witnessing and intervening in the exclusion of a Latina greek letter organization during homecoming festivities. As students told these stories, they expressed feeling irritated, angry, annoyed, frustrated, and "feeling bad." These feelings and their analyses of the situations moved them to intervene in various ways to interrupt the dynamics of race domination they saw at play. While their interventions took various forms – repeating what has already been said to police, stepping down from committees that refused to listen to students of color, and negotiating with other white women to make space for women of color in campus activities – participants' interventions also reinscribed the safety and comfort they experience as cisgender white women. Although the physical safety, emotional well-being, and educational access of others were at risk in these situations, these white women never incurred the same risk, even when challenging the dynamics of racism at play in each situation. One of the hallmarks and tell-tale signs of white, cisgender womanhood in college is the ability to remain comfortable, to experience (and even expect) "niceness," and to have your race and gender identity and performance buffer for you the effects of sexism and classism. In the right circumstances this safety extends even into benefits when white women are identified as "good whites" and "friend of people of color" (Thompson, 2003).

Leonardo (2009) describes that "as long as whites ultimately feel a sense of comfort with racial analysis, they will not sympathize with the pain and discomfort they

have unleashed on racial minorities for centuries" (p. 90). Instead, as Yancy (2014) insists, white people "must tarry not only with the feeling of loss, but with the pain and suffering that people of color endure because of the effects of the historical sedimentation of White supremacy and its continue subtle and not so subtle manifestations. One must be prepared to linger, to remain, with the truth about one's White self and the truth about how whiteness has structured and continues to structure forms of relationality that are oppressive to people of color" (p. 13). White women are not forced to linger; in fact, we are encouraged and allowed not to linger over the truth of the violence we exact and enable. We are comforted by each other, and expect, even demand that others center and care for us.

Women of color, on the other hand, are mammified (Collins, 2009), exoticized (Harris, 2016; Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa & Lui, 2014), and exploited in the process of getting an education or contributing to the education of white students (Edwards, 2014; Yancy & Davidson, 2014). As Lorde (1984/2007) aptly explains:

> Women of Color in America have grown up within a symphony of anger, at being silenced, at being unchosen, at knowing that when we survive, it is in spite of a world that takes for granted our lack of humanness, and which hates our very existence outside of its service. And I say symphony rather than cacophony because we have had to learn to orchestrate those furies so that they do not tear us apart. We have had to learn to move through them and use them for strength and force and insight within our daily lives. Those of us who did not learn this difficult lesson did not survive. And part of my anger is always libation for my fallen sisters. (p. 129)

As I listened to these white women undergraduate students – seniors who are about to graduate – I was lulled by the "normalcy" of their narratives to my white cis woman's ear. I had heard these stories, lived these stories, felt these stories a million times or more in my own years on college campuses. These stories were the water I swam in – the water I SWIM in – and the air I breathe. But they also itched. If I paid attention, my skin twitched. Because the underside of these stories – the untold and unspoken parts, the implications and consequences and histories – are stories of death and inhumanity for people of color, for Indigenous communities, for Black folks, for Latinx communities, for Asian and Pacific Islander folks, for immigrant and migrant communities. To flip the stories white women tell and open up the silences would mean to hear the symphony of orchestrated furies that have sustained communities of color in the face of genocide, modern day slavery, and educational inequities that deny the intellectual, creative and entrepreneurial talents of millions of students of color across the nation and world. Ahmed (2010) calls on us all to built a more attuned felt awareness of the violence in our world: "We have to work and struggle not so much to feel hurt but to notice what causes hurt, which means unlearning what we have learned not to notice. We have to do this work if we are to produce critical understandings of how violence, as a relation of force and harm, is directed toward some bodies and not others. … feelings might be how structures get under our skin" (p. 216). Our bodies, after all "remember such histories, even when we forget them" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 154), and our emotional and embodied reactions can uncover the learned and habitual ways white people have of "lying to (ourselves), masking the extent to which (we are) implicated in whiteness" (Yancy, 2008, p. 236). Attending to our itches are integral for

researching the self, the self in relation to others, and the self in relation to system (Milner, 2007).

Thread 2: Silence & Shifts

When participants in the study began talking about race, a series of conversational moves silenced explicit talk about race and racism. Participants had difficulties sustaining talk of race – tarrying, as Yancy (2014) would say. Participants would either bump up against the limits of their language for talking about race, or their desire to, and shift. These shifts were significant.

For example, Kinsley grapples with how gender is easier for her to talk about with strangers. With her friends, white "liberals" with whom she shares a social world and racialized understandings, she has easier talks about race, but with others, race talk is more difficult.

> *I almost think with people who aren't my friends, I think sometimes it's easier to talk about gender than it is about race in some ways. And I'm not really sure why that is, because since I'm, even though women are half the population, I'm a minority in terms of gender. Maybe I can talk about gender more because I'm a minority or it could just be that maybe we've evolved in some ways to talk more about gender than we have about race, in general. So I would maybe feel more comfortable talking to a stranger, supposing it came up, about something that was bothering me about sexism or something. ... I feel that in some ways talking about gender is maybe easier to do with strangers than about race. But again, I don't know if that's just because I'm white. I don't know, maybe just as many people of color talk to other people of color they don't know all the time about these things. I have no idea.*

Kinsley begins to wonder about the role of being white in her difficulty talking about race, but does not get very far before stopping and admitting "I have no idea." She also loses her words when she talks about growing estranged from an elementary school friend who was Black once they entered 6th grade. Her school was segregated by race, and her friend starting "hanging out" with other Black students:

> *then it was kind of like a fissure. Like, there was no point of where she was like "I don't want to be your friend anymore" and she wanted to stop hanging out. But she was always hanging out with them, and then she kind of just started, not being colder to me, but just kind of acting more distant. And, I don't know if it's because they're more of her culture and she just felt more at home with them, but, I don't know.…that was really weird to me. I didn't really understand. And I still don't understand it now.*

Kinsley has no understanding – nor close adult or high school friendships with Black women – that help her understand school segregation, peer groups, and her own and her friend's experience. While she is an honors student, and seeks out other women-centered campus activities through which she meets women of color, including Black women, she does not build close friendships with them, or explore this "fissure" and estrangement from a childhood best friend and her own actions and inactions that might have created the fissure.

Lacy also comes to a stop, or rather a shift, when she talks about her sense of herself as a white woman:

> *I don't think about being a white woman. And that's probably a privilege in itself. A lot of people tell me that I don't look like a white woman. I get asked, "What are you?" I'm like, "Well, my Dad had some Cherokee way back when," but … Yeah. I get asked that a lot, but … My race isn't on my mind, and that's totally a white privilege.*

As soon as Lacy begins thinking about white privilege, she shifts. When Lacy gets stuck at white privilege, she reaches for any experience she has that connects her with non-white racialization. Specifically, she reaches for what Deloria (1988) and Tuck and Yang (2012) call the Indian Grandmother Complex. Tuck and Yang (2012) describe this as "settler nativism" that is a "settler move to innocence because it is an attempt to deflect settler identity, while continuing to enjoy settler privilege and occupying stolen land" (p. 11). Not only is this a move to innocence from responsibility for ongoing

settler colonialism and white domination, but it also diminishes the effects of exoticization that many women of color, both monoracial and multiracial, experience on campuses (Harris, 2016; Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa & Lui, 2014; Porter & Maddox, 2014). Both the land and communities of color are erased, as are the violences of ongoing settler colonialism.

Participants also often shifted conversations from race to culture. Reba talks about whiteness first as culture-less – "I don't think we really have a set-in culture that a lot of us practice" – and then as a culture separate from white privilege characterized for people she knows as football, Baptists and conservatives.

> *I just think White culture and White privilege ... Not talking about privilege right now, but I don't think we really have a set-in culture that a lot of us practice. We have Thanksgiving and things like that, but we don't have ... I think we value football more than we do a lot of other things. A lot about it (for my Indian immigrant friends) is family and their holidays and their beliefs. I think it's more uniform. It's more widely practiced by that race. ... We have some cultures. We all gather round ... Maybe I'm not seeing it as a culture. I'm just seeing it as my normal, and their culture's not my normal. ... On Sunday we have it all developed to one sport, especially in the South. We have a lot of Baptists, and we have a lot of conservatives. That's culture in itself, but it's not as ... I'm normalizing my culture again, but ...*

Reba starts. And stops. And struggles to move past her "normal" to describe and understand it. She reaches first for culture, then to privilege, then back to culture as she makes connections with her Indian friends whose families are immigrants and whose festivals she talks about having visited. In fact, she treats white culture as different than white privilege, a move that flattens racial power dynamics and hides the fact that white privilege – and in fact white domination – is endemic to white culture in the US. Both Thanksgiving and football are neutralized as holidays and past-times without settler-colonialist or racist and patriarchal underpinnings.

These silences and stops are not empty "neutral" spaces. The silences get "filled" and operate to DO something. Both Bonilla-Silva (2014) and Villanueva (2006) talk about the ways that culture stands in for race to perpetuate the new racism: colorblind racism. Linguistic gymnastics silence talk about race and racism in order to perpetuate racist systems and practices. Rather than being negations, these silences and shifts attempt to preserve what Leonardo (2009) calls the "innocence of whiteness" (p. 76). Tropes of "white privilege" and whiteness-as-nothingness (re)present white people as innocents on whom processes of racial domination work, bestowing privilege: race "domination without agents" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 76). Nearly all of the participants in this study mentioned white privilege. As soon as white privilege was mentioned, stories moved into silences, shifts, and elisions. Connecting white privilege to lived experiences seemed either impossible or dangerous or both. bell hooks (2003) describes her witness and understanding of this pattern: "white supremacist culture encourages white folks to deny their understanding of race, to claim as part of their superiority that they are beyond thinking about race. Yet when the denial stops, it becomes clear that underneath their skin most white folks have an intimate awareness of the politics of race and racism. They have learned to pretend that it is not so, to take on the posture of learned helplessness" (p. 26).

I have learned this posture of helplessness – of silence and ignorance – as well. If participants are posturing this learned helplessness as they tell me stories, I have a role in these silences, as well. As I wrote in one of my research memos:

> *I itched and wanted to jump in on lots of occasions as participants were telling these stories. Part of this itch, discomfort and high blood pressure is a feeling of responsibility to students of color that I know, to my friends who are folx of color, to faculty of color who I know are targeted by such narratives and*

> *students. But another part of my silence – if I'm being honest, and I must – was my training and socialization to participate in the telling of these narratives. My training in niceness and the art of silencing and staying silent. Even listening is a part of the telling, with an ethical dimension and cost, and I knew that by listening without intervening, I was participating.*

I can not help but think here and now of Lorde's (1984/2007) admonition: "I have seen situations where white women hear a racist remark, resent what has been said, become filled with fury, and remain silent because they are afraid. That unexpressed anger lies within them like an undetonated device, usually to be hurled at the first woman of Color who talks about racism" (p. 126). Was this the pattern I was falling back into in these interviews? While I was angry on several occasions at stories I heard, I channeled that anger into writing and reflection for myself. But what if I had channeled it into the conversation in the moment? I can say that I wanted to stay silent as an act of listening that would encourage participants to keep talking, that I asked questions to find out more, to keep the stories going, becoming more elaborate. But what would have happened if I had intervened to move one story or another in a different direction? Audre Lorde (1984/2007) calls to me again: "But anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification, for it is in the painful process of this translation that we identify who are our allies with whom we have grave difference, and who are our genuine enemies" (p. 126).

These silences and shifts – my own and participants' – move in racist and settler colonialist ways. They are the ways white women participate in the settler colonial, racist project while preserving their own innocence and sense of self as "nice," and a "good white person" (Thompson, 2003; Applebaum, 2010). Meanwhile, we walk

around campuses – and our communities and the world – excluding, exploiting, and violating. The structures, all the while, "under our skin" making us feel good and shaping our desires (Ahmed, 2010, p. 216).

Thread 3: Entitlement to Space

As participants talked about their experiences on campus, they often talked about not wanting to be bothered. They valued places that were exclusive, often where they could be alone, places that no one else knew about and where they could feel both special and comfortable by being there.

> *not a lot of people know how to get to (this garden), so it's like your own little sanctuary … I feel like I have power because I'm pretty much the only person there. If I'm having a week where it's really stressful and I need somewhere to go to work on homework and be by myself, I have the power to go there. So it's not really like I have power, but it's like I do because a lot of people really don't know how to get there. And so I go there. (Sidney)*

> *I like the courtyard in (my college). No one is ever there. … I feel like most people don't know about it if they don't live in the Honors College. … It was always the place where you would go if you wanted to have a peaceful moment. (Becca)*

Both Becca and Sidney, along with other participants, appreciated and sought out places where they could be alone. They also articulate, however, that these places made them feel powerful or special because they were exclusive; others on campus did not know about them or did not know how to access them. These spaces were empty and quiet on a bustling campus where space is difficult to find and are at a premium *because* others could not get to them or did not know about them. This fact not only made the quiet possible, but also increased the value of these spaces for participants like Sidney, who was aware of and felt powerful by knowing how to get to a place that others could see – a garden – but did not know how to access.

This valuing of spaces that were exclusive, difficult to access or unknown, unoccupied, quiet, and "peaceful" echo a kind of romantic academic life. As Harris and González (2012) describe, "certain … qualities and attitudes—brilliance, rigor, seriousness, rationality, objectivity—are greatly prized. … the romance of the brilliant, lonely genius in pursuit of Truth—even if the heavens should fall—still lingers (in academia)" (Harris & González, 2012, p. 4). While Harris and González (2012) connect these notions of the lone and exclusive academic life with white masculinity, they are also made possible – historically and currently – by processes of colonization and displacement. Participants' in this study appreciated and desired exclusive, quiet spaces, from courtyards to secret rooms; these spaces made them feel powerful and were meaningful to them. Lipsitz (2007) describes these desires as the "white spatial imaginary," a way of valuing space based on exclusion that has long colonialist and imperialist roots:

> interconnections among race, place, and power in the United States have a long history. They stem from concrete policies and practices: Indian removal in the age of westward expansion; restrictive covenants during the industrial era; and urban renewal and urban restructuring in the late industrial and early post-industrial periods (Rogin 1987; Hirsch 1983; Sugrue 1996). Yet these policies also emanate from shared cultural ideals and moral geographies based on a romance with pure spaces. (Lipsitz, 2007, p. 12)

Pure spaces, empty spaces, and quiet spaces are only made so by exclusion and displacement. Participants who talked about valuing quiet and exclusive places on campus were those who lived on campus. Participants who lived with their families and

commuted to campus often felt excluded from such places – especially the library, with its nooks for studying, as well as its other physical resources. They felt excluded because of their schedules and their lack of knowledge about places on campus outside of their colleges and workplaces. Students of color on campus, however, regularly experience exclusion and marginalization from spaces because of overt and covert discrimination, micro-aggressions, and the policing of space both by authorities and peers (Dancy, 2013; Patton, Harris, Ranero-Ramirez, Villacampa & Lui, 2014). Because of this, students of color, queer students, and other students who share experiences of marginalization on campuses find places of congregation; they create spaces that often center on mutual aid, collective mobilization, and even multi-campus alliances and kinship networks (Collier & Lacey, 2017; Sulé, 2016; Nicolazzo, 2016). This use of space for coming together, however, directly counters white, colonialist notions of space as valued for private use, exclusivity, and exchange value (Lipsitz, 2007).

Not only did participants value spaces that were exclusive, where they could be alone, but participants like Sidney expressed ambivalence and frustration about sharing spaces with strangers on campus. She talks about her frustrations in terms of other people's rights to public spaces, and the lack of power she sometimes feels when sharing spaces – in this case, walkways – with others on campus.

> *Some people will take up the whole sidewalk and you're stuck behind them, and that really irritates me … I just feel like that's rude. But I can't be like, I can't be like, "You're being rude. Please get out of the way."… If like a group of people will just stop like in the center of the sidewalk, it's like, they also have rights to the sidewalk, too, you can't just tell them "You need to step aside" or you don't, you shouldn't do that. …it just makes me feel like I don't have power because I can't be like "you know, it's really rude of you to like block up the entire sidewalk" when it's not my sidewalk, but it's also not theirs.*

To many readers – including myself – Sidney's frustrations likely feel familiar, and everyday. The irritations of being stuck, of trying to get somewhere quickly, of having a path marked out and another person obstructing the way. As she articulates this in terms of rights, I hear Sidney understanding rights as a zero-sum game, as other people's rights infringing on her power and ability to use space as she would like. She understands power, in this instance, as the ability to tell others what to do, but she also feels a strong expectation and social pressure ("shouldn't") not to do this. To be clear, Sidney did not articulate whether others on the sidewalk were students of color or were white, class privileged students that she talked about at length in other parts of our conversation. Regardless, her frustrations with shared space and ambivalence about other people's rights in relation to hers remain a dimension of her experience on campus, one significant enough to talk about with me despite its daily familiarity.

Sidney and other participants' desires for exclusive spaces, and Sidney's naming of her frustration with others' rights to public space, highlight the powerful everydayness of white entitlements to space, and the long historical roots that reach into our individual and collective psychologies, shaping our conscious and unconscious ways of being and moving through the college and campus life. These desires result in ways of moving through and using space that not only displace others through race domination, but also reinscribe the white spatial imaginary.

Thread 4: The Unattainable Ideal

Most participants in this study felt like they did not live up to an ideal of the good student. The ideals they mentioned were usually other white, cisgender, class privileged women. Sometimes words like "lifestyle" and "personality" arose as the

centering term, like a magazine cover title waiting to happen. I could almost see these "good white woman" students they conjured on the cover of campus publications and featured in view books. I did not ask any questions about what a "good student" looked like; instead these images arose in response to questions like "Are there any experiences on campus you wish you'd had an opportunity to have, but didn't?"

The "ideal" that many participants felt they never lived up to was a white student – often a cisgender woman – who was involved in many campus activities and had time for internships (paid or unpaid). She was a woman who could meet with faculty during office hours and build mentoring relationships with faculty. She did not have to work two jobs, and had leisure time and money that allowed her to eat lunch near campus with friends and participate in extracurricular activities. Participants sometimes felt pressure and sometimes felt desire to be this woman, influenced by explicit and implicit communication from colleges, faculty, and peers.

> *I feel like there's pressure to have a certain kind of personality and a certain, um lifestyle maybe. … People who are very involved in campus activities, in their college, and who are very bubbly and outgoing … not that genuine. … the competitive atmosphere of my college is very unhealthy. And (professors) are like "Well, that's how the real world is." And I'm like, "But not really though." (Sidney)*
>
> ***
>
> *Personally, I think that there's just ... They focus. The university focuses on the people who can better their name. I think that if they show really good promise in the first ... If they go into the department that freshman year and they say, okay, and they make the name for themselves as a student, they go in and then they go do office hours or anything to get their face remembered by people. There's a sophomore in one of my classes who is already on a relationship level with our dean, and I'm like, "Okay." They just have that drive. Growing up I never was told to do that. I was never told to go and just include myself in all of that. A totally personality thing as well.*

> *Sometimes I would just wish I didn't have to work so that I could make those relationships with the ambassadors at my college or just being able to go to the meetings in the evenings, because sometimes I wouldn't get home from work until eight, so ... I wish that I had the opportunity to go back and be able to not work and be a student, a full-time student.*
>
> *I'm not going to say her name, but she is a full-time student. She works at the campus newspaper. She works at the nightly news show. She's a college ambassador. She does a lot .... (she has opportunities) that are going to better herself for that career. She doesn't really have a job, and she doesn't have ... Her parents provide for her, and she gets involved. She gets to do a lot of the things that I wish I had the opportunity to do, to build up that, to just build up until I was in her position.*
>
> *Those aren't things that can really be helped, though. (Lacy)*

Participants imagined an ideal white cis woman student who through her involvement in academic opportunities, her professional focus, her personality and "lifestyle" could "better the name" of the university. Inherent in this is an understanding that the university uses students – particularly white cisgender women – to build an image and a reputation. These women are identified early, even in the first year, and selected for special relationships and opportunities. As Harris and González (2012) explain, "Reputation is the coin of the realm (at universities), and reputations are built not only by objective accomplishments but through images and sometimes outright fantasies—individual or collective—that cling to the nature of the work and the person being evaluated" (p. 4). But how can a first-year student have any objective accomplishments on which a reputation is built? White cisgender women, when they show themselves in the first year as ready and willing to participate in the image building of the institution through the "good student" values they enact, fulfill a fantasy, and the reputation "clings" to them. Ahmed (2012) describes how particular bodies and "faces" enable institutions to build particular character for themselves: "an institution might not have

an intrinsic character, but it is given character in part by being given a face" (p. 33). She further explains that "institutions become white through the positing of some bodies rather than others as the subjects of the institution (for whome and by whome the institutions is shaped)" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 45). Institutions, then, posit certain bodies – white, cisgender, enabled students, in particular – as subjects through both formal and informal selection processes that are enacted by faculty, staff and students. Reputations cling quickly. And if the reputation of "good student" can cling so easily to white cisgender women, what reputations "stick" (Ahmed, 2012) to other students?

Students whose bodies resist the normative "ideal" – students of color, students with disabilities, transgender and gender non-conforming students, and others – experience constant othering, marginalization, and violation on campus. Such students experience the paradox of simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility that leads to micro and macroagressions both in classrooms and extracurricular spaces on campuses (Krusemark, 2012; Hamilton, 2016). The reputations that pre-cede students whose bodies always-already do not conform to the ideal, shape their learning and living experiences in deep and enduring ways. Conversely, the experiences of having your body (my body!) move easily and accrue privileges through participation in white, cisgender, enabled ways of being also shape learning experiences in deep and enduring ways. So deep that they get "under the skin" and direct the ways we move, act, and relate within the matrix of domination.

Yearning for whiteness

Two of the women who shared their stories in this study identified having one parent who did not identify as white. They both identified as white not only during

recruitment for the study, but in many of the stories they told and ways they understood themselves. On occassion they also expressed racial and ethnic ambivalence, not being sure if they *should* identify as white. Amelia, in particular, expressed a desire for a more "average white female" experience of college. For her this desire was a result of her being raised by a white mother in a nearly all white school and town, being estranged from her "Hispanic-American" family for much of her life, and having to work two jobs to help off-set her loans and the cost of college attendance. As she described,

> *I'm supposed to be Hispanic-American but I'm super white-washed … I don't speak Spanish, but I probably should. 50% of my family really speaks Spanish, I should speak Spanish but I don't. I don't know how to make any of the traditional dishes, I should. There's a lot of things I should know, I think, if I was going to actively be Hispanic as much as I am white, I guess, if you can actively be any on race or something, but I don't (because I was raised in by my white mom with my white family). I struggle with that a lot because I can't just be an average college student female and that's what I want more than anything … I would love to be your normal white average female.*

While Amelia identifies as white, she does not feel like she's "enough" white to get the "true experience" of college. Amelia describes this desire for a true experience of college as connected not only to her estrangement from her Hispanic-American family, but also her experience of working multiple jobs, not being able to afford to go on "lunch dates" at restaurants near campus, and not being able to take advantage of campus-based involvement and academic opportunities, including professors' office hours and physical library resources.

> *Everyone has their own idea to an extent, I think (about what "normal white average" is). I think to me it's like average economic class like enough to go to college, I guess and not have to work so that you can get the full college experience. I never got to live on campus because we couldn't afford it and so I don't know what it's like to live in a dorm but I hear that's a big part of the college experience. I've really only gotten to eat (in the shopping district near campus) a little bit. I don't know 75% of the restaurants, but most everyone here could tell you all about that tiny little restaurant that's amazing but serves only*

> *two things and it's in the corner and I don't know anything about most of those and it's like ... that average female white college girl, she totally would get to do that. She gets to eat there a couple times a week, at least. Have lunch with her friends to have a study date or something like that and she uses the library way more often than I do. She doesn't just do all of her research on the website and hope that that works or that what she needs she can get in an internet format. She gets to go to the library and she gets to use the quiet study room when she needs to. That's a normal college student thing to do. I don't get to do that.*
>
> *She doesn't have to make special arrangements with her professors. She can go to office hours. That would be really awesome. That's kind of the normal college student thing to me. You get to ... your whole world is kind of here. When you need to go to the doctor, more than likely you're going to go to the student health center. I've never been to the student health center. Never. I don't know. It's not really an option or a part of my world. I don't have that college student thing. I guess that's kind of what it means to me.*

Amelia feels like she is not enough white. This conglomeration of experiences holds together via the image of white womanhood. Whiteness somehow clings to these performances of the idyllic college experience. And students who cannot access this portfolio of experiences either because their life circumstances do not allow or their bodies do not always already show up as white, cisgender, and able, do not feel enough. In Ahmed and Bhabha's words, colonialism positions such people who occupy ambiguous bodies and performances as "not quite, not white" (Ahmed, 1999, p. 95). In higher education, such students are not enough even according to institutional and scholarly discourses on "success." Feelings of not "enoughness" – not quite the right kind of white woman - were common among participants. Amelia's feelings of not "enoughness" were also connected to her family's history and racialization (even racism). Within colonialist, racist society's, attempts to become, or to pass, as white serve to highlight the instability of oppressive racial distinctions and structures. They do this not only by highlighting the instability of racial identifications and markers, but also by reifying them at the same time. As Ahmed (1999) describes, "Ambiguous

bodies that do not fit existing criteria for identification keep in place, or are even the condition of possibility for, the desire to tell bodies apart from each other through the accumulation of knowledge" (p. 92).

If students can identify other students on campus as embodying an ideal, the ideal must come from somewhere and be communicated to students. When institutions talk about "the successful student" and focus on the myriad of high impact practices (accessible mostly to class privileged white students) that facilitate this success, they create an ideal. When viewbooks and recruiting materials and processes craft an idyllic college experience to sell to potential students, they create an ideal. Although several participants in this study would qualify as highly successful students who were engaged curricularly and co-curricularly on campus, all felt as if they fell short. An ideal, after all, is by it's very nature unattainable and inhuman(e). Ideals and ideal types as concepts depend on the marginalization of 'others' in order to hold their power (Ahmed, 1999; Bhabha, 1984).

The ideal of the successful white cisgender woman as student also functions as whiteness property (Harris, 1993), serving as a measure by which to determine who is 'white enough' and thereby protect 'the right to use and enjoyment' of higher education for white people and those who are loyal to the institution and white domination (Harris, 1993; Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2017). Maybe this is the cult of true White womanhood (Collins, 2009) refashioned for the neoliberal university and economy of the 21st century. And just as the cult of true womanhood encouraged propertied white women and those of the middle class to aspire to the virtues of "true womanhood," using them to subjugate and oppress women of color (Collins, 2009), so too do images

of the "ideal college student" "mask social relations that affect all women" (Collins, 2009, p. 79) convincing white women students to act in solidarity with neoliberal, imperialist values rather than in solidarity with marginalized students and communities.

Break it up

This sense of not-enoughness, or not the right kind of white, is connected to the necessity of people of color as "contrast to break it up." Sidney talked about feeling particularly aware of being a white woman on campus in her college, a college she perceives as predominantly comprised of white women, "Almost to the point where it's uncomfortable because, you don't have much of anything else. There isn't like a contrast to break it up." She continues on to describe:

> *The only way I can describe it is like, uh a metaphor. So you have like a paper and it's a wall of words and then sometimes people will be like why don't you include a graph or something to break up the text and it's just like there's nothing to break up the text. So you're just stuck with like the same consistency throughout and it gets kind of like, boring over time. 'Cause just like, you want to get to work and you're like "this is gonna be great" and then all of your classes are the same people. The same gender from the same sorority houses who did the same things on the weekend.*

Sidney almost directly echoes Ahmed (2012) when she writes that "diversity provides a form of punctuation." Ahmed explains that when something is institutionalized, it "becomes background" (p. 25): "the background of habitualized activity opens up a foreground for deliberation and innovation" (p. 26). As universities launch into new capitalist endeavors and markets, as they focus on innovation, even in realms related to "diversity," multiculturalism, or globalization, they still depend on the background of whiteness, both embodied and enacted. This means that white students are embraced, enveloped, and absorbed into the everyday workings of the institution. While white, cisgender male students might be selected and groomed for leadership positions in

campus organizations, or identified as protégés by faculty and staff, white women in this study were often identified by faculty as "good students" and invited into caring and service roles as research assistants and leaders in service oriented organizations. Meanwhile students of color remain marginalized and tokenized, and even their tokenization can be valorized by the institution and its individual faculty and staff as innovation.

As Ahmed describes, "People of color in white organizations are treated as guests, temporary residents in someone else's home. People of color are welcomed on condition they return that hospitality by integrating into a common organizational culture, or by 'being' diverse, and allowing institutions to celebrate their diversity. … This very structural position of being the guest, or the stranger, the one who receives hospitality, allows an act of inclusion to maintain the form of exclusion" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 43). Other scholars would go even further, arguing that the settler colonialist structures of the university treat the Black bodies of students, faculty, and staff, as property (Dancy, Edwards, Davis, n.d.), rather than relating to Black students, faculty and staff as human beings, much less knowers, learners, or experts. The unattainable ideal of the white woman undergraduate student, then, both positions white women students to strive for allegiance and loyalty to the institution – settler colonial white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy – and positions students of color as perpetual guests, at best, or property at worst. White women undergraduate students, then, as they strive for "good student" status – the right kind of white – not only spend their time and energies contributing to "bettering the name" of the institution, but they also view women of color either as "punctuation" and decoration in their experience of college (as

Sydney did) or problems (as Anne and Patrisse's roommate conflict exemplifies); in either case, women of color serve the interests and needs of white women.

"Oh, I forgot about her"

Maddie was a graduating senior who lived at home with her parents in a nearby town. Her dad was white and her mom was "Mexican," and she felt closely connected to them and her younger brother. In all of her stories and in self-selecting to participate in the study, Maddie identified as white, and when she enrolled at the university she pledged an historically white Greek letter organization. She told many stories about her experiences in the organization, and her ambivalence toward it and historically white Greek life as a whole. In one particular story she described an experience during practices for a recent homecoming dance competition. After decades of organizing 'separate and unequal' homecoming activities for students, the university – prompted by an explicit racist incident that made the national news cycle for weeks – re-organized teams for competition in the homecoming festivities. Now teams included groups from across campus life and Greek life organizations, with a goal of fostering cross-race interaction. Maddie describes the interactions as she witnessed them:

> *(The homecoming dance competition) also incorporated this year the cultural fraternities and sororities. It was really cool, because we did it with a regular (historically white) fraternity, but we also did it with an Asian fraternity and a Hispanic sorority. I actually made a really good friend from that sorority that I still talk to. … It was really sad, because they had a pretty big group, but only two of the girls were brave enough to do it. We could have taken 10, however many they wanted to send, but she was telling me that the other girls were kind of nervous about being around those type. Not type of women, that sounds bad, but just a different Panhellenic sorority, because, "They're all white women, or they might treat us differently." She was telling me that they were really worried about that, but she enjoys dancing. She wanted to do it.*
>
> *It was funny, because on the very first day we got there, we ended up being in formation next to each other. She was the first person I started talking to,*

because I wanted her to feel comfortable. I was friends with some of the girls, but I didn't have necessarily that main friend group. ... It was interesting to see how out of all those girls, because I would say there was probably 28 other girls from my particular sorority, and two of hers. She was the one that I sought out to talk to, because I was interested in hearing about what they do. She was explaining to me how they do this stomp dance thing when they go to parties. They choreograph all this stuff, and have matching outfits, which I thought was really cool. I was like, "Oh, that's really neat."

Then we've gone to lunch several times, and she tells me about how her parents live in OKC, and she goes and works for them. She's constantly going home to help with her younger brother. We were able to really relate on kind of that aspect, because she was very family-oriented, too. She was really down to earth. I think I was just wanting her to feel comfortable. That's probably just my personal characteristic, but no one was talking to her, and I couldn't figure out why. "Oh, she has darker skin." Who cares? Yeah, I never really realized that I kind of sought her out. Yeah.

(But the other girls from my sorority) never really interacted with her, because I knew her name after day one. They would be saying, because her name is Luisa. My friend was the one that was in charge. She would be like, "Hey, will you come help me put your side of the formation? I'll give you my paper. Just tell people, 'You're here, you're here.'" I'd be like, "Okay." I was like, "Well, where should Luisa go, because you don't even have her on here?" She'd be like, "Who?" I was like, Luisa. She's right there." She stands right next to me. She's like, "Oh, I forgot about her." I also noticed that a lot of times they would forget about both those women that were from that other organization. No one ever really bothered to get to know their names.

I did feel bad, because in the first formation, it was guys in the middle and two groups of girls. They split the two girls up, which I don't think they should have done, personally, just knowing how some people can be. They might isolate her. They put one on each side. I talked to the girl that was on my side, but I did notice that the other one no one ever talked to, because I would even tell Luisa, I'd be like, "We're going to have a 10 minute break. You should tell her to come hang out, or go talk to her. I don't care. You don't have to stand around talking to me," because I felt bad. She just stood by herself, and no one really acknowledged her, I guess.

Maddie's sorority sisters literally erased two Latina dancers from the planned choreography. They refused to learn their names, and isolated them both emotionally and spatially. They are, to use Patel's (2016) words, "erased to replace"; their presence is erased to make both more room for white women, and to "purify" the white space.

White women were clearly in charge here, and actively marginalizing their own teammates because of their race, as Maddie noted when she said "'Oh, she has darker skin.' Who cares?'" Meanwhile, dancers from the Latina sorority endure isolation, marginalization, blantant disrespect and layered race and gender discrimination in an activity that is supposed to be fun and enriching. When they step into classrooms, they face more of the same, even as they pursue not only a degree, but also the uplift of their own communities through their extracurricular involvement in a Latina Greek letter organization.[16] Formalized attempts to foster cross-race interaction on college campuses often do nothing but (re)produce racism, even increasing the isolation, marginalization, and microaggressions that students of color experience daily; they also further support and reward white women's race domination.

High Impact Educational Practices as Gendered Curricula of White Ignorance

For white women in college, the desire to remain comfortable and be perceived as nice combines with silencing of self and others, entitlements to space, and striving for an ideal white experience of college to create images of self and other that drive racist, colonialist ways of being on campus. Meanwhile, white women remain ignorant of the ways that we and others around us do racism, both directly in actions and relations with people we know, and indirectly through our investments in segregated systems and educational opportunities that perpetuate white domination. We do this in gendered ways that preserve false innocence and our ability to continue to see ourselves as nice white women who do good, and are good. As Lorde (1984/2007) emphasizes,

[16] Historically white and historically Black, Latino/a, and multicultural Greek organizations have decidedly different histories, goals upon founding, and relationships to historically white institutional and the legacies and ongoing practices of white supremacy (Hunter & Hughey, 2013). For more on Latino/a Greek letter organizations, see Muñoz and Guardia (2009).

"Mainstream communication does not want women, particularly white women, responding to racism. It wants racism to be accepted as an immutable given in the fabric of your existence, like eveningtime or the common cold" (Lorde, 1984/2007, p. 128). Historically white institutions of higher education perpetuate this "immutable given" through what I call gendered curricula of white ignorance. While these curricula are enacted in both conceptual and physical space, in the next section I suggest that high impact educational practices are particular sites in which white women participate in formal and hidden curricula that (re)produce white ignorance (Mills, 2007). I draw connections between the ways that white cisgender women do racism in college and the spaces that both support these actions and maintain white ignorance of race domination and violence via the use of gender.

High Impact Educational Practices

> *It's just the whole OU in itself just is welcoming to me. –Reba*
>
> *(I feel a) sense of happiness and I feel comfortable in the environment, like I belong. When I'm walking on the campus with a smile on my face, and like "Today is going to be a great day," just from the environment around me. – Becca*
>
> *I think one of the opportunities I've been most grateful for was being a writing assistant in the Honors College. So when I took my (introduction to the Honors College) class, the professor just noticed that I was a good writer. I was making good grades on my essays, and I knew that they were looking for writing assistants. So I said, I would like to be a writing assistant because I wanted the money and I wanted kind of the prestige that came with it, as well. I wanted to get to know other professors, work on networking, and just kind of, I thought it would be a good line on a resume, as well. And I knew that I liked editing and helping people. So I did that for 2 ½ years, 3 years? One semester you're kind of, um, you're in a class to learn how to be a writing assistant. And you're working with some students, but you're given a much, like, reduced load. You're not paid. Um, that was a really good experience I think because it helped me I think improve my teaching skills and I think teaching is a really important skill, even if you're not going to be a teacher, but just learning how to communicate your knowledge to someone else. I think just interacting with a lot of different*

people was good in the Honors College. And then also it was really fun for me because, ah, first of all I really enjoy editing papers, and second of all having access to like the thoughts and the ideas of really smart people, and being able to sort of I guess be imaginative with them and talk to them about why they think this, why they're interpreting this this way? It was really fun for me, and just getting to kind of help pull that out of them. And then also it was almost like I was taking those classes as well. So I was learning a lot through their papers. So that was fun. I tutored for a class called Politics of US Economic Policy that the Dean was teaching. I knew nothing about any of that, but by reading all those papers you're able to sort of learn and standardize your knowledge of that, which is cool. Cause it's like, "Oh yeah, now I can tell you about Volker in the 1970's and the 1980's or whatever. And Nixon and Reaganomics and all that." So that was a really incredible experience. –Kinsey

Participants as a whole had opportunities to participate in what the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) calls high impact educational practices (Kuh, 2008). They talked often about experiences not only in classrooms, but also in internships, undergraduate research experiences, service-learning, study abroad, peer education, and senior capstone courses and projects. At least five of the twelve participants were also members of the university's honors college, and talked at length both about the opportunities they received through the college, and also its overwhelming whiteness in terms of student body and faculty. When I asked participants how they accessed these opportunities, they generally reported seeking out these opportunities because they had known about them from high school or from family members, or because they had been identified by faculty as good students. We know that white students have better access to high impact educational practices (Kuh, 2008), and that this access is both a function of and reproduction of white privilege (Harper, 2009). McCormick, Kinzie, Gonyea, and Ribera (2017) frame this as the result of "deficit-minded campus practices" that act as "barriers to increasing under-served student participation," but such a frame hides what these wide-spread, pervasive

practices of prioritizing and centering white students does for white students and for historically white institutions, as well as what it means for students of color and communities of color. The differential ushering of students into sites of educational privilege (high impact practices) either via institutional mechanisms like admissions or via faculty selection (identification of white cisgender women as "good students") also function as investments in whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006) and the (re)production of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993)[17]. Namely, white faculty and staff invest in whiteness, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by passing educational privileges and opportunities to white students, thereby compounding and reifying their white privilege. They identify white women like Kinsey as 'good writers' and 'good students,' selecting them for 'prestigious' opportunities as rewards for their 'good student' (i.e., 'good white woman') performances. Kinsey also trades on her whiteness as property by seeking prestige; at the same time she seeks opportunities that put her in a 'helping' role, allowing her to maintain – or (re)produce – her innocence as a 'good white woman' trading up in a system of white domination.

White faculty and staff also practice whiteness as property by excluding Black, Latinx, Indigenous, or other students who are "not white enough"[18] from these same educationally, socially, and economically advantageous opportunities. Not only are students of color often excluded from these sites of educational privilege, but even more

[17] In her foundational work on whiteness as property, Harris (1993) identifies links between constructions of property and racial identity in the US. The four property functions of whiteness she identifies are 1) rights of disposition, 2) the right to use and enjoyment, 3) reputation and status property, and 4) the absolute right to exclude.

[18] Participants' stories of not being "enough white" exemplify the ways that dominant white identity intersects with class, ethnicity, ability, gender performance, and other social hierarchies and systems of domination to accrue into an "ideal" that becomes normative and perpetuates what Collins (2012) calls the matrix of domination.

they experience marginalization, as well as micro and macro-agressions that result in racial battle fatigue and racial trauma even when they do participate (Smith, Yosso & Solórzano, 2011; Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solórzano, 2009). The impacts of these mis-educational experiences are also high, with lasting negative consequences (Patton, Harper & Harris, 2015). Dancy, Edwards, and Davis (n.d.) argue that historically white institutions do more than exclude Black students (as well as faculty and staff); HWIs operate according to enduring anti-Black plantation politics that engage Black bodies as property, "maintaining an institutional and social relationship of ownership with people of color, and Black people in particular" (p. 2). And white women play particular roles in supporting and (re)producing these institutional plantation politics.[19]

White cis women who participated in this study normalized their experiences of having white faculty and staff "invest" in them because of their whiteness. Even more, as white women we learn via participation in high impact practices to further invest in inequitable and inhumane systems of domination. And we learn to do this in particular ways as cisgender white women. Heather's narrative illustrates this. When she talks about her work-study position in a retention-focused office, she is grateful for the connections that it offered her during a time in her life when she was learning to manage her mental illness and feeling alienated on campus as a first-generation, poor college student. She also, however, learns her place in the institutional hierarchy of the university.

[19] In plantation politics, white women played, and play, the role of "domestics and reproducers who both supplied and served generations of white male colonists" (Dancy, Edwards & Davis, n.d., p. 9). Even post-slavery, after the plantation economy had shifted, white women continued to serve the racist, imperialist, settler colonial interests of the nation by "empower(ing) themselves as central players in civilization-work" (Newman, 1999, p. 8). They carved out new public spaces for themselves as "missionaries, explorers, ethnographers, and educators" (Newman, 1999, p. 20), and colleges were sites in which they prepared for these new public and professionalized colonizing roles.

I guess the thing that makes me feel powerful about it is knowing that when people call that phone, or text that phone, or email us, one of the biggest things that's emphasized in our job is we're not going to just pass it on to somebody else. If we have no idea what's going on, and we've never even heard of it before, we're going to write down everything about the situation, and we're going to tell them that we'll call them back by the end of the day, and we're just going to barrage ... I have had to call so many random offices on campus, and places I've never heard of, look up stuff on the internet, and so it's a feeling of powerful, of I'm not going to let this person go away without knowing where to go with their next step. ... I have the power to help these people in a way that I wish I had known people were there to help me.

This is a chair that we got out of surplus, and this desk wobbles, so it's not like ... This doesn't look like a position of power. If you turn around, there's literally a desk this size on the other side of the room, and that's my boss's desk. If you walk into the room, you think, "Here's this big, important person's desk, and then here's this cubby for students," but it feels like a very powerful place on campus because it's ... How did they put it? They told us that we were like the gatekeepers, so we are letting people into our office, and into information that they didn't know about resources. It's important to them that the gate is always open, and I think that's something that's important to me, too. It feels powerful to be able to in a sense open the gates, because we have people call, they're like, "Well, I've called like seven different offices on campus, and nobody helped me."

It's really funny because I have no authority there. I'm the person that's been there the second longest, but that's since last May, so it's not that long. I guess it's the feeling of standing on the shoulders of giants. It's like, I know that the people around me, if something totally off the wall comes in, which it does all the time, that I can put a person on hold for like 30 seconds and someone's there to support me in it. I guess that makes you feel powerful, too, because people that ... I feel powerful, and I guess I do have some power taking the people in, but (the people above me) have power. They have name recognition, and status, and things like that, and they are willing to share that power with us so that we can help other people, so I guess that makes it feel powerful, too, is knowing that people who have power, and in theory, don't necessarily need you are willing to need you. They're willing to make you a part of their team, and to share that power, and invest in you. --Heather

When I first listened to Heather story her work-study experience, I heard echoes of the evidence for the value of on-campus work, especially work students find meaningful. They make connections, gain information about the academic bureaucracy, and usher other students into these same networks of information and relation. But when I listen as a white woman, with one ear to Heather's story and another to the

stories of many students, faculty, and staff of color, I hear Heather being socialized and rewarded for occupying a white woman's place and identity in the world. Heather feels the power of helping, the power of gatekeeping, and the power of being networked with people in positions with more institutional authority and power. Heather gets to feel powerful because the institution hides information, separates students from each other and information, and then gives inequitable access to that information. This is settler colonialism - separation to create hierarchies - at work (Patel, 2016). White women are positioned – and position themselves – as gatekeepers, the holders of information, the "good" white people who give access (or not), who are helpful (or not). While Heather values "keeping the gate open," there is power in her position because a) the gate exists, and b) she can close it. Meanwhile, women of color who might occupy similar positions are likely to be seen as service workers, seen as threats because of their exercise of power, experience contrapower harassment (Rospenda, Richman & Nawyn, 1998), and endure myriad microaggressions both from students, peers, and supervisors.

Heather recognizes the power in this particular position not only via her own experience, but also because of the meaning that other white women staff members in her office ascribe to her position in conversations with her. This out-of-classroom learning demonstrates the formative nature of supervisory relationships and the ways that white women socialize other white women into raced and gendered understandings of position and power. These understandings remain untheorized, however, and involve deliberate ignorance about the systems in which we, as white women, work and know. It also involves strategic ignorance of the effects of white women's practices on people of color. Heather's supervisor normalizes both the hierarchy and the practice of

gatekeeping, while maintaining the innocence of white women within a racist system by emphasizing their/our good "nature" through a framing of our role as 'keeping the gate always open.' Meanwhile people of color – students, faculty and staff – are often at the mercy of white women in such gatekeeping roles who exercise their power in either "knowingly, lovingly ignorant" (Ortega, 2006) racist ways or intentionally racist ways. I have seen both. And I have been taught both.

Gendered Curricula of White Ignorance

> *White ignorance . . .*
> *It's a big subject. How much time do you have?*
> *It's not enough.*
> *Ignorance is usually thought of as the passive obverse to knowledge,*
> *the darkness retreating before the spread of Enlightenment.*
> *But . . .*
> *Imagine an ignorance that resists.*
> *Imagine an ignorance that fights back.*
> *Imagine an ignorance militant, aggressive, not to be intimidated,*
> *an ignorance that is active, dynamic, that refuses to go quietly—*
> *not at all confined to the illiterate and uneducated but propagated*
> *at the highest levels of the land, indeed presenting itself unblushingly*
> *as knowledge.*
> *(Mills, 2007, p. 13)*

Participants often voiced versions of "I've never really thought about this" as they talked about their own whiteness during our conversations. And as I sat with theories developed by people of color, especially Black and Indigenous women, I too wondered, "How could I not know?" How could, did, and do I maintain ignorance about not only about the experiences and histories of people close to me, people with whom I work and live and study, but especially about the ongoing violence and trauma that surrounds me every day, and for white I am both directly and indirectly responsible? Are my participants and I truly ignorant and unknowing? Or do we perform ignorance to protect our innocence, egos, and repuations?

The work on epistemologies of white ignorance emerged as important for helping me think through these deliberate un-knowings, both participants' and my own. Sullivan and Tuana (2007) describe white ignorance in this way:

> In the case of racial oppression, a lack of knowledge or an unlearning of something previously known is actively produced for purposes of domination and exploitation. At times this takes the form of those in the center refusing to allow the marginalized to know … Other times it can take the form of the center's own ignorance of injustice, cruelty, and suffering, such as contemporary white people's obliviousness to racism and white domination. Sometimes these 'unknowledges' are consciously produced, while at other times they are unconsciously generated and supported. … Far from accidental, the ignorance of the racially privileged often is deliberately cultivated by them, an act made easier by a vast array of institutional systems supporting white people's obliviousness to the worlds of people of color. (p. 1-3)

Mills (2007) argues that white ignorance is in fact deliberate, involving both "straightforward racist motivation and more impersonal social-structural causation" (p. 21). Because race is the primary social division in the US, white people generally understand Black interests as opposed to their own. Not only does this make shared interests and goals difficult or impossible, but it also, according to Mills (2007), affects white social cognition**: "**the concepts favored (e.g., today's "color blindness"), the refusal to perceive systemic discrimination, the convenient amnesia about the past and its legacy in the present, and the hostility to black testimony on continuing white privilege and the need to eliminate it to achieve racial justice" these cognitive

components are "interlocked with and reciprocally determining one another, jointly contributing to the blindness of the white eye" (Mills, 2007, p. 35).

Ortega (2006) further describes how white ignorance manifests and is practiced by white women toward women of color. White women, as she argues, can practice both "arrogant perception" of women of color, as well as "loving, knowing ignorance." While the arrogant perceiver "is guilty of seeing with …eyes that skillfully organize the world and everything in it with reference to the arrogant perceiver's desires and interests" (p. 59), loving, knowing ignorance is practiced by "those who seem to have understood the need for a better way of perceiving but whose wanting leads them to continue to perceive arrogantly, to distort their objects of perception, all while thinking that they are loving perceivers" (p. 60). According to Ortega (2006), loving, knowing ignorance operates in at least two ways:

a) "a stance in which the perceiver (white women) and the knower (women of color) are actually involved in the production of knowledge about women of color—whether by citing their work, reading and writing about them, or classifying them—while at the same time using women of color to the perceiver's (white women's) own ends" (p. 61), and
b) "ignorance of those who look and listen … but do not check and question" (p. 61).

Both loving, knowing ignorance and arrogant perception arise in the stories participants told with me. Ann practices arrogant perception as she refuses to listen to her roommate Patrisse's perspectives and experiences in the world and in their roommate relationship. She continues to organize the world according to her desires when she calls for "civil

discussion" where no one "gets overheated" in her ethics class. Heather does not directly name people of color in her story of feeling empowered in her work study position, but she positions herself to be lovingly, knowingly ignorant, despite the research she's done on implicit bias and the experiences of women of color. Taylor's experience studying abroad in Turkey also functioned to place her in relationship with women of color, whom she valued for their "niceness" toward her. Despite their engagement in high impact educational practices, practices that evidence shows result in "deep learning" (Kuh, 2008), white women at historically white institutions continue to invest in whiteness and practice racism while maintaining ignorance of both the effects of these practices on communities of color, and their fellow community members of color as a whole.

> *What woman here is so enamored of her own oppression that she cannot see her heelprint upon another woman's face? What woman's terms of oppression have become precious and necessary to her as a ticket into the fold of righteousness, away from the cold winds of self-scrutiny? … We welcome all women who can meet us, face to face, beyond objectification and beyond guilt.*
> *(Lorde,1984/2007, p. 132-133)*

Responding, Divesting, & Relational Restructuring for Praxis

If high impact educational practices in fact (re)produce white ignorance in gendered ways, what other ways of educating toward new relations might be possible? After all, as Cabrera, Franklin and Watson (2016) emphasize, "the point is not to simply identify epistemologies of ignorance but rather to eliminate this ignorance and its material consequences" (p. 22). I suggest that the framework of answerability offers one way forward toward thinking about praxis for freedom and decolonization. Patel (2016), drawing on Battiste (2013), suggests answerability as a construct and a cognitive tool:

> Because coloniality has been so pervasive, we can think about how our actions, our research agendas, the knowledge we contribute, can undo coloniality and create spaces for ways of being in relation that are not about individualism, ranking, and status. Answerability includes aspects of being responsible, accountable, and being part of an exchange. It is a concept that can help to maintain the coming-into-being with, being in conversation with. (Patel, 2016, p. 73)

As faculty, administrators, staff and other educators within postsecondary institutions consider resistances that would work against and undo the structures of settler colonialism and white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy, we must begin to "see ourselves as stewards not of specific pieces of knowledge but rather of the productive and generative spaces that allow for finding knowledge" (Patel, 2016, p. 79). White educators – and students – in particular must see ourselves as answer-able to communities of color, to the knowledges and ways of life valued and practiced in homeplaces, and to the legacies of dehumanization, trauma, and theft left in the our white wake. As Battiste makes clear, each person, institution, and nation-state "is offered an opportunity to rededicate itself to protecting humanity, redressing the damage and losses of Indigenous peoples, and enabling Indigenous communities to sustain their knowledge for their future and the future of humanity" (Battiste, 2013, p. 189). Higher education, as part of the larger ecosystem of the material, political, and social world we live in has a responsibility to redress ongoing theft of land, languages, and human and community potential from communities of color.

Dancy, Edwards and Davis (n.d.) call also for divestment, specifically Black divestment from the white social contract, and "directed investment in the creation of Black counter intellectual and economic spaces" (p. 21). For white educators and students, what might it mean to divest from the white social contract and settler colonialism? Is such a thing possible for people who by their socialization and their identification as white benefit at every turn from the contract? And how might such moves toward answerability, responsibility, and divestment from white supremacy and settler colonialism necessarily take different forms for people across genders, and for white cisgender women in particular?

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion & Implications: Toward Answer-able Curricula for Solidarity

As I finished interviewing the white women who participated in this study, the 2016 US Presidential election was taking place. I remember being away from home – in Columbus, Ohio, actually – on election night. I was spending time with friends, both of whom were Black, before a conference. As we ate dinner and sipped drinks, the election results came in. We were all stunned, and speechless for stretches of time. We'd met in the middle – they'd driven in from a blue state in the northeast, I'd flown in from the deepest red in the southern Midwest – and we were all away from home in a swing state that had swung decidedly Red, co-signing the explicit racism, sexism, and homophobia of the Republican candidate. As we walked home late that night, I was more on edge than usual, as were they. I was starkly aware that had I been walking down the street by myself, my whiteness would protect me – tonight and every night – Trump supporters (and other more "liberal" white people) would immediately fashion me as a potential ally, in their war camp, whatever they saw themselves fighting. Of course, I know these friends of mine ALWAYS have a different experience walking down the streets in predominantly white parts of any town. But tonight I felt like we had already been ambushed. I didn't know whether our closeness, walking arm in arm, would be a sign of my race-traitor status and invite attack, or if my whiteness would be an insulator for any open or cloaked white supremacists ready to celebrate with violence. But this wasn't new; I just felt the way my whiteness impacted our friendships and the social scene around us in a more urgent way.

The next day, as the analyses of the results poured in, white women were IMPLICATED, called out and shown for who we are. "Friendly" by day and traitors to our neighbors by night and in the polling booth. My people sold out my friends. And what had I done to turn the tide of racism that pulled – and pulls – Black and brown folks under to drown, to get shot by police, killed by corporate-induced poverty, stressed to death by a million little cuts in professional environments. I had been fooled and had fooled myself, but I knew. As a sophomore in college I helped start a fleeting and short-lived Young Republicans club, mostly because my boyfriend at the time was a committed Republican, but so were my parents and everyone I'd grown up with. I knew what it meant to be a good, racist white woman and how white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy had sold us a bill of goods that made us trade in our own humanity for participation in race domination. I'm still unlearning this.

> *"If treason to whiteness really is loyalty to humanity (Ignatiev & Garvey, 1996), then the greatest act of love Whites can show humanity is to end whiteness itself, to love so much as to send whiteness to its grave. Given that whiteness is mainly a sadomasochistic construction, Whites need to not only undo racist ideologies and organize acts of racial disobedience, but also bear the emotional pain necessary to lovingly end the White race as a sociopolitical form of human organization." (Mattias, 2016, p. 62)*

White cisgender women are the overwhelming beneficiaries of affirmative-action policies in higher education (Ajinkya, 2012; Hochschild, 1999). While we remain under-represented in high paying, high status fields such as engineering and business (Allan, 2011; National Science Foundation, 2007), we have clamored for our places in the social sciences, and especially in historically feminized helping fields such as education, social work, and nursing, as well as other practical and professional fields

such as journalism and public relations. Climates on campus remain chilly – even dangerous – for students of color, however. And faculty of color experience harassment, isolation, alienation, and discrimination both from white students in classrooms and advising situations and from white faculty colleagues and administrators (Pittman, 2012; Smith, 2012; Yancy & Davidson, 2014). Women of color especially experience compounded oppressions at the intersections of racism and sexism. And trans folks of color find higher education often so dangerous and alienating that they are locked out altogether (Nicolazzo, 2016). Women of color, however, continue to lead and foster innovations for equity in higher education and beyond, creating sites and spaces of resistance that are life-giving, educative, and sustainable. Yet white women still prevail, making their way to positions of relative power within white, patriarchal institutional structures of power. I ultimately wanted to explore the role a college education plays, via the everyday experiences of formal and hidden curricula, in the gendered race domination of white cisgender women in higher education. More specifically, I asked

- In what ways do undergraduate white women experience college?
- In what ways do white women do racism while in college?
- What college experiences shape and support the ways that white women learn and do racism?

The process of critical narrative inquiry involved re-storying (Clandinin, 2012) participants' narratives by weaving them together with each other, and with the stories and perspectives of people of color, especially women of color, and the local and wider contexts in which we move. It brought to the surface four particular threads that weave a fabric of whiteness in participants' lives: 1) desires for comfort and niceness, 2)

silences and narrative shifts, 3) entitlements to space, and 4) aims for an unattainable ideal. These threads of white domination are supported by white women's engagement experiences on campus, including their engagement in high impact educational practices. These curricular and co-curricular educational sites, then, enact what I call gendered curricula of white ignorance because they maintain an inverted epistemology (Mills, 1997), or ways of knowing that deliberately *mis*interpret the world. These interpretations of the world are both raced and gendered, and white women are rewarded and validated – via these curricula – for displaying and enacting these gendered-raced knowledges (and ignorance).

Implications for Theory & Research

Critical whiteness studies. These findings suggest first that although critical whiteness studies works in tandem with other critical race theories and scholarship developed by women of color (Critical Race Feminism, Black feminism, womanism, global south feminisms, indigenous theories of decolonization, and others), it has not deeply considered the ways that whiteness and white supremacy intersect with other systems of domination, in particular gender and the experiences of cisgender and trans women broadly speaking, and within higher education specifically. Although there are a growing number of inquiries focusing on white women as teacher in K-12 education settings (Hancock & Warren, 2017; Castagno, 2014), higher education has yet consider how a college education more generally socializes white women to participate in racism in gendered ways. This study highlights some ways in which whiteness interlocks with gender, exploiting the "up-down" positioning of cisgender white women, convincing us to grab at what little (or sometimes large) bits of power are available to us, leveraging it

move into further positions of power, while maintaining false innocence – white ignorance – about the cost at which we do so for others, especially people of color. It also begins to articulate how curricular and co-curricular high impact educational practices maintain white dominance and white ignorance in part by leveraging gender intersections for people of color and white people alike. Although this inquiry did not draw out additional intersections with systems of domination, participants' narratives also point to the need for more careful and focused considerations of critical whiteness and ableism, classism, transphobia and gender binarism, and nationality and documentation status.

Cabrera, Franklin and Watson (2016), based on a review of the current body of critical whiteness research in higher education, have suggested the following areas for further research:

- Moving beyond the "good white" / "bad white" dichotomy,
- People of color internalizing the discourse of whiteness (i.e. internalized racism),
- Further developing white antiracism studies,
- Whiteness and higher education space,
- Whiteness and listening,
- Whiteness and affect,
- Whiteness and higher education policy,
- Whiteness and methodology.

This project builds on what we know in many of these areas, especially what we know about whiteness and affect and whiteness and higher education space, especially as they show up in the curricula and co-curricula – formal and informal – of higher education.

Matrix of domination and intersectionality. Though many higher education researchers focus on intersectionality with an emphasis on identity, I return here to Collins' concept of the matrix of domination in order to refocus on systems of domination. As Andersen and Collins (2013) describe, race, class, and gender are intersecting categories of experience that are simultaneous and interlocking. "This structural pattern affects individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges" (p. 4). This study sheds light on all three dimensions in which the matrix of domination shapes (and is shaped by) white women's lives: via individual consciousness, group interaction, and access to institutional power and privileges. Higher education curricula impact these three dimensions of the matrix of domination in interlocking and compounding ways. When we know this, we have an opportunity to develop interventions. Importantly, however, these interventions – on individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privilege – must also be simultaneous and interlocking. Many "diversity" and "inclusion" initiatives attempt a colonial move by dividing these interlocking interventions and pretending that one suffices for all (Patel, 2016; Ahmed, 2012). For instance, when consciousness raising and group interaction are addressed via intergroup dialogue (Galura, Pasque, Schoem & Howard, 2004; Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler & Cytron-Walker, 2007) or privileged identity exploration (PIE) pedagogies (Watt, 2015), many institutions forgo interventions that address group access to institutional power and

privilege by maintaining segregated living and learning via historically white Greek letter organizations, or by neglecting structural and sustained faculty development, recruitment, and promotion and tenure initiatives. This study illustrates that these three dimensions of the matrix of domination must be resisted simultaneously. They must also recognize the interlocking nature of domination by intentionally recognizing, addressing, and intervening against racism, sexism, and classism, as well as heterosexism, ableism, and genderism, simultaneously and intersectionally. This requires intersectional coalition building that includes ongoing power analyses and focuses on those most marginalized within an institutional and/or community context. Importantly, future research that considers intersectionality must recognize its foundations in Black feminism and Critical Race Feminism (CRF), and use it not as a tool simply to explore intersections of identity, but to critique systems of dominations as they operate intersectionally, as well as build coalitional praxis that seeks justice for those who are most marginalized (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013).

Decolonization. Although not included in this analysis, this project, because of its inclusion of photo elicitation, also has the potential to critique the ways that epistemologies of white ignorance "take place" (Lipsitz, 2011) in land-conscious, decolonial ways. Critical whiteness studies, as well as higher education research, has yet to seriously take up calls from indigenous scholars for "critical place inquiry" that is historically specific, context specific and place specific in its decolonizing efforts (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015; Tuck & Yang, 2012). As Tuck and McKenzie note, "Like colonization, which has shared components and instruments across sites but is uniquely implemented in each setting, decolonization requires unique theories and enactments

across sites" (p. 11). Higher education scholars doing critical whiteness work also have opportunities to consider theories and methodologies from critical geography and sociology that see the process of justice-seeking as spatial, as well as historical and sociological (Soja, 2010). We also must take better account of the ways that anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity have been historically, sociologically, materially and spatially intertwined and inseparable (Patel, 2016; Simpson, 2014), and white women's roles in these processes.

As Smith (2012) explains, European colonialism typically takes at least four different forms: "(1) imperialism as economic expansion, (2) imperialism as the subjugation of 'others', (3) imperialism as an idea or spirit with many forms of realization; and (4) imperialism as a discursive field of knowledge" (p. 22). Importantly, this study describes how higher education leverages whiteness and gender to involve white women in each of these forms of colonization simultaneously. I suggest that answerability as a practice of political solidarity is a practice and relational way of being that would help white people, including white women, "to become vulnerable, to come from a place of 'right spirit,' and to apprentice ourselves as willing observers and learners, shearing responsibility for ongoing projects of decolonization in service of healing our relationships" (Ritchie, 2015, p. 88) with people of color and communities of color.

Narrative methodologies. These findings also suggest further directions for inquiry when considering race – particularly the operations of whiteness – within narrative and narrative methodologies as a whole, and within narrative inquiry in particular. Narrative inquiry and narrative methods would do well to robustly consider

the role of silences in narrative. This suggests potentials in bringing together critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, rhetorical theory and other areas of study that consider the functions and power dynamics of silences within narrative. These bodies of work might also help scholars who use narrative inquiry to consider more fully how power, identities, and systems of oppression move in, around and through narrative processes, both individual and collaborative, especially during the process of co-constructing narratives that is central to narrative inquiry.

Higher education research. This project and others also call into question the take-for-granted good of high impact educational practices and the frames with which we understand engagement and involvement (Patton, Harper & Harris, 2015; Harper & Quaye, 2009). When we begin with studies of majority white students, without taking a critical approach to whiteness and imperialist, white supremacist heteropatriarchy, we reproduce colorblind, racist assumptions about the goods and the potentials of higher education. Many scholars of color in higher education have already noted this (Cabrera, Franklin & Watson, 2016; Patton, 2016), and yet we find it difficult to dislodge our centering, as a field, of white students' needs and experiences. Scholars considering engagement, and educational impact, including deep learning, must take better account of systems of oppression. Even when taking a critical approach to whiteness, it is possible to slip into re-centering white people in the critique. This is why it is necessary to both name and critique white supremacy and white domination, while locating the possibilities for liberation within resistances that happen at the margins, in the places and among people who know domination best because they have to study it to survive

on a daily basis. These are the people and places to which white critical whiteness research must be answerable.

Full Stop

A Reflection: April 2017

This is where I feel as if I reach the limits of my own knowing, and the limits of a text that is single-authored by a white woman about whiteness. I feel an expectation and pressure to delineate what my dissertation means for differently engaging white students on historically white campuses. But I also sense and feel – an itching under my skin – that to do so can re-center white students, their needs, and our collective white (liberal) fetish with making white people less racist.

While the work of racial justice – and intersectional justice – requires that white people learn to practice solidarity and justice over racism, an exclusive focus on making "good white people" plays into the sympathies, desires, and pathologies of whiteness. The same ones highlighted by this study. To try to redeem whiteness rather than end it as a dehumanizing and violent system, is a trap. Instead, I want to suggest a shift, a turning away and a disinvestment in the pathologies of whiteness and reinvestment into spaces of resistance, fugitivity, and insurgency. I call on white folks both to learn how to do relational unlearning work with our fellow white people, and also to learn how to invest the resources we have access to into people of color led resistance movements, especially those that are truly intersectional, led by and centering those who live most at the margins.

Implications for Practice

A number of scholars have already and are currently doing the work of thinking through how to challenge white students (and students who experience multiple other privileges) to confront their privileges and build competencies for social justice action (Watt, 2007; Watt, 2015; Cabrera, Watson & Franklin, 2016; Iverson, 2012). Their work provides important steps forward in this vein. Watt (2007) and Cabrera, Watson & Franklin (2016) describe how we must challenge white students (and students with other privileges), creating moments of dissonance that can be leveraged and supported into a pedagogy of racial agitation (Cabrera, Watson & Franklin, 2016) or privileged identity exploration (Watt, 2015). Iverson (2012) suggests that multicultural frameworks must become social justice frameworks, in that we guide students in developing equity-mindedness, as well as action skills for intervening in unjust situations.

While these pedagogies are important given the predominantly white student populations present in higher education, they are not sufficient if our aim is justice, reparations, and repatriation of land and resources that have been stolen from Indigenous and Black communities for centuries through the present (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Dancy, Edwards & Davis, n.d.). The education of white students must always serve the aim of centering students who are most on the margins of the matrix of domination (Andersen & Collins, 2012). Too often social justice pedagogies aimed at ameliorating white studetns' racism end up serving the aim of saving white people from "being racist" rather than focusing on the outcomes of this learning for students of color and others who are multiply marginalized on campuses and in communities.

Stewart and Nicolazzo (2016) refocus our attention, however, when they suggest reframing high impact practices from the perspectives of the most marginalized students and community members. They suggest reconceptualizing of high impact practices specifically from the perspectives of trans women of color, drawing on Spade's (2015) concept of trickle-up activism, to suggest we think about "trickle-up high impact practices": "The impact of trickle-up high impact practices (TUHIPs) is liberatory, rather than the highly bruising effects of HIPs. … TUHIPs are a way to engage in a praxis of recognition and redistribution alongside marginalized populations (Ferguson, 2012)" (Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2016). This praxis dislodges centered and dominant/dominating identities, shifting our focus to the knowledges produced at the margins of intersecting oppressive systems.

Trickle-up high impact practices would require profoundly different ways of knowing, learning, teaching, and collaborating. It fulfills a political intersectionality and intersectional praxis as Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) describe it: "a dual concern for resisting the systemic forces that significantly shape the differential life chances of intersectionality's subjects and for reshaping modes of resistance beyond allegedly universal, single-axis approaches" (p. 800). Racism so deeply infuses white people's ways of being in the world that racist (as well at sexist, ablist, classist, homophobic and transphobic) ways of relating and moving become habits (Granger, 2010). These habits require both learning and unlearning at multiple levels: cognitive, emotional, psychological, interpersonal, methodological. This requires deep considerations of praxis engaged as a constant process for liberation that will never be finished. In short, it requires answerability (Patel, 2016) in a relationship of political solidarity (hooks,

1983). Political solidarity is a process rather than a consensus that is arrived at and decided once and for all. hooks (1983) notes that, "to develop political solidarity … feminist activists cannot bond on the terms set by the dominant ideology of the culture" (p. 47). We must find other terms, and other ways of relating. Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013) also note the centrality and importance of communal networks, and call intersectional researchers and practitioners, organizers and activists to "create spaces—discursively and otherwise—for critical masses to gather and share the resources that are vital in sustaining a burgeoning field" (p. 794). In short, political intersectionality and intersectional praxis require divestment from systems that dehumanize and investment in resistant spaces that take multi-axis approaches to justice work. They require pedagogies of recognition and redistribution (Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2016).

Hughes (2017) argues that white people need to begin taking care of their own, doing work in white enclaves such as those in rural and suburban US communities, rather than "colonizing and gentrifying Brown and Black work" by glomming onto Black and brown resistance movements, whether in academia or in the broader public. I would extend her argument; white people need to do antiracist work in white enclaves – including higher education – but we must do so in ways that are answerable and responsible to relationships of political solidarity with people of color. Stewart and Nicolazzo (2016) suggest a few ways of moving forward in this vein, toward a practice of trickle-up high impact practices (TUHIPs). They suggest that working toward trickle-up high impact practices might look like

- creating research teams that reflect the margins alongside whom they are working

- having those who are multiply marginalized be central, not peripheral, to the research team;
- collaborating alongside various local community members and organizations
- using research methodologies that resist normative/static conceptualization of multiply marginalized students
- developing practices with and alongside the populations they espouse to support
- opening up TUHIPs to consistent and content revision rather than suggesting they act as a final point of "liberation"

The tension and trick – as sadomasochistic (Matias, 2016) as it is – is that as white people we have been educated in ignorance, including the ignorance of how to build relationships with people of color that are liberating, mutually caring, human, and vulnerable rather than colonizing, racist, and exploitative. A key question, then, becomes the one Spade (2012) asks: "Because the university is both a location of the production of knowledge that is often central to sexist, racist, capitalist, and imperialist regimes of practices and a place where structures of laboring are articulated through these forces, what does it mean to practice ally politics in the university?" (p. 186). Patel (2015) offers these words of caution about offering blueprints for decolonizing work: "it is premature, impulsive, and counterproductive to demand the details, blueprint, and figured world alter-realities of decolonization when our current context is so deeply embedded and enlived by colonial logics" (p. 88). With this caution in mind, I suggest a few beginnings based on this inquiry and the work it grows out of.

Toward Answerable Praxis in Higher Education

Answerable curricula. Curricula that takes into account whiteness and white supremacy, as well as the ways that it is shaped by settler colonialism in the US and interlocked with other systems of domination must be answerable to communities of color, and must work toward the dismantling of whiteness as an organizing category of dominance and exploitation. Curricula must be answerable to histories of settler colonialism and white supremacy as they interlock with other systems of domination. They must also be answerable to local contexts, lands, and people. And they must be answerable to learning.

Answerable to histories. Answerable curricula must be answerable historically, to people of color who have been dispossessed, marginalized, and dehumanized, especially those who's labor, lands, and knowledge was exploited in the founding and growth of historically white institutions. This could and should take different forms across disciplines, and local contexts. For example, in biology courses faculty and instructors could not only include content related to local econsystems, but also address how indigenous communities understood and understand these ecosystems and how these ecosystems and biological life have been impacted by historical processes involving industrialized agriculture, urban growth and sprawl, or recreation. Curricula in political science could include critical race analyses of political processes, connecting histories of white enslavement of Black people and dispossession of Indigenous land and communities with current voting rights legislation, voter identification laws, redistricting efforts, and generational differences in voting patterns. Questions faculty

might ask in developing curricula that are answerable to histories of colonization and racism include:

- What is the history Indigenous people in the local area? How has my discipline/area of study been involved and complicit in the colonization of this local area? How is this represented, or silenced, in my courses and the broader curriculum?
- How has my discipline/area of study been involved historically in processes of colonization and exploitation in the US (and globally)? Do I name this in my curriculum? How do I ask students to engage with and trouble this? What is the impact for students of color in my class? For Black students? For Indigenous students? For immigrant students who are coming from different homelands? For white students? How do students' gender identities, class, religious backgrounds, sexual orientations, also influence their engagement with these histories?
- Do I include the work of scholars of color within my curriculum? Do I do so in a way that represents their work as foundational and central to the field historically? If not, am I clear with students about how the field has marginalized scholars of color, especially women of color?

Answerable to local context, lands, and people. Curricula must also be answerable to local context, lands, and communities of color. In this vein, I recall Smith's (2012) questions about relationship and usefulness in the lives and for the well-being of people of color – Indigenous, Black, Latinx, south Asian, and others depending on our local histories, contexts, and communities. She writes: "Whose research is it?

Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? … What other baggage are they carrying? Are they useful to us? Can they fix our generator? Can they actually do anything?" (Smith, 2012, p. 10). I suggest faculty consider how their curricula are answerable to the well-being, demands, needs, strengths and knowledges of local communities of color. Questions for beginning might include:

- What communities of color does this institution share space with? What is the relationship between these communities and the university? How are these relationships a result of processes of colonization, white supremacy, and interlocking systems of oppression?
- How does my discipline speak to these processes? How is it a result of these processes?
- Do these local communities of color have a desire to connect with faculty and students at the institution? Are members of these communities also members of the campus community? If so, how might I approach relationships in a way that recognizes histories and systemic power dynamics in order to redistribute resources and share knowledge?
- How am I regularly accountable in my development of curricula to local communities of color? How could I involve members of local communities of color in the development of curricula and/or as experts within the courses or learning experiences? How can my relationships with local collaborators be reciprocal and useful for them?

- How do my own social identities and access to power shape these relationships? What are the risks to community members of working with me, my department, or the institution as a whole? How can I recognize and mitigate these risks in our collaborations?

Answerable to learning. Patel (2016) notes that decolonizing educational research must be answerable to learning as a human activity, as something that is not contained by schooling processes, and a human activity that is fugitive and insurgent. Answerable curricula, then, must recognize and make space for learning that is not measurable, planned, or structured. It must, however, be answerable to creating spaces in which learning that is liberatory and humanizing can happen. This is only possible when white people engage in *un*learning racism and learning relationships of political solidarity with people of color. White students must be engaged by the curriculum in unlearning racism and learning political solidarity, and students and faculty of color must not be expected to do this teaching and mentoring work. Instead white faculty have a responsibility for creating learning spaces in which white students are answerable to students and communities of color, in which analyses of power dynamics are ongoing, and in which students of color can bring their family and community histories and knowledge to bear on disciplinary questions as well as interdisciplinary and holistic ways of viewing the questions raised by a course and curriculum.

Answerable pedagogies. This study also emphasizes that faculty and instructors should develop pedagogies that recognize and disrupt the power dynamics of settler colonialism and white supremacy. As this inquiry illustrates, in order to be answerable, pedagogies must attend holistically to dimensions of education and learning processes

that are often thought of as unimportant within white, western, colonialist systems of education. More specifically, answerable pedagogies must disrupt a) the emotional dimensions of domination and liberation, b) the silences and shifts of colorblind ideologies, c) the ways race "takes place" in classroom and co-curricular spaces, d) the white mythical ideals of success, meritocracy, and "the college experience."

Recent research in teacher education (Hancock & Warren, 2017; Castagno, 2014) provides suggestions for ways to move toward answerable pedagogies in other fields, especially considering the intersections of race and gender, particularly for white women. Applebaum's (2010) white complicity pedagogy also offers a promising framework and process for creating classroom (and out-of-classroom) spaces that foster white students' respons-ability for their complicity in structural injustice. White complicity pedagogy "shifts the focus from white identity (and white privilege) to how the system of racism is perpetuated and maintained by and through individuals. The focus is not on rearticulating a positive white identity but instead on how whites can be part of an alliance against racism" (p. 146). Such a pedagogy reconceptualizes white moral responsibility: "Acknowledging the complicity involved in normative violence calls for a special type of responsibility based on vigilance that involves uncertainty, humility and critique" (Applebaum, 2010, p. 147). This inquiry also suggests that white complicity pedagogy must recognize and name how whiteness shifts along fault lines of other intersecting identities in order to maintain vigilance involving uncertainty, humility, and critique. Because white complicity pedagogy involves white students learning to listen in new and lingering ways to students of color, such a pedagogy disrupts white silencing of people of color, creating learning spaces where students of

color can more effectively be centered and heard, and where cross racial alliances and collaborations are more mutually educative and even healing.

Answerable administrative and organizational praxis. Because the purpose of higher education institutions are arguably to foster learning and knowledge-making, administrators should ask themselves if they are creating the conditions within departments and organizational units that make answerable curricula and pedagogies possible. Are administrators and faculty themselves engaging in learning spaces where answerability and white response-ability (Applebaum, 2010) are held as values, pedagogies, and material practices? How are administrators not only fostering curricula, pedagogies, and practices within their organizations that are answerable and response-able to building alliances against racism and interlocking systems of injustice, but how are they collaborating with marginalized communities, in answerable ways, to build coalitions for justice, as well?

Answerable white student engagement. Answerability takes into account the ongoing nature of settler colonialism in the US, as well as the ongoing reality of systemic white domination. For this reason, for student engagement to be answerable, it must consider the differing positions and needs of students in relation to white supremacy, settler colonialism, and educational justice. Answerable student engagement would ask: To whom are different students, faculty and staff answerable? And to what end? For white students, answerable engagement would be response-able to the histories, local contexts, and needs of communities of color, both on campus and off campus. The impact of answerable white student engagement would be felt first and foremost by these communities that have been marginalized by the institution itself;

although white student learning and transformation would be an outcome, as well, it would be ancillary to the needs and benefit of communities of color. In short, answerable white student engagement would ask what students with dominant identities must learn – and how – in order to respond to their fellow students and community members who are most on the margins in ways that promote justice. It is the flip side, and works in tandem with, Stewart and Nicolazzo's (2016) trickle-up high impact practices. Answerable white student engagement would be a praxis of Yancy's unhooking from whiteness, and would reconceptualize engagement as unhooking from intersecting systems of domination and answering to marginalized communities in pursuit of justice.

Answerable white student engagement would take into account how other systems of domination interlock with whiteness to maintain the matrix of domination. For white cisgender women, answerable student engagement would consider, engage, and unhook a) the emotional dimensions of domination and liberation, b) the silences and shifts of colorblind ideologies, c) the ways race "takes place" in classroom and co-curricular spaces, d) the white mythical ideals of success, meritocracy, and "the college experience." It would be answerable to learning as it happens in and outside of the classroom, in the everyday moments of students' lives. The forms it would take would be responses to local, historical, and current enactments of racism and the violence and marginalization of communities of color. Considering what I have learned from participants in this study, answerable white student engagement would involve unlearning opportunities for white students that do not require additional labor, time, or continued trauma from students, faculty, and staff of color.

Some ideas might include the following.

To address emotional dimensions of whiteness:

- Design learning groups in which white cisgender women do emotional unpacking of their psychological attachments to whiteness with each other and prepared facilitators over time, across multiple semesters.
- Incorporate white complicity pedagogy (Applebaum, 2010) for white students when teaching about race and racism both in courses and in leadership training and other student organization and co-curricular learning opportunities.

To address silences and shifts of colorblind ideologies:

- Create learning opportunities that can to be integrated into courses and student organizations that would focus on critical vocabulary and concepts for thinking and talking about race akin to Stevenson & Stevenson's (2014) racial literacy
- Create multiple opportunities across the curriculum and co-curriculum. (certificate programs, course clusters, badge based programs or other incentivized opportunities) for white students to explore their own racial identities and family histories in relation to the identities and histories of students of color on campus and local communities of color.

To address how race "takes place":

- Create opportunities for race-focused spatial analysis projects in classrooms or in co-curricular spaces with student leaders (Vélez & Solórzano, 2017; Blaisdell, 2017).

- Design embodied learning and movement-based workshops that uncover unconscious bias and bodily habits that contribute to race domination (Godbee, Tang, & Ozias, 2015).
- Teach solidarity workshops where white students learn strategies for supporting people of color led activist groups in community and campus-based justice efforts; organize white participants to be 'on call' and accountable as requested by people of color led groups.

To address white mythical ideals of success, meritocracy, and "the college experience":

- Revise and re-envision orientation programs to center on definitions of success taken up by students of color, especially multiply marginalized individuals and communities who have particular needs and resistant visions of success (Bates, 2017).
- Design first year experience courses to incorporate local histories of racism and colonialism, definitions of success that include resistance to power structures, and varied images of "the college experience" that intersectionally address issues of race and racism on campus.
- Redesign student organization and student government leadership training to center on the needs of student leaders of historically marginalized groups. Create spaces for white student leaders and organization members to engage with white complicity pedagogy (Applebaum, 2010), privileged identity exploration (PIE) model (Watt, 2015), and solidarity pedagogy (Freire, Friere, & Oliveria, 2014).

These dimensions of answerability – curricular, pedagogical, and administrative – must respond to communities of color locally and nationally/globally, resulting in the

transformation of the ways institutions engage white students, as well as students of color. For efforts to be answerable, they must address structural patterns of domination at the levels of "individual consciousness, group interaction, and group access to institutional power and privileges" (Andersen & Collins, 2013). Rather than talking about "highly impactful practices" or even "highly impactful practitioners" (Mayhew, 2017), what if we shifted the focus to "highly answerable practices," "highly answerable practitioners," and "highly answerable campuses"? Such a turn requires understanding of white complicity (Applebaum, 2010) and response-ability (Battiste, 2013) at the institutional level, and holds the potential for collective, intersectional racial justice work by institutions. If white individuals are willing to divest from white domination and white supremacy.

Continuations, Futures, and Praxis

Gendered ways of doing racism are deeply socialized for white women. We learn them from birth in our homes, communities, schools, and places of worship. Some educators and administrators in higher education might claim that these types of deep socialization are impossible to unravel and unteach once people reach adulthood and enter college. It may be difficult; however, it is not impossible. For white people to claim so, is to lean on the same desires for comfortability, ontological expansiveness, and colorblind racism that is the bedrock of white supremacy masquerading as liberalism today. It ignores the experiences, the trauma, the microagressions, the everyday dehumanization that students, staff, and faculty of color face on campuses each day as they work to learn, to collaborate, and to carve out spaces where freedom is possible. Not only is it our moral imperative to create emancipatory learning spaces, but

knowledge from fields like psychology, social work, sociology, organizational theory, and others suggest change is possible: individual, interpersonal, organizational, and social.

At the same time, Bell (1991) suggests a corollary and possibly contradictory truth: racism is endemic to the nation-state of the United States. It will not be eradicated, so we must deal with anti-blackness and other dimensions of racism as a never-ending struggle toward freedom. In Bell's (1992) words: "That acknowledgement enables us to avoid despair, and frees us to imagine and implement racial strategies that can bring fulfillment and even triumph" (Bell, 1992, p. 374). This "racial realism" leads to questions of what ongoing resistance looks like for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and white people in the US.

It is possible – even probable – that institutional and social change will never be fully realized, but that does not exonerate white people from the moral imperative to work and struggle toward justice and freedom for our neighbors and community members who are not white and experience the dehumanization of racism and settler colonialism daily. Mills (2007) suggests that "eventual achievement of racial justice can only be accomplished through a systematic national re-education on the historic extent of black racial subordination in the United States and how it continues to shape our racial fates differentially today" (p. 31). Such efforts at national re-education may be systematic, but they may also be fugitive and insurgent. It might be that, in the face of seemingly immovable institutions and systems, we can still seek justice, humanity, and freedom as educators by understanding learning and knowledge as fugitive, as "seeing around corners, stockpiling in crevices, knowing the un-rules, being unruly, because the

rules are never enough, and not even close" (Patel, 2017, quoting Macharia, 2013). After all, "settler colonialism has been trying hard for centuries to erase Indignity and define Blackness as chattle, and it has failed" (Patel, 2017). The question that remains is how white women can stand answerable and in political solidarity with communities of color, especially women and trans people of color, against the dehumanization and erasures of settler colonialism, anti-blackness, and imperialist white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy. "White ignorance has been able to flourish all of these years because a white epistemology of ignorance has safeguarded it against the dangers of an illuminating blackness or redness, protecting those who for 'racial' reasons have needed not to know. Only by starting to break these rules and meta-rules can we begin the long process that will lead to the eventual overcoming of this white darkness and the achievement of an enlightenment that is genuinely multiracial" (Mills, 2007, p. 35).

> *If you want to know what the undercommons wants, . . . what black people, indigenous peoples, queers and poor people want, what we (the "we" who cohabit in the space of the undercommons) want, it is this – we cannot be satisfied with the recognition and acknowledgement generated by the very system that denies a) that anything was ever broken and b) that we deserved to be the broken part; so we refuse to ask for recognition and instead we want to take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls. We cannot say what new structures will replace the ones we live with yet, because once we have torn shit down, we will inevitably see more and see differently and feel a new sense of wanting and being and becoming. What we want after "the break" will be different from what we think we want before the break and both are necessarily different from the desire that issues from being in the break. (Halberstam, 2013, p. 6)*

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APPENDIX A

White Women's Experiences of College
Moira Ozias
IRB # 6589

Participant Information Form

Name

_____

Preferred Email Address _____
Preferred Phone Number_____

Academic Information

Major(s)_____
Minor(s)_____

Organizational involvement in college

_____
_____

Degree Employment Aspirations (check all that apply)

□ Master's _____(field)
□ Ph.D._____(field)
□ M.D._____(specialization)
□ J.D._____(area of practice)
□ Other_____
□ Undecided

High School Information

High School Demography
□ Predominantly Black
□ Predominantly White
□ Predominantly Latinx
□ Predominantly Native American
□ Predominantly Asian American & Pacific Islander
□ Racially & Ethnically Diverse

High School Type
□ Public
□ Private
□ Other_____

High School Location
□ Rural
□ Suburban
□ Urban

Family's Social Class
□ Poor
□ Working Class
□ Middle Class
□ Upper-Middle Class
□ Wealthy
□ Other_____

Sexual Orientation
□ Straight
□ Queer
□ Lesbian
□ Bisexual
□ Fluid
□ Pansexual
□ Asexual
□ Other _____

Is there other information you would like to share with me that is important for understanding who you are and your experience in college (i.e. religion, nationality, age, veteran status, marital or parental status, etc.)? Please describe.

_____

_____

_____

_____

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APPENDIX B

Interview 1: Narrative Interview Protocol

Introductions

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. The same campus can feel very different to different students. What is it like to be you on the OU campus?
3. Tell me about one of the best experiences you've had on campus.
4. Tell me about of the worst experiences you've had on campus.
5. What is a typical day like for you?

Intersecting Identities on Campus

1. If I were to ask you who you are, how would you describe yourself?
2. Do you see yourself as a white woman? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. What identities are most important to you?
4. What identities most affect how others see or respond to you? Can you tell me a story about that? How does this change in different situations?
5. What identities are you most aware of on campus? When? Where?
6. What identities are you most aware of off campus? When? Where?
7. When (and where) do you think about being a white woman on campus? When and where do you think about being a white woman off campus?
8. Do you ever have conversations about race, gender, or other identities? What are those conversations like? Can you tell me about some of them?

Doing Race-Gender

Expectations & Enforcement: Identity Performance

1. What expectations do you feel like others have of you as a white woman?
2. How do they communicate these expectations to you?
3. Are these expectations similar on and off campus?
4. Do you feel like you meet these expectations?
5. When was a time when you feel like you really met those expectations? Can you tell me about it?
6. When was a time that you feel like you broke people's expectations? Can you tell me about it?

Friend Groups and Friendships: Relationships

7. How would you describe your different friend groups?
8. Do you have friends with women who don't identify as white? How would you describe these friendships?
9. Do you have friends who are white women? How would you describe these friendships?
10. Does being at OU make any of these friendships easier or harder? How? Can you tell me a story about this?

Opportunities: Structuring Privilege

11. What kinds of opportunities for leadership, involvement, or unique learning have you had since you've been at OU? How did you get these opportunities?
12. Did who you are affect how you got these opportunities? Can you tell me about it?
    a. Possible probe: Did being a white woman affect how you got any of these opportunities? Can you tell me about it?
13. Are there opportunities you'd like to have that it's been difficult to make happen?

APPENDIX C

Interview 2: Photo-Elicitation Interview Protocol

Take pictures of places where

a) you feel like you belong on campus.
b) you feel like an outsider on campus.
c) you feel like you have some power on campus.
d) you feel like you don't have power on campus.
e) you feel like a white woman on campus.
f) you've had meaningful or significant experiences on campus. (These can be positive, negative or neutral.)

Photo-guided interview:

1) Viewing (a) photos – Tell me more about this photo and how it shows where and when you feel like you belong on campus.
2) Viewing (b) photos – Tell me more about this photo and how it shows where and when you feel like an outsider.
3) Viewing (c) photos – Tell me more about this photo and how it shows where and when you feel like you have some power on campus.
4) Viewing (d) photos – Tell me more about this photo and how it shows where and when you feel like you don't have power on campus.
5) Viewing (e) photos – Tell me more about this photo and how it shows where and when you feel like a white woman.
6) Viewing (f) photos – Tell me more about these pictures.

APPENDIX D

My Commitments to Collaborators

I am committed to the following:

- Involving collaborators only as it is beneficial for their own intellectual work and the rest of their lives and commitments. I am aware of the habits of white women to dominate spaces and conversations, privileging their own needs and desires, and will actively work against this.
- Coauthoring all publications that follow from this project. (I am expected to single-author my dissertation, but even that might include – as they would wish – writing or narratives from co-authors.)
- Publishing in venues that forward the goals of collaborators. This might mean publishing in journals related to their disciplines and areas of study or in non-academic venues where the results of this research would be valuable or contribute to change.
- Carrying the load of administrative and other types of organizational work that would give collaborators opportunity to focus on the intellectual work of the project.
- Other commitments as suggested, requested, or required by collaborators.