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Diane Kuthy and Olivia Robinson, *Swaddled* as seen in their creative submission on page 66 of this issue.

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Editorial: Whiteness and Art Education

Joni Boyd Acuff, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University

Whiteness is a complex, hegemonic, and dynamic set of mainstream socio-economic processes, and ways of thinking, feeling, believing, and acting (cultural scripts) that function to obscure the power, privilege, and practices of the dominant social elite. Whiteness drives oppressive individual, group, and corporate practices that adversely impact schools, the wider society and indeed societies worldwide. Lea & Sims, 2008, p.2

In 2015, White art educator, researcher, scholar, Dr. Sunny Spillane wrote a pointed and candid article, titled “The failure of whiteness in art education: A personal narrative informed by Critical Race Theory.” The paper called out the ways whiteness lurks in the crevices of all of her art education work, even though she purposefully assumes a social justice lens. But she admits that her social justice stance was not necessarily an anti-racist stance, thus did not require her to identify whiteness as a structure that needed to be analyzed and destabilized. Spillane (2015) explains, “In order to understand the impact of racial discrimination, it is important to recognize its function in securing and maintaining white privilege. This may be a challenge, as many whites—including myself—are neither accustomed to nor comfortable with thinking about ourselves in racial terms” (Spillane, 2015, p. 59). Spillane goes on to proclaim that regardless of the intent to do critical art education that emphasizes racial equity, when whiteness goes unexamined, it maintains its place at the center. “Speaking from the center” (Yancy, 2004, p. 1) continues to wage normative demands on people of color.

In 2017, I conducted an interview with Spillane that followed up on some of the topics embedded within her “Failure of whiteness” article. During our chat, I frankly asked Spillane, “What do you wish you were taught about whiteness before you entered the classroom?” Spillane thoughtfully responded, “I wish I understood whiteness as the lynchpin of systems of racial meaning in the raced society that we live in. I wish that I understood that whiteness wasn’t just another racial category, but that people are racialized differently in relation to whiteness. I wish that I understood [race] as a social fiction; and, that it is critical to not just be conscious of myself as a raced individual, but of the systems of racial meaning and their import for the field” (personal communication, 2017).
The jCRAE “Whiteness and Art Education” mini-theme aims to do some of the work that Spillane (2017) refers to, especially the task of identifying whiteness as the lynchpin of systems of racial meaning, and moreover, of racial oppression within art education. Issue 2 of Volume 36, as did Issue 1, brings together conscious voices that ask new questions, make critical considerations and promote anti-racist teaching strategies that decenter and destabilize whiteness within the art education field. From classroom resources to classroom language, arts archives to research strategies, the authors in this issue identify the ways “white hegemony functions to obscure the power and privilege and practices of the dominant social elite and reproduce inequities and inequalities within [art] education and wider society” (Lea & Sims, 2008, back cover). The authors offer strategies for developing the critical consciousness and anti-racist practices that Spillane (2015) vulnerably shares that she failed at, and thus advocates for.

Melanie Buffington opens Volume 36, Issue 2 by taking stock of the sites where whiteness lives in art education. In her research, Buffington points out that whiteness circulates the art education field through materials like specific pieces of quintessential literature that the field has named significant, and in everyday teaching resources like artist posters used to introduce young children to visual artists. Essentially, Buffington works to unmask the pervasiveness of whiteness so that efforts can be made to disrupt the structural racism that lives within art education. Then, Beth Balliro and Lyssa Paluay use Critical Race Theory to make sense of the ways that archived American art and design education history aid in the perpetuation of white supremacy in contemporary college art classrooms. Using research completed at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt), the co-authors identify the counternarratives of students, faculty and staff of color as a methodology of resistance, culture change, and archival reclamation.

In an engaging personal narrative, Adriane Pereira analyzes her lived experiences surrounding “becoming” a woman of color. Describing the shift from self-identifying as a White Hispanic woman to being categorized by a catch-all term, “woman of color,” Pereira examines the complexity and fluidity of the social construct of race. Using Anzaldúa’s Borderlands theory and Deluze and Guattari’s theorizing on “becoming,” Pereira ultimately completes a critical examination of the ways her “becoming” a woman of color consequently drives her artist and art education identity. Next, Diane Kuthy and Olivia Robinson offer a creative work that brings to light the visual culture of whiteness, and the ways whiteness is maintained through historical and contemporary imagery. The co-authors present their series of handmade quilts, titled Swaddled, as art-based intervention for disrupting white supremacy in the arts and visual culture.
Injeong Yoon uses autoethnography to examine the ways whiteness has impacted her self-actualization as a Korean woman, immigrant, and as an art educator of color in the classroom. Laying out her positionality with frankness and vulnerability, Yoon’s research is pivotal in revealing the ways whiteness can be internalized by people of color, but also the ways it can be destabilized through intentional critical self reflexivity, which consequently impacts her work as an art educator. Yoon takes readers on her journey of resilience and survival as an academic in a predominantly white field. Then, Dionne Custer presents a creative prose that questions the way children of color are nurtured to develop, or in this case leave behind, an artist identity. This contribution reveals the significant power of art educators’ words and actions, thus making readers (art educators) question how seriously they take their responsibility to teach and encourage all children inside and outside of the classroom. Issue 2 of “Whiteness and Art Education” wraps with Tyler Denmead’s work, “White Warnings.” In his paper, Denmead identifies the ways reflexivity in research can end up re-centering and reinvesting in whiteness, creating a double bind. Denmead’s work also takes to task the “Creative Cities” discourse, particularly the way whiteness is unmarked in the concept of “the creative.”

Volume 36 of jCRAE forefronts a discussion about what happens to whiteness once it has been made visible to white people. What happens to whiteness when its normality has been interrupted? (Bell, 2017). The authors share personal reflections, paths of exploration, and even actionable items that may be able to assist the art education field in establishing a new way to talk about race and engage in transformative practices that calls out and challenges the pervasiveness of whiteness in art education.

References


Whiteness is

Melanie L. Buffington, Ph.D.
Virginia Commonwealth University

ABSTRACT

This paper addresses how Whiteness circulates in various forms in the past, present, and future of art education. Through a literature review, document analysis and narrative interpretation, I show myriad ways that Whiteness circulates in art education in an usually unchecked fashion. This unexamined centering of Whiteness harms all of our students, particularly pre-service teachers who will enter diverse settings without a deep and nuanced understanding of race. Through adopting some principles of critical race methodology and augmenting the existing resources in art education, we may be able to start breaking down the specific systems of structural racism within Art Education.

Keywords: Whiteness, anti-racism, teacher education, Critical Race Theory, racism in education

Whiteness Is a Force in Art Education

Whiteness is and has been a powerful force in education, especially within art education. In art education, the racial and gender disparities of both the art world and the realm of education intersect creating a particularly nuanced form of power dynamic. From the earliest days of art education, this racial power dynamic permeated our field and it continues to this day. Within the heralded book by Arthur Efland, A History of Art Education, the first mention of art educators of color I found came on page 158, thus showing how people of color have been ascribed to the margins of the history of art education through this popular book (Efland, 1990). While the way Whiteness operates within art education has changed over time, its effects continue to be strong. For instance, artist and educator Faith Ringgold discusses how her works from the 1960s that overtly addressed race were not shown in galleries from 1969-2010 (O’Neal Parker, 2013). Based upon my own observations in public school classrooms and in reviewing pre-service teachers’ lesson plans,

1 Throughout this paper, I capitalized the word “White” and “Whiteness” when they refer to people. In reference to the color “white,” I used the lowercase word. When quoting another author, I retained the capitalization originally used.
images of her story quilts including *Tar Beach* became staples in many art classrooms and countless friends and colleagues, myself included, engaged children in thinking about their dreams. In my experience, I have never seen a lesson plan from a student and have never seen a poster in a classroom featuring one of her works that more overtly addresses race. This contrasts with the frequency that I read lesson plans from students or see posters on walls during classroom observations that feature her works that more subtly attend to race. When we consider Whiteness as a construct throughout the art world and the realm of education, we may see how and why forms of oppression exist and are ignored by many who hold power and privilege (Desai, 2010; Knight, 2006; Kraehe, 2015; Mansfield, 2015).

The United States Department of Education (2016) released a report on teacher diversity finding that during the 2011-2012 school year, 82% of teachers were White, 80% of principals were White, and 75% of college students enrolled in education majors were White. This significant prevalence of Whiteness in these arenas starkly contrasts with the increasing diversity of students in public schools in the US with 43% of high school graduates in 2011-2012 being students of color and predictions that, by 2024, 56% of public school students will be students of color (US Department of Education, 2016). For the purpose of this paper, I rely on the following definition of Whiteness as,

> the overt and subliminal socialization processes and practices, power structures, laws, privileges, and life experiences that favor the White racial group over all others....Yet, society socializes everyone to adhere to the Whiteness rules simply because one exists in environments where Whiteness dominates. (Helms, 2017, p. 718)

As a field dominated by White teachers and White faculty members, it is long overdue that the field of art education undergo a significant reflection about how Whiteness operates throughout all aspects of our discipline.

To better understand the phenomenon of Whiteness in art education, this article explores the past, present, and future of Whiteness, using different methodologies for each investigation. To explore the past, I utilize principles of qualitative literature review and search key journals that address Whiteness in art education and then explore the prevalence of Whiteness in the most prominent history of art education book (Efland, 1990). From there, I consider Whiteness within contemporary commercially available classroom resources by conducting a quantitative document analysis of the posters listed on the Dick Blick website, analyzing them around the race and gender
of the artist. When thinking through the future of the field and about how Whiteness may continue to circulate through the actions, values, and beliefs of pre-service teachers, I utilize some narratives from my own teaching and share the ideas and perspectives of students. The paper concludes with some ideas and strategies for art educators to work together to create a more hopeful future for our field, focusing on who needs to do the work of deconstructing Whiteness and how to begin.

Additionally, it is important to situate myself within the landscape of Whiteness in Art Education. I am a White straight cis female art educator who has always attended and taught among majority White student and teacher populations (with a six month exception in my elementary school years). The one common factor among my schooling experiences is that Whiteness and race were taboo topics until I was in graduate school. Through taking classes with students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds and faculty who acknowledged race, I learned ways to broach these important topics with my own students. Over the last several years, I have made an increasing effort to make my classroom environment, reading list, and pedagogical practices more culturally sustaining. Now that I am in higher education, it is common for me to only see White faces at “important” meetings or to have a small number of people of color present. It is also common at higher level meetings to have majority White men and few women or non-binary people of any race at the table. These meetings serve to remind me that this problem is widespread, though it may be particularly pronounced in art education.

Contemporary Whiteness Literature in Art Education

While culture and multicultural issues have been prominent within art education literature since the late 1970s (Tomhave, 1992), frank discussions of Whiteness are a relatively new phenomenon. As I searched four art education journals for articles about Whiteness, I found some interesting trends. The available search feature in the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* produced zero hits for the term Whiteness. *Studies in Art Education* had one hit, an editorial published in 2018 that came up with the search term “Whiteness” (Carpenter, 2018). Searching in the journal *Art Education* resulted in 14 hits with five articles written since 2000 addressing Whiteness as a racial identity that wields power (Blair & Shalmon, 2005; Desai, 2010; Gude, 2000; Keifer-Boyd, Amburgy, & Knight, 2007; Lee, 2012). The remainder of the articles addressed the word Whiteness in a cursory fashion or in other contexts including white text on a dark background (Marantz, 1964), properties of the color white (Howell, 1977; Stumbo, 1969), and reference list entries for the bell hooks essay *Representing Whiteness in the Black imagination* (Howell,
White & Congdon, 1998), among others. Within the *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education* (JSTAE), there were 179 hits with the search term “Whiteness.” As I reviewed the more recent articles from *Art Education* and *JSTAE*, two main themes emerged: the need to change art education curriculum practices to acknowledge the power of Whiteness in our field and personal narratives of Whiteness that related to authors acknowledging how their race and racial privilege limited what they could see and understand.

The need for change to address Whiteness

As I reviewed the articles that fit within this category, two stood out because of the depth with which they engaged the topic. These articles, E(Raced) Bodies in and out of Sight/Cite/Site by Wanda Knight (2006) from *JSTAE* and The Challenge of New Colorblind Racism in Art Education by Dipti Desai (2010) from *Art Education* emphasized and clearly articulated the imperative within the field to challenge the dominance and power of Whiteness. Both Knight (2006) and Desai (2010) pointed out that the way that Whiteness has been ignored by predominantly White art educators and pre-service educators throughout the field is one of the reasons that it has maintained its power. Knight (2006) noted “…Whiteness is perhaps the foremost unmarked and thus unexamined category in art education…. Moreover, when Whiteness goes unexamined, racial privilege associated with Whiteness goes unacknowledged” (p. 323). She makes the point that this unexamined approach to Whiteness plays out through the gaze of White teachers on their students and how they may or may not actually see their students, thus reducing the teachers’ abilities to meet the needs of the students. Knight also discusses the prevalent and problematic approach of many teachers who claim to be “colorblind.” In explaining the significant harm that emanates from this position, Knight states, “…a colorblind viewpoint enables White teachers to erase from consciousness the history of racism” (p. 326). As Knight notes, this is particularly harmful when teachers are not aware of or not willing to acknowledge the racist underpinnings of contemporary education practice and policies.

Desai (2010) further articulates points about the notion of colorblindness and how harmful it is throughout art education. She points out how the push for multicultural education has become part of the practice of many educational institutions and is enacted as a means to promote colorblindness via the guise of tolerance. Desai discusses several features of colorblind racism that are particularly relevant in art education including that White people do not have culpability in the consistent and persistent educational achievement gaps, that the use of “coded” and subtle language is one way that racist ideas circulate, and that there is a perception that systems that create racial inequities are invisible. She also points out how
elements of visual culture lead some people to believe that racism is an individual issue, not a systemic one.

Both Knight (2006) and Desai (2010) noted how their White students struggle with anti-racist educational practices because they believed that they, personally, are not racist. Further, Desai described a scenario that often occurs between her White students and the students of color in her class in which the White students become annoyed if their positions around colorblindness are challenged, thus indicating the need for more of these types of discussions in pre-service teaching classes.

**Personal narratives of Whiteness**

While numerous authors addressed how their awareness of their Whiteness brought about an increased understanding of different situations (Kirker, 2017; Slivka, 2015; Spillane, 2015), the article by Sunny Spillane clearly articulated this by using critical race theory as it aligns with art education settings. She notes how, as a White teacher in a predominantly African American school, she assumed that her experience would be analogous to the experiences a Black person might have in a predominantly White space. However, Spillane (2015) goes on to question that assumption and noted that the situations are not analogous because, “whiteness is not just another racial category; it is the axis around which other races are constructed in hierarchical relations of power and both material and psychological privilege” (p. 59). Spillane also acknowledged how the district’s new teacher mentoring program brought her into contact with more experienced teachers who attributed her struggles to deficits in the students of color rather than in her teaching. These White teachers had previously taught in schools with more students of color and transferred to “better” schools with fewer students of color. As Spillane grappled with the implications of these various experiences, she learned about critical race theory (Crenshaw, 1995) and deficit thinking (Bastos, Cosier, & Hutzel, 2012; Valencia, 2010). Her changes in thinking took time and also significantly affected her practice as an art teacher and later as an art teacher educator. Citing the work of Amelia Kraehe (2015), Spillane (2015) noted how the continued centering of Whiteness acknowledges the experiences of the majority of pre-service art teachers, and simultaneously disregards the needs of students of color. This ongoing system of oppression in art teacher education “further entrenches white art teacher identity as normative” (p. 64), rather than constructed.

**Whiteness Is Heralded in the History of Art Education**

Throughout the written histories of art education, the role of White educators is pronounced and the role of educators of color is not
highlighted nearly as often. The most prominent text on the history of art education, *A History of Art Education*, by Arthur Efland was published in 1990. Throughout this text there are chapter titles including “Western Origins of Art Education” (p. v) and headings including “European Origins of Common School Pedagogy” (p. v). Though some female art educators are mentioned throughout the book and there is a three-page section devoted to “Art in the Education of Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” there is not significant attention in this book paid to women or educators of color. Toward the end of the book there is a section on more contemporary developments that includes discussion of Discipline-Based Art Education, Critical Theory, the use of a wider range of media including technological media, the National Art Education Association, and research in art education. Efland addresses each of these topics in more depth than the role of race or gender. In one paragraph, Efland acknowledges the social and political movements that shaped education. He states:

The Civil Rights movements generated a demand for the art forms of ethnic minorities, including the study of living African-American and Native American artists, while the feminist movements generated an interest in the work of women artists. These movements also led to scholarly study that brought to light minority and women artists whose work had previously been neglected. (Efland, 1990, p. 158)

This segment of the book is the most in-depth discussion of these topics. It is interesting to note the contrast between the emphasis placed on the European origins of art education practice and the paucity of detail that relates to any practices or ideas that may have come from other cultural backgrounds. Other than the mention of people of color on page 158, the Efland text does not actively question the idea of Whiteness or the representation of people of color. The Civil Rights Movement is not discussed in detail, the role of segregation and desegregation in informing art education practices or curriculum is not mentioned, the multicultural movement is not mentioned, and issues related to representation of people of color are completely absent from this text.

**Narratives of Whiteness**

Certainly, other scholars noted this previously including Acuff, Hirak, and Nangah (2012) who wrote about their approach to the history of art education that sought to dismantle the Master Narrative (Ladson-Billings, 1999). According to Acuff, Hirak, and Nangah (2012), this master narrative of Whiteness in art education makes it difficult for “others” to enter the history of the field and to see themselves
represented there. Over time, there certainly have been efforts by art education scholars to rectify this situation including Paul Bolin, Doug Blandy, and Kristin Congdon’s (2000) *Making Invisible Histories of Art Education Visible*, Mary Ann Stankiewicz’s (2001) *Roots of Art Education Practice*, and a recently published book edited by Paul Bolin and Ami Kantawala (2017) entitled *Revitalizing History: Recognizing the Struggles, Lives, and Achievements of African American and Women Art Educators*. These books are all well-researched accounts of the contributions of multiple art educators, highlighting the work of women and art educators of color. Whereas Efland’s (1990) book is a cohesive and comprehensive history of White art education and its European origins, none of these other books present as cohesive a history. Though they are not exhaustive in scope they do present important counter narratives related to individual educators and particular projects.

Solórzano and Yosso (2002) explained the importance of counter narratives from a critical race theory perspective related to educational research. They noted how counter narratives that center the experiences of people of color tell different stories than the “objective” research of White educators. Thus, the inclusion of these counter narratives in histories of art education might be a means to change the marginalization and sideling of art educators of color. Further, Solórzano and Yosso proposed a methodology, critical race methodology, that centers race in all aspects of the research process. If art educators utilized this methodology, the historical research they conduct would likely be quite different. For instance, in the case of Efland’s work, researchers might start to ask questions about why documents related to White art educators and students were preserved, but why there is so little archival documentation of teachers and students of color. Further, additional data collection techniques, including oral histories, might be utilized rather than a significant reliance on archival documents. Researchers working from a critical race theory perspective value the experiential knowledge of people of color and recognize how it helps understand and teach about the subordination of people of color. Further, they may regard these types of knowledge as a strength that helps to understand experiences of people of color in more nuanced ways than documents that may be deficit-based or built around an understanding of Whiteness as a benchmark (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Throughout other books related to the history of art education, I have not been able to locate significant bodies of information related to arts education in segregated schools or the efforts of art education leaders of color. While there are chapters or articles about individual art educators of color including Hale Woodruff and Aaron Douglas (Bey, 2012), Augusta Savage (Bey, 2017), Mary Godfrey (Holt, 2017), Frances Euphemia Thompson (Stankiewicz, 2013), and many others,
these do not create a comprehensive history in the same way that the Efland text does. Further, as this information is published in separate journals or books, it is easy for a person to come across one of these sources, but not nearly as easy to come across all of these sources. Creating a more inclusive history of the field would be a significant undertaking, but one that is of paramount importance. We cannot simply hope that our students come across counter narratives in a piecemeal fashion. This is one area where the National Art Education Association (NAEA) could take a leadership role and work with experts in the field to curate an inclusive text that could be used alongside Efland’s book to promote a deeper understanding and more inclusive view of the role of people of color throughout the history of art education.

Whiteness is Reified Within the Present of Art Education Through Commercially Available Classroom Resources

To better understand the prevalence of Whiteness in current-day art education practices, I chose to review commercial posters available through one of the larger art education supply sources - Dick Blick. Assessing these posters gave a snapshot of resources likely used throughout the United States, and potentially beyond. For many years, art educators have investigated spaces of learning including textbooks, classroom arrangement, and classroom decoration. For instance, Susi (2002) discussed classroom arrangement in the context of behavior management; Kushins and Brisman (2005) noted how the physical surroundings of classrooms and schools affect learning and learners; Efland (1990), drew from Stankiewicz’s (1984) work related to reproductions of artworks in school classrooms; and Grant and Kee (2013) researched omissions and incorrect information presented in Art History survey textbooks regarding African American artists of the Harlem Renaissance, among many others.

Working with an art education graduate student, Kate Duffy, we conducted a content analysis of the race and gender of the artists represented in all of the commercially available posters through Dick Blick’s website. After we identified all of the posters that featured images of art works and the names of the individual artists, we calculated how many of these posters featured artists of various races and genders. We found that of the 3032 posters that feature a named individual artist, 262 (86.5%) of the posters show the work of a White artist. Thus, Whiteness was consistently a factor in these poster sets, and, to complicate matters, the intersection of race and gender shows how both Whiteness and maleness are reified in contemporary resources. Of the 303 posters, 227 (75%) show the work of White men.

2 Many of these include images by the same artists. See Figure 2 for a discussion of the most frequently featured artists.
None of the sets that we reviewed contained more than one image by a person of color, with the exception of the set from Dick Blick that was specifically about African American artists.

Simultaneously, issues of complete omission are significant here with the complete absence of Native and Asian women artists from these commercially available sets.

After spending some time with the data, we noted multiple ways that diversity was silenced. After separating out the individual artists from the posters, we found that many of the commercially available images represent the same artists multiple times. Among these resources, the artists featured four or more times are: Mary Cassatt (5), Jacob Lawrence (5), Henri Matisse (5), Pablo Picasso (5), Edward Hopper (4), Frida Kahlo (4), Wassily Kandinsky (4), Roy Lichtenstein (4), Rene Magritte (4), Wayne Thiebaud (4), Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (4), Vincent Van Gogh (4), Grant Wood (4). Through looking at the data this way, it is again clear how the posters promote Whiteness with 11 of the 13 artists featured the most often being White. Further,
11 of the 13 artists are male and the only female artist of color is Frida Kahlo. Thinking about intersectionality and the complete absence of Black and Asian women as well as the exclusion of all Native people presents a troubling scenario that shows how Whiteness continues to be prevalent and significantly reified in the contemporary resources available to art educators.

While moving back and forth between this data analysis and writing this article, the linguistic similarity between the “Master Narrative” of art and art education discussed by Acuff, Hirak, and Nangah (2012) and the three poster sets from Dick Blick that include the word “master” in their titles struck me. The set “20th Century Art Masterpieces” has ten posters that all feature work by White artists, with nine by male artists and one by female artist Georgia O’Keeffe. In the “Masterworks of Art I” set, there are eight posters that all feature work by White artists, seven males and one female artist, Mary Cassatt. The final set, “Masterworks of Art II,” contains eight posters with six by White male artists, one by Jacob Lawrence, an African American male artist, and one by Frida Kahlo, a Mexican female artist. The message about who is a “master” in art is clearly communicated through these classroom resources that glorify White artists while ignoring and marginalizing works by artists of color. Particularly, this graphic representation helps us understand the intersectionality of Whiteness and maleness and how that is virtually a requirement to be considered a “master.” These posters hang in classrooms throughout the United States and silently teach children...
every day; those lessons reinforce that not all children have equal opportunity in the visual arts.

Another way that NAEA could influence the current situation of Art Education is to develop and distribute poster sets for classrooms that do not replicate these inequities. If there were sets commercially available that promoted artists of color, a wider variety of our students would be able to see themselves represented in the physical environments of their classrooms. Further, district curriculum supervisors might ask art educators to conduct an audit of their classroom to see whose art is featured and how the featured images break down along the lines of race and gender. Art museums often offer a range of educational programs that could similarly be audited by internal staff to better understand the ideas and artists they are promoting through their tours and educational opportunities. Engaging arts educators in various settings in content analysis audits of their resources and curriculum may help well-meaning White educators see inequities that they might not otherwise notice. This relates to the idea from critical race methodology that dominant ideologies should be challenged (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) because they are embedded with the power and privilege of the dominant group. In this case, the work of certain artists (White ones) as “masters” and other artists as “not masters” is on display throughout classrooms, museums, and other art settings. Therefore, educators need to challenge their own previous education and think about the dominant ideologies that they learned themselves. This may lead to more art educators pushing back at the “neutral” tropes of art history that omit the work of artists of color while reifying the work of European and White American male artists.

Whiteness is Strong within the Future of Art Education

Through my role as a faculty member at a large university in the Southeastern United States, I interact daily with pre-service teachers. Based upon their comments in class, their reactions to readings, and the lessons they create, I know that Whiteness is going to be a factor well into the future in art education. Through the following narratives based on classroom experiences, I highlight several areas that are particularly problematic as they relate to understandings of race, empathy for the plight of White people, and classroom interactions.

Understandings of Race

Many, though not all, students enter my class with narrowly defined understandings of race that do not relate to the complex histories of race throughout the United States. For instance, when discussing people of color, a student brought up a teacher she had who identified as African American. However, the student believed that the
teacher looked White, and thus, would not have ever experienced racial discrimination. The lack of knowledge, both historical and contemporary, on the part of the university student about a variety of issues including the one drop rule, issues of passing, and generational trauma related to race is troubling. Also, the student’s belief that her perception of the teacher’s race was more important than the teacher’s self-identification demonstrates a lack of understanding about how race operates. Further, other students have criticized James Banks (2008) and other authors for openly discussing race with students stating that, “Talking about race is racist.” These issues are compounded by the fact that many of the classes I teach are 100% White or there may be one or two students of color present. It is rare for me to have three or more students of color in an average class of approximately 15-18 preservice students. This is particularly troubling at a large university with a racially diverse student population. For many reasons, students of color are not entering the art education major and this perpetuation of pre-service classes in art education being virtually always White spaces does not do enough to expand students’ understandings of race. It is unlikely that White spaces with White students and White professors can be enough to help pre-service teachers understand the history and harm of racism. Through dialogue and discussions across racial, ethnic, gender, etc., groups White students can come to learn more and develop deeper understandings3.

**Empathy for the Plight of White People**

In numerous ways, students chose to focus their empathy on the actions of other White people and those who do not intend to do harm. Interestingly, this focus on the intent, rather than the impact continues to direct empathy towards those in power and away from those who are harmed by racism. After visiting an exhibit with a group of students, we noted how some of the images featured stereotypical images of people of color. When I raised this issue with students, they made excuses for the use of this racist, stereotypical imagery, focusing on their perception of the kind intent of the creator rather than the impact these images would have on others. In another instance, a student shared how he had a high school teacher who called out students, in a joking fashion, when they committed a micro-aggression against another student. One of the White students in my class mentioned how it would upset her if she were called out, even in a subtle or playful way. Ignoring the hurt that your words can cause and focusing on one’s own discomfort rather than the pain caused to the other prolongs the effects of Whiteness in classrooms.

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3 This points to the need for a significant change in K-12 education to include honest and accurate information about slavery, race, and racism throughout time in the United States and around the world.
The fact that numerous pre-service teachers tend to focus on themselves and their intentions rather than the impact of words and images on others is a sign that we need to do more to help better prepare our students for their own classrooms. Further, because many White students in my classes perceive racism to be an individual problem, rather than a systemic problem, they do not see the need for significant structural change.

**Classroom Interactions**

We live in an era when discussions of safe and brave classroom spaces are common. However, the ways that students perform within the classroom consistently reinforce dominant practices that privilege Whiteness and its trappings, even within these teacher-defined safe or brave spaces. For instance, a Latinx student shared with me that a White student did not know how to pronounce her last name. Instead of asking or only using her first name, the White student made a few incorrect attempts and then ended by saying, “Whatever” in front of the whole class. The lack of recognition by the one student about how her classroom interaction and lack of effort to pronounce her classmate’s name correctly is one example of how Whiteness circulates freely in classroom spaces (Kohli & Solórzano, 2012). The Latinx student later shared with me how this was just one of countless microaggressions that made it difficult for her to be as successful in class as her White peers.

I posit that we need to work toward spaces that are more than just brave, but are overtly anti-racist spaces. Instead of having students leave a classroom knowing their classmates do not value or acknowledge their race and/or culture, we need to work toward unpacking Whiteness. The idea of involving student voice in creating parameters for classroom discussions and interactions is one way to begin deconstructing Whiteness as a force in classrooms. Helms (2017) believes that, “Whiteness is so powerful that White people can determine when and under what conditions racism exists, as well as when it is necessary to supersede race and racism with multiculturalism or diversity” (p. 718).

**Whiteness is Constructed and Must be Deconstructed to Create a Different Future for Art Education**

Because of the prevalence of Whiteness throughout the past, present, and likely future of art education, it is paramount for educators to begin deconstruction now. If we do not start this work immediately, the future described previously is likely to be our only option. However, with a concerted effort by many in our field, we do have the power to create a different potential future. One prime place for this deconstruction to start is in the classrooms that train preservice
teachers (Knight, 2015), but it cannot be the only place and this type of work should be ongoing throughout a career. Helping preservice teachers understand more about the construct of Whiteness and how it infiltrates all aspects of society in the United States may facilitate change in more art classrooms, pre-K through college. The majority of art teachers in schools are White and the majority of faculty members teaching preservice art teachers are White as well. This will require White art teacher educators, White museum educators, White curriculum supervisors, among others to spend time deconstructing their own practices; finding, owning, and changing aspects that reify Whiteness; and will also require rethinking ideas about recruiting and retaining more diverse future teachers. As White teacher educators begin this process, I suggest that White people need to listen. When a person of color shares a story of oppression, White people need to refrain from sharing their own stories of perceived oppressions or problems and not offer suggestions. Instead, they should listen and learn.

Rather than rushing to speak, it is helpful for White teacher educators to wait for the person to finish and then thank the person for opening up and sharing a story. White educators need to take time to consider this situation and think about it over and over again while considering how Whiteness functions to give privilege and operates in education. It is helpful to examine curricular choices and assignments while searching for instances of deficit-based thinking and assignments that encourage such thinking in students. Teachers can change those assignments, they can acknowledge race in the classroom, and they can intentionally select articles and books by scholars of color and point out that they are people of color. White museum educators can ensure that they have multiple tours that include significant numbers of works by artists of color, they can plan docent trainings to feature pieces by artists of color, and they can invite particular schools to tour the museum. White curriculum supervisors could create in-service sessions that assist art teachers in understanding the role of people of color in the contemporary art world in the US, they could review local and state curriculum to assess the proportion of artists who are people of color, they could overtly address the systemic oppression that has kept and continues to keep many people of color from pursuing careers in the arts, they could intentionally bring in speakers who are artists of color who address racial oppression through their work, among many other options.

There is no shortage of things that can be done to promote social justice and equity by reigning in the effects of Whiteness throughout Art Education. However, there is a shortage of time; it is unacceptable to put off this work any longer. If you are a White educator, recognize that you have power and that you have a choice to use your power
to continue to promote Whiteness in education or to deconstruct and
decenter Whiteness while working toward a more equitable future.
Teaching as you were taught and as you have always taught is a vote
for the former. I strive to do the latter.

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Reclaiming the Archives: White Supremacy and Testimonials of Resistance in an Art & Design College

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ABSTRACT

This paper uncovers the white supremacist origins of curriculum and pedagogy in an Art and Design College, while presenting a video testimonial project in which participants speak their truths regarding racialized encounters on campus. Using a Critical Race Theory framework, we trace a lineage from the early Eurocentric formations of American Art and Design higher education to current racial hostility on college campuses. Counternarratives are presented as a methodology of resistance, culture change, and archival reclamation.

Keywords: Art and Design Education; Counternarratives; Critical Race Theory; White Supremacy

In this article, we trace a history of white supremacy in our art and design college by unearthing racist images in our archival library textbooks and identifying the presence of such history as a defining legacy. We then describe a video intervention project in which a group of campus activists generated archived testimonials that foreground racialized experience on campus and entered them into the institutional archives. Through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) viewpoint, we interpret these manifestations as evidence of institutionalized white supremacy and hope that their unearthing incites the capacity to support institutional transformation.

There is a sense of urgency in art and design education as we are tasked with preparing the next generation of fine artists and designers who will shape contemporary culture. These photographers, architects, teachers and art directors are making daily decisions about how and who is represented in mainstream culture. This representation has been so problematic for people of color on a number of societal and political levels in U.S. history that an insistence that Black Lives Matter in 2019 is necessary. As educators, we are facing our own complicity in an educational system that continues to exalt the Eurocentric at the expense of the dignity of
all cultures that fall in the margins. We need other frameworks to re focus on the past and invite counternarratives to subvert an existing educational structure that debilitates all who are in it. To approach the future of art and design education we must unsettle our dominant practices today, uproot and reckon with our past, and insert our counternarratives into the archives.

**Critical Race Theory**

Unearthing the history of art education within institutes of art and design can significantly illuminate our current dominant practices. First, it can bring awareness to past practice, policy and thought and its “lingering influences...to assess the validity for today’s art education” (Chalmers, 1996, p. 20). A historical approach allows us to consider the past and its influences on our current time (Stankiewicz, 2001). Pinder’s (1999) critique on Black representation in Western art history textbooks pointed out that “it is as if they are writing in this [African American] art history with their left hand and erasing it with their right” (p. 533). Chalmers (1996) suggests that few art educators have linked the history of art education to social, political, and cultural histories or other histories of education in general.

CRT will guide this examination of Massachusetts College of Art and Design (MassArt). MassArt began as Massachusetts Normal Art School as the first free standing art school in the U.S. in 1873, in response to the Massachusetts Drawing Act of 1870 that mandated drawing as a subject in the public schools. The Massachusetts Normal Art School graduated the first art teachers, artists and designers in the U.S. who were trained to answer the needs of the industrial revolution. Massachusetts Normal School took its cues from the European art academies and modeled its curriculum and pedagogy from this tradition. This legacy is essential as we view MassArt from a CRT lens.

One tenant of CRT is that race and racism are endemic and fundamental to the underpinnings of U.S. society (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Savas, 2014; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano & Lynn, 2004). We can credit Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) with connecting CRT to the foundation of racism in education. Ladson-Billings (1998) also demonstrates how racism in education normalizes and fixes whiteness in particular opposition to other categories of race. A historical study of MassArt will illustrate this tenant and expose how racism is an embedded part of the fabric of curriculum and pedagogy of art education in the U.S. .

The second tenant of CRT we will explore is the act of counter- storytelling which will be illustrated in a video exploration of contemporary voices at our institution. The inclusion of counter storytelling highlights the importance of experiential knowledge
to gain a fuller context and understanding of racism in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It gives voice to students who have experienced discrimination and encourages an exploration of problematic educational structures (Crichlow, 2015). A CRT framework also allows the echo of historical structures to be heard in contemporary voices and wonders what fixes instances of racism in place. The alumni, current students, faculty and staff who shared their stories express some of the same opinions and questions that CRT scholars ask about the project of white supremacy, marginalization of people of color and the structures that maintain it (Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., Thomas, K, 1995).

We will also suggest that the history of art education is linked to other histories of education, in particular, the ideas of recapitulation theory that guided education policy in Europe and the United States in the mid to late 19th and early 20th century. This theory was: “inherently ethnocentric and racist because it depicted people of color as inferior and inchoate” (Fallace, 2015, p. 3). There were four beliefs that guided recapitulation theory: 1) All global societies existed on a scale of development from savagery, barbarianism and civilization; 2) All global people travel on the same stage of psychological development; 3) Sociological stages of development align with psychological development; 4) Non-White people were stunted in an earlier stage of sociological and psychological development (Fallace, 2015). Zerffi (1876), a leading English author and teacher, wrote the most influential text on art history training in the 19th century and reveals ideas consistent with recapitationsist thinking:

The Negro fixes our attention only as a savage; the yellow man has a line of his own, and has remained stationary in his artistic development; the white man has surpassed through the savage stages...the white man exclusively we owe art in its highest sense. (p. 27-28)

Zerffi illustrated a belief that particular groups of people entered linear stages of development such as barbarianism, savagery and civilization. White races were assigned to the civilized category, Red or Yellow races were half-civilized and Black or Brown races were barbaric (Fallace, 2015; Rimmer, 1877; Stimson, 1903). Another revelation from this citation is the superiority of the “white man” who solely possesses the ability to create art in its best form. This language reflected a common understanding of the time and reinforced a hierarchy of a Eurocentric curriculum that would be taught in art schools in England. The European models of art education were the standard to emulate and Zerffi remained influential as schools of art were soon to be established in North America (Chalmers, 1996). In North America, recapitulation theory was applied to the education
of Blacks and Native Americans (Fallace, 2015). Letters from an abolitionist missionary hoping to set up schools for Native Americans in New Mexico illustrate the perpetuation of a hierarchy of the white race:

They look upon us as a superior race. They look up to us for the models of perfection in military prowess, in arts and sciences, in morals, in everything. Hence it is American influenced sanctified American influence -that must renovate this land, dissipate its might of ignorance and degradation, and fill it with the light of civilization (Gephart, p. 1851).

Education in boarding schools for Native Americans directly referenced eradicating savage and barbaric ways through curriculum, in the words of Commissioner Morgan to the Bureau of Indian Affairs: “with an atmosphere of civilization, maturing them in all that is good, and developing them into men and women, instead of allowing them to grow up as barbarians and savages” (Morgan, 1896, p. 404). The echoes of recapitulation theory are clearly heard from the voices of an English art educator, a missionary and a Bureau of Indian Affairs commissioner. It is helpful to consider the ideas that framed early history of education in the U.S. and how these influences may have shaped broader approaches and policies that included art and design curriculum and pedagogy.

Origins of Art Institutes

The CRT tenant that racism is endemic can be seen in the curriculum and pedagogy of the early art institutes where European artistic traditions were seen as the ideal and other cultures were inferior and tokenized (Chalmers, 1996). For example, the description of a life drawing class in 1879-1880 illustrates this point: “A life class was started, to meet for three hours on two afternoons a week, and employed a picturesque old negro for its model” (Bronson, 1932, as cited in Barrett & Martinez, 2008, p. 52). The “negro” was seen as an object, like a specimen for the art students to study. No other information was provided about the drawing lesson. In fact, the mention of the “old negro” was the only time a description of a subject in art class was identified. This drawing class illustrates how American society has practiced an ongoing objectification of Black culture and bodies (Cantanese, 2005).

Two important texts, Art Anatomy (1877) by William Rimmer and The Gate Beautiful (1903) by John Ward Stimson existed at the time of the founding of MassArt and may have influenced and reinforced the focus of European superiority in society and in art education. William Rimmer was a highly regarded physician, artist and art educator
described by some as the Michaelangelo of North America (Weidman, Harris & Cash, 1985). He postulated ideas about art that directly connected to recapitulation theory. His text *Art Anatomy* (1877) is filled with visual examples that emphasize the hierarchy and ideal of European culture. This text also may have influenced the movement to establish mandatory drawing in Northeast U.S. schools since it was released during the height of the movement (Davis, 2003). Rimmer’s approach to drawing anatomy was influenced by two strategies. One was comparative anatomy and the other was the pseudo-science of physiognomy that used physical features to analyze personality types (Davis, 2003). Rimmer borrowed the technique of comparative anatomy from Pieter Camper (1794) who compared the facial angles of animals to different races of man (Davis, 2003). For example, Rimmer illustrates “negros” in comparison to apes, as seen below in Drawing 1. This comparison suggests that “negros” have features more apelike than human.

Rimmer further emphasizes features that set apart the English male in comparison to an Anglo-Saxon male from America. Features of the English male are described as “highest average outline” in comparison to an Anglo-Saxon male in America whose form begins to be more Indian like. Seen through a CRT lens, the technical descriptions of the drawings take on a new meaning and the drawings themselves further illustrate the endemic nature of racism in his text.
Rimmer also uses generalizations and classifications as a way to rationalize his thinking. Below he writes about form:

The form of the lion stands for the form and qualities of all lions; that of one horse for all horses; and if the forms of different animals be so placed, or are so found, that they may be seen together, they not only represent the different qualities found in each, but stand, besides, for the difference between them. (Rimmer, p. 111)

Upon reading this description, it becomes easier to understand how Rimmer applied this type of thinking to classifications of people. One “negro” represented all “negros.” Rimmer’s text helped to reinforce the ideas and images of racial stereotyping (Davis, 2002).

John Ward Stimson, another notable art educator who taught at Princeton, the Metropolitan Museum and served as superintendent in New York asserted the importance of art and drawing. His influential text *The Gate Beautiful* (1903) had drawings that also illustrated the ideas of recapitulation theory. This chart illustrates the chief types of man progressing in form and color to the ideal white.
This is a page from the book *The Gate Beautiful* by John Ward Stimson published in 1903. Like Rimmer, Stimson (1903) was influenced by physiognomy where he assigned physical characteristics to understand the difference between the barbaric and the civilized:

We may see these same characteristics of evolving Form and triple Style extend over three stages of Barbaric, Half-Civilized and Civilized man and directly reflected in his arms and arts. Even among those later and higher race migrations, which whiter and more civilized man pursued under the pressure of a higher ambition and ideality, we can still remark distinct tendencies to broadly classify under Three Main Types of social disposition and temperament, based on similar prime relations in force and form. (p. 396)

Stimson makes a direct correlation between how an “angular exterior” of the Northerner is valued for preoccupation with science, wealth and activities related to gaining power. Stimson (1903) takes his thinking a step further to describe and assign ideals of beauty in art:
Beauty is a very different thing from Art, or even from Individuality and Character in art…Thus a Chinese monster in bronze, a grotesque Japanese dragon, an Aztec idol, a Polynesian war club may be crowded with artistic individuality and even significant character of the age or civilization producing it, without at all producing beauty. (p. 165)

Similarly, Chalmers (1996) recognizes sentiments about beauty in the text *The Grammar of Ornament* by Owen Jones (1856) in which Jones describes Islamic design as decorative and ornamental work, but ultimately still savage. These examples reinforce the superiority of European art as civilized and ideal while tokenizing and classifying art from all other cultures as inferior. Rimmer and Stimson influenced the exercise and training of life drawing in the 19th century (Davis, 2002) and most likely shaped the curriculum and pedagogy of art education in the U.S.

**To Challenge Our History**

By acknowledging this difficult evidence of racism in art education, we may begin to subvert policies and practices that made everyone other than white people invisible or marginalized in our classrooms. In most art and design higher education institutions, if Western Art History is the only art history required of art and design students, we hear echoes of recapitulation theory and the superiority of the Western European ideal. To this day, there is still a scarcity of Black artists in Western Art History survey texts, and when they are included, it is within a context of being primitive, naïve or othered (Pinder, 1999). We may not have the same images circulating in our drawing classes but in many ways we uphold the same white supremacist sentiments.

There is indeed a sense of urgency in art and design education, as decisions about representation are often made by the art directors, designers and photographers we educate. There are direct linkages of the historic texts of Rimmer (1877) and Stimson (1903) to Gucci’s Black Face sweater (Bauck, 2019) and H&M (West, 2018) depicting a Black child wearing a hoodie with the words, “Coolest monkey in the jungle.” These products illustrate a historic amnesia that perpetuates stereotypes and degradation. The H&M ad does not see Blacks as a primitive race or as an *Apelike Man* that Rimmer describes. Instead, the contemporary image takes this racism a step further. The young Black child in the hoodie is a monkey. Failing to thoroughly understand our history will increase the likelihood of repeating it. Those generating our current visual culture, the domain for which we prepare our students, lay bare this repetition happening in plain sight.
CRT does not allow us to dismiss these connections.

It is important to locate ourselves in the past and in the history of art education in relation to a broader context. Acknowledging the origins of art education in the U.S. is to subvert and tell the story of where we have been and how these racist origins demand a sense of urgency to haunt and teach us where we need to go next.

**Racism on College Campuses Today**

These past pathologies take new shape on our campuses today. Recently a limelight has been shed on the preponderance of racist incidents on college campuses across the U.S. Today’s stories of targeted racialized attacks are tragically abundant, from dramatic racial profiling by armed campus police (Blow, 2015) to more subtle assaults in which Black community members are reported as being suspicious (Jaschik, 2018; Victor, 2018). The use of social media has been a key strategy for illuminating these often-alienating encounters, leading to a national conversation regarding the trouble with our campuses’ racialized climates.

We learn that students of color, in addition to being vastly underrepresented in higher education (Harper, 2012) are by necessity seeking degrees in institutions that perpetuate white supremacy in practice, design, and legacy (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Although there are attempts to address issues of “diversity” on many college campuses, these efforts often fall short in their lack of aggressive strategy, their clumsy assumptions that those victimized by racism should be taxed with undoing it, and their pandering to white fragility (Hikido & Murray, 2016; Lam, 2018).

**Real Talk: Race on Campus**

College campuses have long been sites of activism, and the conditions for catalyzing change have taken many forms across generations. On our campus there have been seasons of student resistance that have been institutionally erased, although not vacant from the minds of those who build upon their legacy. The *Real Talk: Race on Campus* project grew from a cross-generational spark to foreground the cyclical and shared experiences of students of color across the decades. Current students insisted on the urgency to speak their truths while archiving the narratives of their collective traumas so that their stories would not be silenced and forgotten.

On our particular campus in 2013, those of us who were attuned to and/or were the victims of campus racism were very clear about the regularity of racialized trauma. In our public Northeast college, many activists and educators had been working to combat
racism on campus, and most worked their anti-racist efforts into their classrooms. Our dominant culture, however, showed little commitment to acknowledging the troubled climate for community members of color. Although obvious to anyone attuned to issues of race, it was only beginning to emerge in data form that students of color were significantly less likely to find the climate of their classrooms supportive and welcoming (Health Resources in Action, Inc., 2015).

Groups of student activists and faculty including Beth Balliro, one of the authors of this article, began to build a momentum for collective action. In 2014, Beth joined forces with student activist Sakina Bramble-Hakim to conceive of *Real Talk: Race on Campus* and they began to co-direct the undertaking. The methodology, creative design, and project impact are described below.

The project inception involved a confluence of exchanges. Beth and Sakina first met when they joined a Civic Engagement Committee, a formal body created to advance official campus initiatives. Beth was a new white faculty member with extensive experience in Urban K-12 schools who was experiencing culture shock at the lack of discussion surrounding culturally-responsive teaching. Sakina was an African-American senior completing a socially-engaged art program who felt that her gifts were disregarded and the racial climate was caustic. Having entered the committee work with good faith that they might affect change, they were both soon disillusioned with the lack of activism in the group. Their bond through action grew and was fueled by their shared outrage at the festering racial climate and lack of overt response.

Simultaneously, Beth was reporting the inspiration of the younger activist to her alliances outside of campus, many of whom were alumni of color from the institution. She learned that one of these individuals, a filmmaker, had engaged in similar activism decades before as the leader of the Black Student Alliance. He recounted feelings of such deep isolation and racial profiling that he committed to never set foot on campus again. He would, however, be excited to meet the young activist and support her work. Throughout the project he provided guidance and technical support, while the co-directors brought the project to fruition.

It is important to note that although Beth did submit for an Internal Review Board review, this project was not designed or deemed as research, but rather as an artist-activist work. She was able to secure funding for the project through a serendipitous process which accelerated the project’s completion. Methodologically, it was enacted through collective, participatory practice and Beth drew from CRT to establish approaches for her leadership.
One particularly relevant tenet of CRT as articulated by the eminent legal scholar Derrick Bell (1980) is the concept of “interest convergence”, the belief that “(t)he interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (p. 523). Striving to minimize the transactional benefits of engaging in such a project, Beth established some methodological conditions for her practice, which are described below. These principles of practice were established through Beth’s personal reflection and goal setting.

1. Because funding was secured to bring the project to life, student activists, artists, and filmmakers were to be compensated for their time but Beth would not receive any financial compensation.
2. There would be no form of campus compensation for Beth in the form of course releases or diminished committee responsibilities.
3. Because Beth was in the midst of coursework in a doctoral program, none of the project could be “utilized” to advance her degree.
4. The project was to be co-constructed with a collaborative leadership model. When difficult judgement calls were to be made, Beth would default to the student co-director.
5. The project was to be enacted with strategies to mitigate the vulnerabilities of students and the potential for retaliation for their participation.

This project began with an off-campus alumni event which connected current student activists with those of past generations. In a celebratory atmosphere, the alumni and students shared their artwork and engaged in facilitated projects and dialogue. A small group of alumni of color generated the first video testimonials, recounting memories of being on campus. To initiate the Real Talk project, a series of public viewings of these videos was held for the larger community to build involvement and momentum.

Beth and Sakina then commissioned three of the student activists to design and build a video booth (Figure 1 below). One undergraduate graphic designer generated a logo to be used throughout the project; one socially-engaged artist in the graduate program designed the exterior concept imagery of neighborhood living rooms; and an undergraduate industrial design major designed and fabricated the lightweight structure.
The activists then declared a Race on Campus Week in the Spring of 2015. The booth was open for all to enter and tell their stories. Students actively recruited community members whom they knew had poignant stories that they had previously shared, but only in the intimacy of friendship. Student activists generated three questions below, which were asked of those sitting in the video booth:

1. List a few adjectives that describe your experience with race at Mass Art?
2. Has there ever been an instance when you were aware of your race at Mass Art?
3. In terms of race relations at Mass Art, is there anything you would like to see continued or changed?

What resulted is a collection of forty-eight recorded testimonials. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students from a variety of demographics chose to participate and more than half of the testimonials came from students of color. Their videos were the videos which the activists chose to share during subsequent public forums and screenings. The content of these testimonials cannot be essentialized, but there were significant themes that emerged which are recounted below.
Racial Profiling

In the collected testimonials, there were multiple accounts of racial profiling by a number of Black male students and one Black female professor. Most of these accounts involved an unnamed community member alerting our public safety office that a suspicious individual was on campus. In the case of the professor, who incidentally is the chair of her department, public safety arrived on the floor of her department and apologized once they realized the mistake. None of the student narratives included such acknowledgement of fault. We learn of the definitive impact of racism in the student account below:

Right when I first moved into the dorm ... I was with my roommate at the time... this white kid with spiky hair (pushes hand over center of scalp) ... a punk kid ... apache leather jacket ... we were moving in and we needed to get our student IDs, so we walked to Public Safety ... and there was a Public Safety officer outside and it seemed like he looked only at me, and he completely walked by my friend and just stopped me like this (puts out hand) and said, ‘What are you doing here?’ and I was shocked ... because I have never had to explain why I was where I was ... and my first experience here in Boston is someone literally saying ‘I don’t belong here’. And I said, ‘I am just going to get my ID’ and he steps a little closer and says, ‘Really’ as if he doesn’t believe me. But then my white roommate says, ‘Hey, yeah he’s with me, we’re gonna go get our IDs, we live in the res’... and the public safety officer just nods and says, ‘OK’, and then walks by me and kind of like nudges me in the shoulder as he does. And that was an experience that pretty much, for the lack of a better word, ‘colored’ exactly how I would view my Mass Art experience from then to now. (Balliro & Bramble-Hakim, 2017)

The effects of racial profiling, particularly for Black men, have been well documented on college campuses and in the public arena at large (Smith, Yosso & Solórzano, 2007). We can trace the roots of such aggressive and caustic profiling to the racist origins of our institutions as outlined in the outset of this article. With such extraordinary underrepresentation, Black men appear particularly vulnerable on our art school campuses (Balliro, 2016). These accounts of racial profiling by public security are dangerously fraught as many campuses begin to weaponize such officers with firearms.

White Peer Cultural Incompetence
A lack of cultural vitality and representation is a detriment for all students. The lack of racial diversity on historically white campuses is widespread, but is further exaggerated in art school settings (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). A number of student testimonials articulated a feeling of shock when confronted with white cultural incompetence. One student recounts:

As a freshman, you go on a boat cruise and you get to meet all of the freshman of your same class... I met this girl and we started dancing and talking... And she was like ‘oh my gosh, I love you so much... You’re just like my Black friend at home, you know, you dance like her, you talk like her, you even act like her’... that kind of upset me but I was in such a state of shock that she said that, that I didn’t react or anything... that instance kind of set the tone for my years coming... Knowing that I’m different and I basically am a stereotype for Black individuals. (Balliro & Bramble-Hakim, 2017)

Peer group experience in higher education is formative as students affirm their identity and sense of belonging (Harper, 2012). Gross underrepresentation and a lack of cultural competency training for incoming students can have profound effects on the racial climate and general well-being of the community.

**Tokenization by Staff & Administrators**

Tokenization, particularly in environments that seek to appear more inclusive, is an additional hardship affecting students of color. The practice of institutions flaunting racially inclusive optics has deep consequences for those seeking recognition for their merit irrespective of their racial identity (Blanco Ramírez & Palu-ay, 2015). In the testimonial below, a student describes being asked to attend a high-profile party for the Mayor. She recounts her disturbing awakening when she realized the true reason she was invited:

I thought I was there because I was really involved on campus and I worked for the office that threw the party. I thought that was why I was invited but... So I get there and people are asking me why am I there... And then the president at the time introduced me to the previous mayor and she... said my name, and I went and introduced myself and shook his hand... and we got into a conversation and she tells me to tell him where I was originally from, and I am from Haiti, I was born there. And I said that I was born in Haiti, and I guess that was why I was brought to...
this event ... just cause like ‘this girl, who is from a third-world country... ooh, Mass Art has changed her life’ or something like that. It was just really odd that I was invited just because of that one thing and it wasn’t because of the fact that I am a hard-working student who is also involved in a lot of the offices ... or what this institution is all about... so that was really heartbreaking. And there are a bunch of other experiences that are similar to that one (Balliro & Bramble-Hakim, 2017).

It is evident that this student, and others who described similar encounters with tokenization, felt betrayed by those whom she at first thought recognized her gifts. It is of consequence that this particular student became one of the lead activists of the Race on Campus project.

Alienation in the Classroom

We see similar effects of racism on campus in the more intimate terrain of the classroom. In an art and design environment, student work often embodies identity and culture, therefore racialized transgressions can affect the alienation of students deeply.

During critiques everybody has like five or six minutes... I am always the first person to say something. I make sure I critique every person’s work but when it comes to my work it’s always rushed as if my work isn’t important enough to critique at the same level as everybody else’s ... when I say something the teacher is just like ‘O.K’, like what I am saying is so abstract, and so different than what everybody else is saying, its ... not as valid I guess... I am tired of learning about the same artists everywhere I look when I know there’s more out there. Especially when it doesn’t reflect me, and it doesn’t reflect my history (Balliro & Bramble-Hakim, 2017).

Without a robust effort to confront the histories of white supremacy in the curricular content and aesthetic bias of our coursework, underrepresented students will be made to feel othered and diminished. What is striking about the above narrative is the generosity of the student wishing to engage with her peers, as well as the innate sensibility in knowing “there’s more out there.” To match this engagement with silence and erasure is markedly antagonistic. It is quite relevant that shortly afterwards, this particular student decided to withdraw from the college.
Distrust in the Creative Environment

To perform and generate one’s artwork, a climate of trust must be in place in order to encourage risk-taking and vulnerability. Campus racialized hostility in its most visible or insidious forms can prevent the development of marginalized students’ work.

My professors don’t understand ... my creative process... and they don’t want to understand, so I become drained and I don’t even bother with even ... trying when it comes to reviews...I just ask them to go in there and review it, critique it the way they want to-- they don’t even need to hear what I have to say-- just ’cause they won’t even understand it so there’s no point of even trying... that’s when it gets a little draining and unfortunate... And I feel like a lot of times I am teaching myself a lot so it’s just (pause, swallow) annoying ... they don’t know how to vibe with us when it comes to teaching, ’cause all they want is for you to put out what they know and they don’t know how to have you produce what you want to produce... In terms of me being a person of color, a person who is an immigrant... it’s having some sort of mentorship or someone or somewhere I can go to feel safe, just cause (tremble) I don’t in the classroom (swallow)... I feel like a complete outsider here. (Balliro & Bramble-Hakim, 2017)

Without any sense of creative and intellectual safety, students like the one quoted above are presented with a stark disadvantage in arriving at their artistic goals. Their achievement may occur despite their art schooling and not as a result of teacher or institutional investment in their success.

Project Impact

Real Talk: Race on Campus collected testimonials that continue to be accessed years later and are available to viewers in our campus library, the same library that houses the problematic white supremacist historical texts. The testimonials have been presented to our top leadership, public safety personnel, all incoming students, and various internal and external communities. The composite of the testimonials reflects a particular time and space in which white supremacy reared its impact as felt through the experiences of individuals. Bearing witness to these violent infractions is sobering, motivating, and ultimately presents a mandate for change. Subsequent activism involved the organization of a Black-Lives-Matter teach-in in which a group of students engaged in an
interruptive action and presented a list of demands for institutional change. This action then sparked further all-campus interventions which have led to policy and staffing changes that have set us on much firmer ground for transformation. The conversation regarding racial aggression, marginalization, and violence has entered the institutional dominant culture in ways that seemed unimaginable just years ago. Although there is formidable work that lies ahead, we have entered an era of new leadership with newly articulated and formalized priorities that foreground the amelioration of white supremacy.

Conclusion

These occurrences of historic and current racism are not unique to our particular institution. Many historically white universities are contending with their legacies of racism through efforts of unearthing past violence and challenging namesake legacies of white supremacy (Brooks, 2017). Here we have outlined the ways in which our curriculum, pedagogy, and school climate may perpetuate the same legacies of white supremacy and how artist activism can be utilized to catalyze campus transformation.

As we strive for strategies to atone for the past, it is critical that we also identify the present manifestations of racism which are sometimes less conspicuous than an anatomical manual or an overt policy of exclusion. By foregrounding and archiving testimonials of the impact of campus racism and the empowered resistance of students, we can begin to identify and employ collective strategies for change. Art and design institutions have the capacity to become sanctuaries in which creativity is liberated and culture sustained (Paris, 2012). If we can advance our institutions to the forefront of cultural development and nurture our aspiring artists to best achieve their vision, this transformation can spark more cultural vitality in our society at large. In educational institutions of art and design, this mandate should supersede all others.

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Becoming a Woman of Color

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ABSTRACT

Social and biological scientists agree that race and ethnicity are social constructions, not biological categories (Wade, 2015). Social constructs, such as race, are fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on social context (Anzaldúa, 1987). Living in two social contexts makes the distinct definitions of racial construction apparent. The author shares encounters with colleagues, students, and the local community that transformed her understanding of the construction of race in social contexts, her racial and ethnic identity, and her role as faculty in art education. Becoming a woman of color is a continual process of learning/understanding a social construction of race through and within varied social contexts.

Keywords: Identity, racial identity, ethnicity, art education, whiteness

Becoming a Woman of Color

I was born to Latin-American parents and raised in Miami, Florida. In 2014, I moved to Baltimore, Maryland, a mid-sized urban city, to teach at a well-known art college. Living in this new city created experiences, or encounters, with colleagues, students, and the local community that transformed (and continue to transform) my understanding of the construction of race in social contexts, my own racial and ethnic identity, and my role as faculty in art education. Becoming transforms my experience through purposeful perception and reflection. Becoming a Woman of Color is a continual process of learning/understanding a social construction of race through which locals view my racial and ethnic identity, while I simultaneously maintain a social construction of my racial and ethnic identity developed in my home context.

Social and biological scientists agree that race and ethnicity are social constructions, not biological categories (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Wade, 2015). Social constructs are fluid systems that take on different forms and nuances depending on social context (Anzaldúa, 1987). Living in South Florida and then the mid-Atlantic region of the
United States makes apparent the regional delineation of race, namely the different ways that White and Black are defined. In Miami, I am considered White and in the mid-Atlantic I am considered a “person of color.” Despite the fluidity of definitions, race and ethnic constructions are experienced as real (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Wade, 2015) and well-defined in social institutions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), such as schools.

Currently, the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) treats race and Hispanic origin as two separate and distinct concepts. People who are Hispanic may be of any race. People in each race group may be either Hispanic or Not Hispanic. Each person has two attributes, their race (or races) and whether or not they are Hispanic. The terms White and Hispanic are my personal identities chosen from the constructed terms provided on Federal, State, and institutional questionnaires, while Woman of Color is the term that describes my identity in a new context.

In writing, I seek to better understand my own personal and professional identities in relation to racialization (Kraehe, 2015) and share my story to bridge an understanding (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) of the social construction of race. Further, writing serves to keep intact my shifting and overlapping identities and integrity (Anzaldúa, 1987). Therefore, in this paper, I share my lived experience (Van Manen, 2018) of entering a social structure different from the one I lived in for most of my life and how I was perceived racially and ethnically different in this context. I experienced an unexpected identity crisis upon entering my new context: I now lived in a majority Black city with a small Hispanic population, and worked alongside a majority White faculty. In no space in this new context was I perceived to be a White-Hispanic, as I had considered myself in Miami. I was a Woman of Color, and slowly, over time, I came to understand what that meant to me and my role as faculty in Art Education.

I share my experience of feeling and seeing race as a social construction because my experiences have resounded with scholars, students, and practitioners, and I hope to build an understanding of how race is socially mediated, specifically for my pre-service teachers, who I teach and mentor. Teachers of all races benefit from understanding the experience of race as a social construct and its impact on identity and they must consider implications for learning and teaching.
The nature of becoming is ever-evolving, changing, and growing in response to lived experiences (Van Manen, 2014). Lived experience has “temporal structure: it can never be grasped in its immediate manifestation but only reflectively as part of the present” (Van Manen, 1994, p. 36). What I learn today will inform how I interpret the past. I have learned to hold on to the ambiguity that compels me to write, but at times blocks me (Anzaldúa, 1987). For example, in my early stages of becoming, my racial and ethnic identity felt divided between two cultures. As a consequence, I stopped writing for a few months. But as Anzaldúa (1987) theorized, the resistance to knowing is followed by increments of consciousness, kicking out old boundaries of the self, and, for me, has brought about an integrated, multifaceted identity. The following are my early reflections on what it means to become a Woman of Color.

Knowing

Knowing is painful because after it happens, I can’t stay in the same place and be comfortable. I am no longer the person I was before.

Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 70

My process of becoming a Woman of Color draws from Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) theorizing on becoming and Anzaldúa’s (1987) Borderlands theory. Deleuze and Guattari’s becoming frames the process through which I perceive, notice, and give meaning to particular lived experiences of living in my new city that highlight a contrast with my racial/ethnic self-identity. Borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) helps to frame the social context, Miami, Florida, where I developed my White-Hispanic racial/ethnic identity and consider implications of living in other social systems.

Becoming

Life is a series of events that, strung together, are perceived as the actual world of experience (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari theorized that the changing lifeworld is imperceptible unless we notice (Colebrook, 2002). Noticing requires a purposeful stepping away from the flow of experiences in order to carefully examine them. During these points of perception, or noticing, feeling emotions, and reactions give meaning to experience. Life(-experience) becomes through these different points of perception to create meaning. Becoming is the process of perception and its resulting transformation.
(Colebrook, 2002). It occurs as a consistent transformation over time, producing phenomenological knowledge from experience (Van Manen, 2014). The self as a changing perceiver in the experience of life becomes.

Borderlands

Becoming a woman of color refers to my process of perception and transformation in a social context, where my self-identity developed as a Hispanic, White woman in a borderland is different from the identity of Woman of Color in a social context outside the borderland. Growing up and teaching art in Miami, Florida, I lived in a borderland (Anzaldúa, 1987). Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory (Anzaldúa, 1987). Miami serves as a nexus, economically and socio-politically connecting the United States to Latin America and Europe. Anzaldúa’s (1987) theorizing applies to Miami, as a border, which is susceptible to hybridity, or mezcla, of multiple cultures. Inhabitants are not fully from one culture and, on the other hand, are not fully from another culture; they exist in a third space (Bhabha, 1994). Hyphenated-hybrids such as myself, a Cuban-Ecuadorian-American, are commonplace in the Miami borderland.

People learn the reality that their culture communicates (Anzaldúa, 1987), and when my experience growing up in a Hispanic, borderland contrasted with the experience of living in a majority Black city, while working at a predominantly White college, I experienced feelings of alienation as I learned, accepted, assimilated, but then resisted the precepts of my new culture (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Processes of Becoming

In order to examine my experiences growing up in a borderland and moving to a new social structure, I used narrative research as the method of inquiry (Richardson, 2005) and analysis (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009), and this method served as the vehicle to share my experiences as an autoethnography (Anderson, 2014). Through autoethnography I connect my personal experiences to larger issues in society (Jones, 2005). The methodology allowed me to situate myself into a new culture (Anderson, 2014) through taking myself “deeper inside [my]self and ultimately out again” (Jones, 2005, p. 765). Autoethnography was appropriate for my research as it provides a means to examine myself and my new environment through “a self-
narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts” (Spry, 2001 as cited in Jones 2005, p.765). The methodology also allowed me to present my experience as a means for identifying the subjective nature of identity and cultural interpretation (Jones, 2005).

Writing to Become

*To be a writer, I have to trust and believe in myself as a speaker, as a voice for the images.*

Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 95

Writing served as the structure through which I stepped aside from the flow of life-experience to become (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). When particular encounters, or sensible events, challenged my way of thinking about my racial and ethnic identity, I sat down and wrote a rich, descriptive narrative (Anderson, 2014; Geertz, 1973) of the encounter that evening or the following day. I used writing as a method of inquiry to discover and learn something new (Richardson, 2005) because writing is one way to tell stories (Anderson, 2014) and interpret the past (Jones, 2005). I refrained from sharing the encounter with others before I had time to describe and reflect on the experience in writing. This way, I captured my own critical reflections before allowing the interpretations of others to add to the analysis of my experience, which was an important part of my reflection process. Afterwards, I shared experiences with new colleagues in order to enrich my initial analysis of my experience.

I wrote personal narratives as critical reflections to document details and vivid descriptions of cultural phenomena (Anderson, 2014). I conducted written preliminary analysis of themes immediately after I documented the facts of the encounters, but memory of the encounters resonated over time as I made sense of the implications for my racial/ethnic identity in a new context. The narratives produced next serve as social products reflecting experience and an embodiment of inner life (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009).

Encounters, Sensible Events

Deleuze described sensible events, or events that are sensed, are those that spark becoming (Colebrook, 2002). Anzaldúa (1987) refers to such encounters as images that bridge emotion with conscious knowledge. She said
An image is a bridge  
Between evoked emotion  
And conscious knowledge.  
Words are the cables that hold up that bridge. (p. 91)

The experience of writing about moments, and creating images to bring emotions to conscious knowledge, assisted me in making sense of these encounters, which enriched the development of my overlapping and intersecting identities. What follows is a series of images that, together, bridge my experience shifting and reconciling living in two social constructs of race and ethnicity.

Growing up in Miami, Florida

Growing up in Miami, Florida until the age of 18, I lived within the dominant paradigm and precepts of that culture (Anzaldúa, 1987). Miami, Florida is a border town (Anzaldúa, 1987). While fully part of the United States, it is located on the cusp of the United States and the Caribbean and South America. Multiple languages and cultures overlap, mix, blend in this third space (Bhabha, 1994) to create a local Miami consciousness, which include: A popular American supermarket chain that sells pastelitos de guayaba (Guava pastries) and Cafe Cubano (Cuban style espresso) at hundreds of locations in South Florida (Publix, 2018); numerous art and cultural museums with Latin American and Caribbean foci; multiple bilingual radio stations that play both English and Spanish-language music (Top 40 alongside Reggaetón and Salsa music); and bilingual politicians.

I was born and raised in this border town, where 65% of the population identifies as Hispanic, as I do (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). I attended my neighborhood high school with 92% Hispanic students, where most students regularly spoke two languages, winding in and out of Spanish and English when one language didn’t accurately represent something we wanted to express. “Do you have a liga?” was used to ask for a hairband to tie back long hair in this hot, humid city, where Guendis stands for Wendy’s, Faisboo, means Facebook and even McDonald’s sells cafecito cubano. Miamians have created their own hybrid dialect capable of communicating the “realities true to themselves-A language with terms that are neither espanol ni inglés but both” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 77). One can easily go an entire day speaking only Spanish while completing daily activities: grocery shopping, visiting the pharmacy, fueling the car, and visiting a doctor.
In Miami, Hispanics generally identify in multiple ways. We may identify as Black and/or White. Hispanics may also identify with Native American ancestry from South America and/or Caribbean Islands. The parameters for what is considered White in Miami is broader than in my new context. For example, in Miami I am considered White even though I am triguena (wheat color). Nationality adds an additional significant identity marker, which attributes its own set of cultural influences. We identified not only as being Black and/or White, Hispanic or Latina/Latino, but added specificity about the origin of our hispanidad: Cuban, Venezuelan, Dominican, Honduran, El Salvadoran, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Peruano, Panamanian, Brazilian, Nicaraguan, Guatemalan, guatemalteco, Haitian, Costa Rican, costariqueño. Additionally, this bordertown created the opportunity for people from various cultures to meet and have children creating many sorts of hybrid identities (Anzaldúa, 1987). In Miami, we hyphenate identities into what I would call hyphenated-hybrid identities. A few examples are Cuban-Ecuadorian (me), Puerto Rican-Dominican, Columbian-Peruvian, and Cuban-Argentinian-Peruvian-Russian.

**Straddling the Border**

Hyphenated-hybrids have at least two cultural influences that impact identity to varying degrees. In my case, my mother was born in Cuba, my father in Ecuador, and I was born in the United States. I spent a lot of time with my Cuban exile grandparents and great-grandparents on evenings and weekends while my mom earned her Bachelor’s degree. We roast a pig for Christmas, greet everyone in the room with a kiss on the cheek, celebrate Quinces and/or Sweet Sixteen, and pin azabaches on babies clothing to ward off the evil eye. I learned English with Sesame Street and later watched America’s first bilingual situation comedy, about a Cuban exile family, ¿ Que Pasa USA? (2019) on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS).

My identity is a synthesis of cultures (Anzaldúa, 1987). Anzaldúa (1987) considers hyphenating Cuban-Ecuadorian-American a cop out, rightfully, pointing out American as the noun and Cuban-Ecuadorian as adjective. However, for me, I understand hyphenating as clarifying multiple influences on identity to varied degrees. Although my hyphenated hybrid identity is Cuban-Ecuadorian, the Cuban culture and Cuban dialect is a more powerful influence on my identity than my Ecuadorian roots. I regularly cook traditional Cuban meals, which include picadillo, arroz con pollo, fricase, bacalao, frijoles negros,
garbanzos fritos, and puerco asado. My American influence compels me to pair my Cuban meals with a sensible salad that substitutes lettuce for aguacate and cebolla (avocado and onion), omitting the classic pairing of main dishes with white rice and sweet plantains. The multicultural influence in Miami as a bordertown makes available foods such as: Nicaraguan Gallo Pinto, Colombian banana-leaf-wrapped tamales, Argentinian Choripan, Puerto Rican Mofongo, and many Argentine butchers who provide prime skirt steak, enjoyed as Churrasco a la parilla.

I taught art in the large public-school system in this third space for nearly 10 years. I taught at my high school alma mater and I shared an understanding of my students’ intersections of race, ethnicity, and cultural customs, which helped me to facilitate learning in the visual arts. I was cognizant of the varied ethnicities of my students and their customs, worldviews, and approaches to learning. It was commonplace in this third space to ask questions about people’s customs to better understand their ways of being.

Being Hispanic or Latino in this environment was customary, regular, anticipated. I had Hispanic teachers and principals and colleagues, of varied nationalities, throughout my K-12 education and profession. I could look to elected officials and see Hispanic women in positions of leadership.

I occupied several positions of privilege in Miami. Primarily, belonging to the dominant White-Hispanic population provided a sense of belonging and shared understanding which created networks and opportunities for navigating systems (e.g. education, employment, medicine). My birth in the United States privileged me among the largely immigrant community. The maternal side of my family immigrated as political refugees the 1960s. Cubans not only integrated into the Miami culture, but as early inhabitants to a growing population, they shaped culture and established powerful networks as the city expanded (although my mother would challenge that entering high school, as an English language learner was a privileged experience among her peers). Despite the trauma of exile from her home country, my mom earned an undergraduate degree and worked as a business administrator.

Where are you from?

Many times, throughout my life, when I am outside of Miami, people have asked me, “Where are you from?” I’ve learned that my
birthplace, Miami, Florida is not a sufficient answer. People want to
know where my triguena (wheat) skin originates. So I usually answer,
“I was born and raised in Miami, Florida and my mom was born in
Cuba and my dad is from Ecuador.” A mouthful, I know, but that
seems to assuage the curiosity, which I am usually happy to share.
Sometimes I go into the details: that they came to the US in the 1960’s,
to Miami and New York, respectively, and met in South Florida. I like
for people to know that I am American and Hispanic.

My Cuban born maternal grandmother, Mima, helped develop my
proud bilingual Hispanic-American identity. “Tu eres Americana,”
Mima would tell and remind me over the years. “You were born here
and you are fully American and you should be proud of being born
in this country.” She taught me to recognize the value of my ability
to clearly speak two languages. She encouraged me to develop my
abilities in reading and writing (not only speaking) Spanish so that
I could communicate with various populations of people. Being
American and Hispanic was the way I was raised along with others in
this bordertown.

The Miami borderland culture informed my beliefs and the version
of reality that it communicated to me (Anzaldúa, 1987). Predefined
concepts, such as Hispanics in power, hyphenated-hybrid identities,
bilingualism, asking others about their customs, and Hispanic-
Americans, existed as unquestionable and unchallengeable
(Anzaldúa, 1987). As a Hispanic-American in my neighborhood, I
lived in the majority. I was racially insulated. I did not see myself as
racialized, because I was in the dominant culture (DiAngelo, 2011).

**Becoming**

Anzaldúa (1987) theorized that a Woman of Color experiences
unsettlement “within her inner life or her Self...She can’t respond” (p.
42) when alienated from her mother culture. There are encounters
that silence me, or make me unsure how to respond, or in retrospect,
question my response. Becoming a Woman of Color includes these
processes of making sense of the spaces between the different worlds
I inhabit.

**Moving North.** After earning my doctorate, I accepted a faculty
position at an art college in the eastern region of the United States.
The following demographics provide some context to the two cities
that have brought my attention to construction of race in social
contexts. The racial and ethnic origin demographics differences
between my new city and Miami are notably different. The population in Miami is White (74%) and Black (18%), and Hispanic (65%). While the population in my new location is White (29%) Black (64%) Hispanic (4%). The population of White, Hispanics in Miami is 58% and in my new city is 2%. The statistics make it clear, racially and ethnically, I no longer live in the majority.

Attending the Women of Color lunch. In the second month in my new role as a college professor, I received an email invitation to the Women of Color Lunch for faculty and students, and I was surprised. First, I was surprised that I had been identified as a Woman of Color, and second that Women of Color had an associated meeting. I had never attended a meeting specifically for people of color in Miami. I wondered why I was identified as a Woman of Color. Was it my curls, my tanned skin? I wondered: What does “Women of Color” mean? Why should I go?

I accepted the invitation and attended the event because I wanted to learn more about my new context, and thus new label. At lunch, I faced the reality that I was one of less than a handful of Latina-identifying professors at the school. Our school conducted a diversity audit (Diversity Audit, 2016), which revealed to me that only one full-time Hispanic person was hired between 2012 and 2016 (p. 21). Further, the number of Hispanic identifying full time faculty was one. That must be me. Including our part time faculty and staff: Fifty-one percent identified as White; eight percent Black; three percent Asian; two percent identified as more than one race; one percent Hispanic; and 35 percent did not specify.

At the lunch roundtable, I fell silent when I did not know how to respond to young women lamenting that they did not see people who looked like them reflected in the faculty or in the historical and contemporary artwork they studied. The students shared that class critiques of their work focused on formal qualities rather than the concepts they addressed. I was surprised to learn that a few professors never asked the young women of color what their work was about. I realized that even the simple act of being visible and listening to the students was helpful for them. I began to make meaning of the term, “Women of Color.” In this context, it started to gain the meaning “not white.” In this context, my hispanidad put me in the category me as “not white,” racialized, and therefore a “woman of color.”
At the roundtable, I met a group of students from South Florida, who felt uneasy that a professor identified them as Spanish speakers and asked them, in front of the class, to speak in Spanish. I remembered my grandmother’s lessons, and reassured them that being bilingual is an asset and a source of pride. It was okay to refuse the request to speak Spanish. I have learned that people of color “carry the burden of having to choose between tacitly participating in their marginalization or actively resisting racist ideologies” (Evans & Moore, 2015, p. 542). The luncheon provided a space for us to share experiences remaining silent, resisting others’ construction of our identity, while affirming the ways in which we’ve responded to people’s demands.

I found that spaces such as the Women of Color lunch provided me a context for making sense of my becoming alongside faculty, staff, and young women at my school. My trusted colleagues not only listened to my stories, but we challenged essentialist notions of identity, race, and ethnicity. Importantly, I connected with women who also lived varied racial identities dependent on context.

For me, becoming a Woman of Color means feeling belonging in a social network of people of color committed to supporting each other through friendship, collegiality, and sharing experiences. My new social network knew the types of challenges, prejudices, and stereotypes that I would encounter before I had even recognized them and offered me a sense of belonging and kinship in a way that I had not experienced before.

**You don’t look American.** An encounter, or sensible event, with a cobbler in my new city further helped me to reflect on my experience from daily life and become a Woman of Color. I arrived at the counter to pick up a purse that I had dropped off that needed stitching. A jolly, White man wearing a polish stained denim apron approached me with a big smile, seemingly eager to speak with me. He said, “I wanted to meet you because I saw your name on the ticket. It looks Brazilian,” He spelled out each letter, “P-e-r-i-r-a, and I look at you, and

**You don’t look American.**

*What?* I was surprised at the statement. Then, I grinned and chuckled a little because it was such an unusual way for someone to inquire about my ethnicity. People usually just ask, “Where are you from?” Nevertheless, I understood the inquiry at the root of his approach.
My grin turned into a smile and I said,

*Well, yes. I AM American.*

“I was born and raised in Miami, Florida.” I continued with my spiel about my parents’ birthplaces, and added, “The name is Portuguese. There are many Pereiras in Brazil and a city in Colombia named Pereira.” We continued on with a lovely conversation that became tangential to our initial discussion about my nationality. But at the end, I left that cobbler shop wondering: *What do Americans look like if they don’t look like me?*

The encounter with the cobbler revealed how my perceived race and ethnicity was associated with otherness or foreignness. He did not consider my name or my looks to be American. I quickly and automatically resisted his (re)construction of my identity. I tried not to be offended, since his intent seemed to come from a place of friendly curiosity and interest, however, his intent taught me that I am perceived as other in my new context. I no longer lived in the dominant ethnic group and the encounter injured my proud Hispanic-American identity.

**Checking the box.** Most Cuban exiles in the 1960’s were White in the context of their homeland (Torres, 2001). On all of my state standardized tests, college and employment applications, I checked White and Hispanic. Similarly, on my job application to college where I now work, I selected White and Hispanic. In the second semester of my employment, an administrative assistant who was filing a report on the demographics of the faculty asked me to choose one checkbox: White, Black, Hispanic, Two or more races, Native American or Asian. I explained that all my life I had selected two checkboxes White and Hispanic. I was confused by having to choose one. So, I asked to review the requirements for the report. She was right, I could only check one box for Ethnicity and Race. However, the fine print said “Hispanic/Latino of ANY race” (emphasis added). That was it! That was my checkbox.

A trusted colleague who attended the Woman of Color lunch with me earlier that year observed this interaction. She was surprised by the way I self-identified. She communicated that sometimes she had been mis-categorized as White on the same form. She wondered if I too had been misidentified as White. She shared that she checked “Other” or “Two or more races” and also explained that another one of our Hispanic colleagues also checked “Two or more races” on the forms.
At that moment, I could simply reiterate that I’d always identified as White and Hispanic. However, it was clear that White was not the way I was perceived in this context. The way that I identified conflicted with how I was perceived racially. I lamented the ability to define myself the way I had in Miami. We asked “de donde eres,” or “where are you from,” which allowed others the space to identify themselves. However, in this context, I was pre-defined. I began to understand that Whiteness looked different here than it did in Miami. Torres (2001) points out, “Cubans [refugees in the United States] like other Latinos enter a racialized political environment within which they are perceived to be non-white by the dominant culture, regardless of how they define themselves racially” (p. 77). Despite how I developed my racial/ethnic identity as Hispanic and White in the borderland of Miami, when I entered this new city and college, my encounters led me to discover that I am perceived, in this context, non-white, and therefore a Woman of Color, who may not “look American.” The encounter left me wondering if my perceived race had anything to do with being offered my position at the college. Was I chosen for the position because I was perceived to be a person of color? And was I letting them down now that I identified as White?

**Becoming Mentor**

As one of my teaching assignments, I facilitate the development of pre-service art educators who, as interns, teach in a K-12 school once a week. On one particular day after team teaching in third grade, I learned that a boy asked an intern, Margot (whose parents are from Taiwan), “Is Margot a Chinese name?” Being unsure how to respond, she ignored the boy and continued with her lesson. At the post conference, Margot wanted to think about how she might have responded.

We discussed different ways to address a similar situation in the future. We thought that next time she could ask: *What makes you say that?* Or if she was comfortable, she could share a little about her parents’ immigration. We assured her that moving on in the lesson was also perfectly fine. I wanted her to know that she was not alone in such an experience. I shared that at times, I’ve been guided by my maternal grandmother’s words, *hay veces que a las personas hay que educarlas*, “Sometimes you have to educate people.” But, I can’t “educate people” all the time because the burden is just too much, and therefore, I can choose not to respond to people’s inaccurate presumptions. Margot later shared that she felt relief not being
the only one with such experiences, knowing that her mentor and colleagues also faced challenges associated with perceptions of identity. Margot made a “conscious decision to use inaction as an emotional strategy for preventing the emotional pain” (Evans and Moore, 2005, p. 447) of being misunderstood. In this small group of friends and mentor, she found reassurance that her inaction in that moment was acceptable.

Implications for my Research, Teaching, and Artmaking

The written images bridge my experience and an understanding of socially constructed racial/ethnic identity in, and out of, borderlands. I simultaneously become the constructs of race and ethnicity from my hometown and my new city. For me, becoming a woman of color is a continuous process that transforms who I am as a researcher, teacher, and artist.

Becoming Researcher

My becoming redirected my research focus and pedagogy. My K-12 teaching practice and dissertation research interest addressed learner directed curricular structures that nurture adolescent’s independence to address self-developed big ideas through art making. However, my becoming and events such as the Baltimore Uprising, near our school, brought into my lived experience the injustices that I read about in scholarly literature, such as power struggles with police and equal access to education. Living in a largely Black city, working in a predominantly white institution of higher education, preparing mostly white, women teachers, and my own becoming have shifted my research focus toward a better understanding of inequity in our local city and school districts, social justice pedagogy (Anderson, Gussak, & Hallmark, 2010; Quinn, Ploof, & Hochtritt, 2012), and feminist theories (Anzaldúa, 1987; Cooper, 2018; hooks, 1994) to support my pre-service teachers in their own becoming as they face realities in schools. My becoming focuses the viewing angle on the imbalance of educational equity in my institution and within the school districts in our area. My highlighted body in this context and the added layer of color to my identity doesn’t allow me to “stay in the same place and be comfortable” (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 70). The conscious awareness impresses upon me a sense of responsibility to address power, privilege, and equity as big ideas in my courses.

Becoming Faculty
To become a Woman of Color in the art education field, to me, means that I feel an embodied responsibility to learn and develop pedagogy to engage pre-service teachers in thinking about their race and ethnicity, power and privilege, marginalization and, significantly, the implications for equity in their own teaching. Borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987) serves as a framework for pre-service teachers to examine the borders that they inhabit and make visible their conceptions of social reality. My lived experience of becoming and challenging my conceptions of race and ethnicity has taught me to tolerate ambiguity. I embody both White and “of color,” both White and not White, both Hispanic and American, both Cuban and not Cuban, as Hispanic-American- Cuban- Ecuadorian. I am both American, and Spanish speaking. I open a space for students to define themselves by posing, “Where are you from?” My goal is to ask pre-service teachers to consider the culture of their primary discourse (Anzaldúa, 1987) as a springboard for examining their positionality within any classroom.

Anzaldúa’s (1987) critical examination of location, gender, sexuality, and religion serves as a catalyst for my pre-service teachers to critically examine the ways in which their borders, experiences, and identities impact their teacher identity. I offer Congdon, Stewart, and White (2002) reflective questions as a guide to elaborate and define, explicitly, the communities to which they belong (e.g. racial, ethnic, gender, economic, recreational, political, geographical) and then ask them to consider the importance that each community has on the artworks they make and show to students, their prepared unit plans, and their peer relationships.

We make visual the conceptual identities through an engagement that serves as a metaphor for the varied intersections of identity in any classroom. I post the names of each of the communities that influence identity (Congdon et al., 2002) around the room on boards, chairs, and structural beams. I ask each participant to use string to connect to each of the communities in meaningful order based on their reflections. The process becomes a performance and installation as each participant carefully pins the string around the room, and we navigate each other’s presence. The process has been quiet and reflective and other times festive and helpful, which has served as a metaphor for the ways in which classrooms interact. In each case, the resulting installation makes visible a representation of their intersecting identities and, significantly, the cohorts’ varied experiences and identities. We follow the process with a discussion that considers variations of the following questions to explore the potential imposition of our socio-cultural assumptions on learners.
(Crum & Hendrick, 2014):

How do the communities to which we belong impact the types of engagements we design for our students? How does my relationship with each of these communities impact the selection of artworks I select for my students? In what ways can we design engagements that allow us to learn about our students’ identities to inform our curriculum design?

Becoming Artist

My process of becoming fostered a new-found need to share my identity through artmaking. My regular visits to Miami bring into contrast the two social contexts, which I often document through photographs. The early images informed a collaboration Rubia y Trigueña (Blonde and Wheat Color), with a colleague. We created a film documenting what has proven to be an ongoing conversation about race, ethnicity, concepts of home, and belonging, grounded in my experiences in Miami and hers in New York City and Dominican Republic. We shared our film, interweaving conversation and images at our college’s faculty exhibit. I used this space to answer the question “Where are you from?” as a way to define myself, since I had learned that others predefined me here. I needed to express the nuances of my identity.

Conclusion

Anzaldúa (1987) gave voice and recognition to the “internal tensions of oppositions” (p. 96), which grind at the Woman of Color, modify and transform her and those around her, should she engage in the process of becoming. The contrast of my self-identity developed as a Hispanic, White woman in a borderland with my identity as a Woman of Color outside of my borderland spurred becoming as an autoethnographic narrative reflection to discover and learn something new (Richardson, 2005), share stories (Anderson, 2014), and interpret the past (Jones, 2005). Becoming a Woman of Color describes the continual process of reflecting on race and ethnicity and connecting to issues of social justice, feminism, and identity through the transformation of my teaching, research, and artistic practices.

References


Swaddled

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Keywords: whiteness, whitework, white supremacy, visual culture, quilt

We (Diane Kuthy and Olivia Robinson) met through Baltimore Racial Justice Action (BRJA), an educational and activist group which has been going strong in Baltimore, Maryland, USA for over fifteen years. BRJA fights against racism and other intersecting forms of institutional oppression and works toward racial equity, justice and collective liberation. BRJA provides space to work in affinity groups by race (“caucusing”) while also being accountable to a larger multi-racial group. Whereas the perspectives, experiences and analysis of people of color are central to our understanding of racism and racial equity, white people and people of color have different work to do. In the caucus model, white people bear the onus for their own learning and for teaching other white people about racism and white supremacy.

Our artistic collaboration began as a result of involvement in BRJA’s white affinity group and our shared interest in arts-based research methods to investigate visual culture’s role in constructing, perpetuating and disrupting white supremacy. We made our first quilt, Swaddled, to study visual culture of the 1940s, a time of mass consolidation of whiteness. Swaddled is part of an evolving series that investigates the visual culture of whiteness and the historical context that produces its meaning. Each quilt in the series is a thematic investigation that begins by focusing on images and objects in their historical context but expands to other eras as salient ideas emerge. Our intent is to set in high relief the visual culture of whiteness, gleaning insights into how ideas of whiteness are created and communicated through imagery. Through making multiple quilts we want to learn how visual culture buttresses white supremacy in various contexts. The quilts in the series incorporate fiber traditions popular in the U. S. during the historical period of the primary images examined. Each quilt is accompanied by an interpretive guide created in the form of a fabric sample book, which is a teaching tool to engage viewers in the deeper context of the work. Pictured are images of Swaddled juxtaposed with the pages of the interpretive guide.
Swaddled (2017) with interpretive guide, linen and cotton, 47” x 47”, Olivia Robinson and Diane Kuthy
Swaddled focuses on the "This is America. Keep it Pure" poster campaign of 1942, designed by the advertising company Shelden-Claire, with the support of the US government. Created to support America's efforts in World War II, it propagated a vision of life in an ideal "all white" postwar period. During the war, President Roosevelt talked about "four essential human freedoms": the freedom of speech and religion, freedom from want and from fear.

The poster imagery tied these four freedoms to ideals of the middle-class home, the nuclear family, consumerism, and free enterprise. Widely distributed in factories all over the country, the posters changed weekly and came with a illuminated frame. Employees were mailed small reproductions of the images with accompanying text. Many of the posters were created from Farm Security Administration photographs taken in the 1930s and other documentary photos. However, these photographs were manipulated through cropping, erasure and colorization to make the all-white "Americans" who were pictured look prosperous (Gray, 2006). Although the concept "American" has historically been conflated with whiteness, the campaign's strong visuals, wide distribution and messages of freedom made them particularly insidious.

The posters explicitly contrast American freedom with the "enemy" abroad and implicitly are juxtaposed with an "enemy" within. They were disseminated to factories just as thousands of Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps solely because of their ethnicity. Significantly, the "This is America..." campaign began immediately after a different campaign had attracted a national multi-racial audience, calling for victory abroad in the war and victory at home against racism. What was known as the Double V campaign began in February 1942 with a letter from James G. Thompson published in the Pittsburgh Courier, the largest black-owned newspaper in the U.S. at the time.

We used a nine-patch quilt pattern popular in the 1940s and "whitework," a traditional quilting method, incorporating white stitches on white fabric, which allows for simultaneous erasure and presence of the poster imagery. The name "whitework" is a powerful description of what the posters do: promoting a particular idea of what it means to be white and that whiteness is the supreme quality of being American. We are swaddled in white supremacy and literally white-worked. It is vitally important for us to realize this and to seek alternatives.

Page 2. Featuring one of the nine “This America…Keep it Free” posters created in 1942 that we used as source material. This poster underscores the conflation of white masculinity with American citizenship.
The quilt block made from the schoolboy poster above. Only, the heads and hands were transferred to the quilt. The hidden details were stitched back in using the traditional quilting method of whitework.
How was Lewis Hine’s 1908 photograph, Climbing to the Promised Land, Ellis Island, altered in this 1942 poster? Have the alterations changed the original meaning?

What cultures were not welcome in America in 1942? Today?

What was gained and lost by assimilating into (white) America?

What thoughts do you have about our current immigration problems as you reflect on the poster?

Page 3. Demonstrating how the “This America...Keep it Free” posters were created from repurposed old photos.
The quilt block made from the “melting pot” themed poster. It is interesting that until we cropped out everything but the faces and fists in the quilt block, I didn’t notice that only men directly faced the camera.
Closely look at the text and images of these posters, both created in 1942.

Who is missing?

Who is free?

What messages does each convey about what places and people are important? Free? Dangerous? And safe?

Page 4. These two posters are juxtaposed to examine the theme of segregated spaces, one of the primary ways race has historically been constructed in America.
Page 5. It was not easy to locate the posters through image searches when we first started looking at the “This is America...” posters. Since the election of President Donald Trump, the posters have been reprinted several times and now they appear instantaneously in search engines.
Image Credits

Sheldon-Claire Company Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 1942

Lewis Hines, Climbing into the Promised Land, Ellis Island, Brooklyn Museum, 1908

Sheldon-Claire Company Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 1942

Sheldon-Claire Company Records, Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 1942

Lester Beall, United States Housing Authority, 1942
We created *Swaddled* in January of 2017 just after the 2016 election. The “*This is America…*” posters’ contemporary relevance has sadly only increased since that time. Donald Trump (the current sitting US president) seemed to rise through the effect of these white-supremacist tropes on white men and women voters - tropes that were developed in these particular posters of 1942. When we first spent time with the posters, we couldn’t get over how cliché they seemed. Then after reading about their history, it became apparent that they were one of the places where these clichés began to get traction and we began seeing the posters differently. Instead of innocent reproductions of a cliché, they seemed more ominous reproductions of old ideas (whiteness = American) with imagery that was new at the time.

Whiteness seems to eclipse other identity markers in the posters, yet it is tethered to them and garners strength from the intersection. White masculinity is one fulcrum. Whiteness obscuring class foreshadows the prosperity and consumption practices of white Americans after World War II, creating a picture of white racial solidarity. The suppression of labor-management conflicts, a reality during the war, was key to creating the illusion of a classless society (Gray, 2006). Two additional posters that we used for our quilt explicitly focused on ameliorating potential class conflicts by encouraging white worker and management cooperation. The intersection of whiteness-and-Christanity and whiteness-and-heterosexuality are two other significant threads. Unfortunately, these intersections at the service of white supremacy have been fortified in the last few years and are important to understand as factors in the continued support of President Donald Trump.

Quilts and quilting in general are rich in metaphor and have shifted in meaning and worked on many levels throughout the process of making *Swaddled*. There are many layers both to a quilt and to our project. A quilt is something one wakes up to and goes to bed with - much like the constant reinforcement of whiteness messaging. A quilt is a covering and reminds us of how we as a society cover whiteness and so create a necessity to uncover and bare the workings of white supremacy. Making our quilt child-size was a way to speak of whiteness as spoon-fed and normalized from childhood. Whitework, the traditional method we used, both obscures and reveals. It is tactile and intimate and takes scrutiny to understand. The variety of skin colors and the people’s faces reproduced on the quilt are haunting; they are people we know both past and present. Particularly powerful is the way the figures’ hands are grasping but are empty. It makes us think about what the world would be like without the effects of white supremacy. We try to imagine a future world where white people possess less space and participate in an equitable power distribution.
References

Rising Above Pain: An Autoethnographic Study on Teaching Social Justice as a Female Teacher of Color

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ABSTRACT

This autoethnographic study demonstrates my experiences of teaching social justice issues as a female teacher of color at a university in the Southwest. Based on Critical Race Feminism (CRF) and intersectionality, I explore the intricate layers of my social identities and positionality in relation to my teaching practices. The first finding highlights my sense of self-doubt and shame as an “Other” teacher. Next, I analyze whiteness and how it operated discursively and performatively in my classroom. I also discuss how I made sense of and dealt with whiteness particularly in the discussion of race. The third finding demonstrates resilience as a necessary process of becoming a CRF teacher. The conclusion addresses a few suggestions to translate the complex groundwork of CRF into classroom and community-based action as a way to disrupt oppressive norms. These suggestions include questioning the notion of safe classrooms, carefully examining the academic and pedagogical endeavors under the banner of diversity, and creating academic spaces for critical reflexivity on racial relations and theorization starting from the experiences of women of color.

Key Words: female teacher of color in higher education, social justice art education, meta-autoethnography, Critical Race Feminism, whiteness

With the increasing attention to social justice, there have been an abundance of studies discussing theories and practices of art education for diversity and social justice. According to the study conducted by Milbrandt, Miraglia, and Zimmerman (2018), social justice is the most frequent focus in the Studies in Art Education from 2014 to 2016 at 30%. In line with this growing effort, issues of justice, equity, representation, and empowerment are often explored along with social identities including, but not limited to, (dis)ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, nationality, race, and sex. The foundation of social justice education is heavily shaped by the political, social, and cultural theories examining oppression and disparity reflecting the social conditions and experiences of marginalized social groups (Adams, 2010; Adams, Jones, & Tatum, 2007; Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2010). Thus, teaching social justice is emotionally and intellectually demanding since it requires the teacher and students
to examine their beliefs and experiences in relation to their social identities (Bell, Love, Washington, & Weinstein, 2007; Garber, 2004). Race, for instance, is one of the most difficult topics to discuss especially in a predominantly White classroom due to the dominant colorblind ideology (Bonilla-silva, 2006; Leonardo & Porter, 2010). Most White students tend to express their emotional discomfort, such as defensiveness and guilt when learning racial issues (Case & Cole, 2013; Platt, 2013; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005; Tatum, 1994). Succinctly put, teaching for critical consciousness necessarily involves emotional discomfort, forms of tensions, and resistance. However, what if the teacher, who does not fit the White patriarchal norm of academia, tackles the issues of social (in)justice in a predominantly White classroom? If they find their experiences different and particularly challenging, what makes their experiences more difficult, and how do they cope with it? Most importantly, in what ways does their teaching become a way to resist the White middle-class patriarchal norm of the academic authority?

This article attempts to answer these questions through an autoethnographic study on my experiences of teaching for social justice at a university. As a female teacher of color, I explore the intricate layers of my social identities in relation to my teaching experiences based on Critical Race Feminism (CRF) and intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991). College classrooms are not neutral educational sites; rather they reflect the social relations of power interconnected with hierarchies and privileges shaped around race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other social identity markers (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998). In this light, I focus on how my racial and gender identity intersectionally informs my teaching experiences and vice versa in a predominantly White classroom.

The discussion includes my reflection on my anti-racist teaching practice that was in tension with whiteness that manifested in the classroom. Whiteness, which is a racial discourse based on the dominant white-centered racial perspective and worldview, is not automatically equal to White people, whose racial identities are built upon their skin color. As Frankenberg (1993) describes, whiteness is an unmarked cultural category in contrast to other identities marked by race, ethnicity, and class. Whiteness operates on multiple sociocultural levels throughout different ethnic groups as hegemonic images (Leonardo, 2002; Leonardo, 2009), which sometimes lead to homogenize diverse white ethnic groups into a single category. Whiteness is not only a standpoint from which Whites see themselves, others, and society, but also cultural practices that are usually unnamed (Frankenberg, 1993). In the context of racial dialogue, whiteness can be characterized by the denial of racism, unwillingness to participate in racial conversations, minimization of racist legacy,
and other similar evasions (Leonardo, 2002). Where whiteness functions as a normative power in everyday practices of teaching and learning, discussing racial issues is particularly challenging for teachers of color considering their racial power dynamics. From this perspective, this article discusses in what ways I, as a female teacher of color, interrupted and dealt with whiteness in the classroom to engage students in transformative conversations. This discussion is followed by pedagogical practices drawn from critical race feminism (CRF) as an act of resilience to further develop critical racial consciousness.

**Theoretical Lens: Critical Race Feminism**

I employ CRF as a theoretical lens to explore my teaching experience as a female teacher of color. CRF draws on the legal scholarship that sheds light on the concerns of a certain group of people who are women, disproportionately poor, and the members of racial minorities. Delgado (1995), who first introduced the concept, consciously coined the term “Critical Race Feminism” to accentuate its significant focus on women of color and the fundamental connection to critical legal studies (Wing, 2003; Wing & Willis, 1999). Consequently, many central tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and CRF are interconnected. CRF’s race intervention is rooted in the feminist discourse; therefore, it necessarily embraces feminism’s emphasis on gender oppression within patriarchy (Wing, 2003). Even though there is no single definition of CRF, many CRF scholars employ storytelling as their analytic tool and research methodology in order to bring voices of underrepresented women of color to the surface (Delgado, 1995). CRF is also centered around critical praxis; the main purpose of CRF scholarship is the practical application in an effort to dismantle injustice (Wing & Willis, 1999).

**Intersectionality**

Intersectionality is not only a key tenet of CRF and CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), but also the significant analytic contribution that CRF

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1 This does not mean that the experiences of women of color can be categorized and analyzed as a single group. However, defining the different standpoints of groups of women, such as queer women, women of color, poor women, and women with disabilities, reveals that the viewpoints previously considered “neutral” are inflected by the upper-middle-class White male perspective (Hurtado & Stewart, 2004).

2 The foundation of Critical Race Theory (CRT) lies on critical legal scholarship and radical feminism emerged in 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT scholars consider that racism is ordinary and deeply pervasive in the sociocultural fabric of the U.S.; therefore, race is a central categorical axis to analyze the social inequity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).
makes (Wing, 2003). Dill and Zambrana (2009) explained the concept
of intersections as a way to explain experiences of women of color
and to critique the exclusion of women of color’s perspectives and
needs from “both White, Eurocentric, middle-class conceptualizations
of feminism and male dominated models of ethnic studies” (p. 3).
CRF scholars consciously consider the intersection of race, class, and
gender by locating women of color at the center of analysis (Wing
& Willis, 1999). The term intersectionality was originally coined by
Kimberlé W. Crenshaw (1989) to criticize a single-axis framework that
considers race and gender as mutually exclusive analytic categories.
In the dominant legal discourses based on the single-axis framework,
discrimination and inequity were only recognized in instances
of gender and race discrimination, but not a combination of both
(Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Subsequently, the discriminatory conditions
that women of color face were ignored by both feminist and antiracist
discourses. Furthermore, the single categorical analysis misleadingly
implies that oppression functions along a single categorical axis
(Crenshaw, 1989). This argument is connected to Collin’s (2000)
argument about intersectionality as anti-essentialism. Through “the
matrix of domination,” Collin’s (2000) analysis unveils in what
ways intersecting oppressions are structurally, interpersonally, and
ideologically organized and how these intersections regenerate
different forms of oppression (p. 18). As Collins (2000) reminds us,
there is no independently reducible type of oppression; oppressions
always work together in producing injustice.

**CRF and Women of Color in Higher Education**

Race and gender together complicate power dynamics in the
classroom, particularly when the majority of the students are
members of the dominant social groups. For instance, Chesler
and Young’s (2007) study demonstrates that faculty members’
social identities affect the faculty members’ everyday institutional
experiences and their teacher authority. With this in mind, there are
several studies exploring experiences and perspectives of female
scholars/teachers of color in higher education (see Adams et al.,
2007; Berry & Mizelle, 2006; Gutiérrez y Muhs, Niemann, González,
& Harris, 2012; Jean-Marie & Lloyd-Jones, 2011; Ng, 1993; Rodriguez
& Boahene, 2012; Vargas, 1999). These studies place women of color
in the center of their reflection and theorization to investigate how
different sociocultural and political forces shape women of color’s
experiences in school (Berry, 2006). For instance, Vargas’s (1999) study
demonstrates particular challenges that female teachers of color
experience in predominantly White classrooms. Similarly, Rodriguez’s
(2009) autoethnographic study of her experiences as a Latina
professor reveals the construction of the “Other” teacher and how this
normative practice constantly questions her authority and capacity
as a scholar in the university classroom. There are studies discussing
the experiences of female graduate students of color and their journey in and outside of academia. Lee’s (2006) study demonstrates the on-going negotiation of her scholar identity in her own native community and academia.

In relation to my positionality, it is important to point out the significant amount of discussions on Asian and Asian American women’s experiences in higher education (Hune, 2011; Li, Beckett, & Lim, 2005; Mayuzumi, 2008; Ng, 1993). This scholarship illuminates the gender and racial disparities experienced by Asian and Asian American female faculty on both the interpersonal and institutional levels. Asian and Asian American women’s experiences are distinctively shaped through the interlocking multiple hierarchies of gender, race, immigrant/citizen status, nationality, and language (Hune, 2011). In the university classroom, Asian and Asian American professors are not only differently racialized but also deemed foreign (Hune, 2011; Mayuzumi, 2008). Moreover, Asian women scholars also experience the unique dilemma and challenges in regard to their transnational experiences and positionalities (He, 2006; Mayuzumi, 2008, 2015). All in all, these works put together the narratives of Asian and Asian American female faculty’s experiences and collectively examine the ways to dismantle the White, middle class, and male-dominant academic culture.

Methodology

In order to conduct this autoethnographic study, I revisited the data originally collected for my dissertation study completed in 2017.3 I examined not only original data including the researcher’s journal and audio-narratives, but also the presentation and analysis of data I published in my dissertation. This reflective process of revisiting the data in the past and re-writing autoethnography is based on what Ellis (2009) calls, meta-autoethnography. I address my methodological approach and rationale for employing autoethnography in this section.

3 For this course, I taught theories and issues of social (in)justice, including but not limited to ableism, ageism, racism, sexism, transgender oppression, through the lens of systematic oppression (Young, 1990). It was a predominantly White classroom with 10 White students out of 15 students. I had 11 female students and 4 male students. The purpose of providing the demographic information is to contextualize my autoethnographic narratives. Although none of the data presented and analyzed in the study were not collected from my students, the researcher’s journal, audio narratives, and reflections unavoidably included the interactions with the students and what happened in the classroom. I should note that the incidents and interactions I describe in this study are not meant to represent the students’ perspectives. Rather, I attempt to illuminate my reflection on how I interacted with the students and what I learned from it.
Why Autoethnography?

Autoethnography is “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011, p. 273). As its term implies, it is a hybrid form of writing that amalgamates autobiography with ethnography for various purposes that not only studies oneself, but also provides reflexive and critical insights as social research (Hughes & Pennington, 2018). Autoethnography, for me, was a necessitous choice since the goal of this study was to explore the reflective process of my teaching and negotiating with the oppressive ideology embedded in and outside of the classroom. It was inevitable to position myself, the researcher, as the subject voice in the narration (Chaplin, 2011) in order to demonstrate the intricate layers of my teaching experiences as a woman of color in higher education. However, this does not mean that I employed autoethnography for the purpose of self-absorbed or self-confessing writing. In an autoethnographic study, the researcher’s experiences are analyzed in relation to the sociocultural context. For instance, writing about selected epiphanies should be able to highlight how those experiences stem from a particular sociocultural identity and contexts (Ellis et al., 2011). Thus, the purpose of this work is not to accurately represent my experiences nor to merely make sense of them. Instead, it aims at opening up social possibilities of what my narratives can do and where they can lead to on a societal level (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

Furthermore, I chose autoethnography since it considers critical reflexivity (Hughes & Pennington, 2018). My teacher identity and pedagogical practices are shaped through ongoing reflections on past and present experiences as a teacher, memories of schooling, and interactions with other people. Thus, the autoethnographic study can demonstrate how my identity and teaching practices are constantly negotiated within the specific contexts. As Warren (2011) argues, autoethnographic works enable classrooms to be sites for critical reflexivity. Through autoethnographic writing, I attempt to reflect on how power relations, privilege, and oppression in relation to my social identities have shaped my practice and my teacher self (Warren, 2011).

Lastly, this autoethnographic study is written to carefully unpack the interlocking systems of oppression (Collins, 2000) in relation to my teacher identity and practices with an intention to possibly provide a counternarrative. Many educators/scholars of color examine their justice-oriented teaching experiences through various forms of personal narrative writing (See Berry, 2006; Cleveland, 2005; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Ng, 1993; Rodriguez, 2009). Likewise, autoethnography, in the context of teaching for social
justice, can not only provide pedagogical insights, but also serve as a counternarrative to challenge the hegemonic ideologies of coloniality and whiteness in education (see Camangian, 2010; DeLeon, 2010; Mayuzumi, 2009). Although many autoethnographic studies challenge the hegemonic norms and discuss how the systems of oppression function in the authors’ lives, it is crucial to remember that “effective autoethnographies are not victim tales; on the contrary, writing autoethnography well produces survivor tales for the writer and for those who read them” (Ellis, 2009, p. 19). From this perspective, the purpose of autoethnographic writing as a counternarrative is to open up a dialogue on possible ways to subvert the oppressive systems, not to proclaim the right way of being and living (Ellis, 2009).

Meta-Autoethnography: The Process of Reflecting, Revisioning, and Rewriting

There is no single unified form of autoethnography; accordingly, there are various types of approaches to collect and analyze data for an autoethnographic study based on the purposes and styles (Hughes & Pennington, 2018). For this study, I employed the approach of meta-autoethnography proposed by Ellis (2009). Meta-autoethnography is a process of critically reflecting and synthesizing one’s own previous autoethnographic work in order to add “layers of new interpretations, reflections, and vignettes” (Hughes & Pennington, 2018, p. 20). Ellis (2009) describes it as an act of connecting the meaning-making process from the past to our current life. Meta-autoethnography provides me a unique opportunity to revisit the interpretation of my teaching experience in the past and ask questions I didn’t ask then (Ellis, 2009). Since I completed my dissertation study, I had many conversations about my autoethnographic findings formally and informally with my advisors, other educators/scholars I met at conferences, and my friends who were doing similar work. More importantly, I had an opportunity to present the autoethnographic study with the students who participated in the study at a conference. This informal member-checking process with the students offered me new insights and interpretations that I did not previously have. This array of experiences altered some of the original meaning I found and added more nuanced layers of interpretation. As Ellis (2009) argues, the purpose of writing autoethnography is not a simple storytelling, but “a complex interrogation of the meanings that are created” (p. 13). From this angle, I reflected on the meanings that I originally found and reconstructed an autoethnographic narrative with newly developed insights to expand the meanings of my teaching experience.
Figure 1. The Process of Data Analysis for Meta-Autoethnography

Figure 1 describes the semi-structured process of analyzing data and writing meta-autoethnography for this study. “Data in the past” represents the original data which was collected in fall semester of 2016 as well as the autoethnographic writing I published in my dissertation (Yoon, 2017). The researcher’s journal included my observation notes and reflections on a general overview of what happened in class, interactions with students, thoughts on the course materials, surprising moments, relevant memories, new ideas and insights about teaching diversity and justice. I also reanalyzed 14 audio narratives where I recorded my reflection on teaching after the class period. In addition, I revisited my autoethnographic findings I wrote in 2017. I reflected on the findings with the questions in mind: What meanings I found previously? How did I construct these meanings? What are new interpretations/insights I have now? What led me to have new insights?

Moreover, I conducted a critical auto-interview to recollect the memories surrounding the autoethnographic study I conducted and critically reflect on them. Critical auto-interview, which originates from the oral history tradition, is a method of reflexivity and critical awareness (Boufoy-Bastick, 2004). The goal is not only to learn about oneself, but also to examine social norms and values which are embedded in the process of knowing oneself (Boufoy-Bastick, 2004). In this light, I asked myself a set of questions to reveal hidden norms and values that I was unknowingly complicit with and I was resisting against. In terms of recollecting my memories, I asked myself the significant memories I had about teaching social justice, the reasons I
found them significant, the interactions with other people about the autoethnographic findings, and how the interactions affected my new understandings. To further reflect on this process, I also asked myself what questions or theoretical connections I was dealing with at that time and what I have now. By pondering on the fragmentation and gap between now and then, I tried to illuminate how new meanings are constantly created through revisiting and revisioning the autoethnographic narratives.

**Positionality**

As Hall (1990) asserts, “there’s no enunciation without positionality” (p. 18). Reflecting on positionality, which indicates where one stands in relation to others, is a significant part of the qualitative research since the research focus, process and product are mediated through the researcher’s positionality (Bourke, 2014). Especially in the autoethnographic study where the researcher primarily examines their own experiences and perspectives, positionality plays a key role in not only providing a backdrop of the study, but also situating the study in relation to the relevant discourses. I briefly share my social identities and position vis-a-vis the system of oppression (Collins, 2000) in a narrative form.

**Asian.** I became an Asian when I moved from Korea to the U.S. I did not have to claim my Korean nor Asian identity in my home country, where I was ethnically privileged. I am now an immigrant in the U.S. I am not sure when, or if I will identify myself as Asian “American.” Claiming one’s national and cultural identities are not clear-cut.

**Asian Woman.** As a cis-gender woman, I am socialized to perform certain aspects of femininity. I am working on deconstructing my own beliefs on gender, sexuality, and heteronormativity. I also frequently think about how my Asian body gets exoticized through the male gaze and through the predominant media depiction. I used to prepare myself for insensitive comments on my appearance and accent before I walked outside of my home. I became inured to the "you are not from here" gaze.

**Bilingual Asian Woman.** I spent several years of wondering about the hegemony and global power structures upholding English ideology in Korean society. I became more passionate about deconstructing standard English ideology (see Delpit, 2006; Delpit & Dowdy, 2013), which perpetuates linguistic stereotypes and discrimination against bilinguals, Ebonics, global English, and other regional dialects.

**Bilingual Asian Woman in Academia.** My advanced degree allowed me to navigate both my home country and the U.S. with a certain degree of social advantages. Education and financial stability were never
easy for my parents or their parents. My family wanted me to become a public-school teacher because they believed a teaching job would be perfect for a smart girl from the low socioeconomic class. I pushed far beyond their hopes. I crossed the border (national, cultural, linguistic and psychological) that I did not even dare to imagine. Moving back and forth between these distinctly different two worlds is not easy. I switch my language (not only Korean and English language, but the style, vocabulary, accent, etc.) when I talk to my family. I still feel like a stranger in academia. I also feel that I am drifting away from my community and family.

My unnoticed identities. I have been constantly and conscientiously reflecting on the privileged sides of my identity, which pass unnoticed. My immigration status, nationality, cis-gender body, ableness, and my current heterosexual relationship allow numerous advantages in my life. I need to keep questioning at whose expense am I privileged. This should not be a passive self-reflection that makes me feel good. I should make myself vulnerable to take actions toward social justice.

Findings & Discussions

As I explicated in the methodology section, the analytic process of this study was not linear nor strictly structured; rather, the process felt chaotic as I continuously found new meanings and interconnected insights even in the process of writing. Nonetheless, the process of reflective analysis brought my attention to several themes. This section is structured according to the themes I found. The first part discusses my sense of self-doubt as a foreign-born female teacher of color. The second part sheds a light on the process of deconstructing whiteness I was complicit with, as well as whiteness that manifested in the classroom. This part is built upon my new insights that I did not heavily discuss in the previous autoethnographic finding (Yoon, 2017). This part examines challenges I experienced to facilitate critical racial dialogues and how I tried to deconstruct and negotiate with whiteness in the classroom. The last finding highlights the resilience and growth I gained through teaching social justice in relation to my teacher positionality.

Self-doubt, Anxiety, and Shame as the “Other” Teacher

Two weeks after arriving to the United States for the first time, I walked into a university classroom with about 50 undergraduate students as a brand-new Graduate Teaching Assistance (GTA). I taught this general education course for the first time in university about children’s art where I had many freshmen. As an instructor of record, I had the full responsibilities of the course design, teaching, and assessments with the support from a mentor faculty member. The majority of my students did not know that I was a GTA until I revealed it. I usually introduced myself as a doctoral student the first day of class.
This transition from an elementary teacher in my home country of South Korea to a university teacher in the U.S. was as demanding as anyone could imagine. Despite my anxiety and uncertainty about my responsibilities and teacher authority, I hid my insecurity and expressed confidence to survive my first year in a GTA position. In spite of my constant attempt to auto-suggest my confidence and capabilities, I could not get away from a deep sense of self-doubt. I was well aware that my racial, ethnic, and linguistic differences did not fit the persona of a “normal” teacher in U.S. academia (Rodriguez, 2009). In my first two semesters, I had several students with various racial backgrounds who explicitly expressed their doubts about my competence and challenged my authority in the classroom. In my first two semesters, I had several students with various racial backgrounds who explicitly expressed their doubts about my competence and challenged my authority in the classroom.5 With continuous experiences of hostility and resistance, I felt deep shame about myself: the way I presented myself, the way I spoke English, and the way I interacted with my students. The fear that my differences would be presumed incompetent started growing (Baker & Copp, 1997; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012).

With the sense of self-doubt and shame as an “Other” teacher, teaching about race and gender felt more emotionally overwhelming to me. The emotional burden sometimes paralyzed my thinking and my body. I often thought, “What if my students question my authority and the legitimacy of my teaching about race because I am not from here?” I knew this was not an uncommon line of questioning by the authority faculty of color, especially those who are foreign-born. Linguistic identity, such as an English as a Second Language (ESL) also adds another layer to the hierarchical differential in power (Delpit & Dowdy, 2013). I was afraid that my bilingual identity, in addition to my national origin and racial identity, signified the incompetency of teaching critical social issues. The process of coming to the realization of my self-doubt was perplexing and agonizing. As I tapped into my own oppressive thoughts through CRT and CRF, I began making sense of my inner struggles. I learned that self-doubt is one of the consequences of internalized oppression, and it accompanies emotional distress including helplessness, frustration, and mistrust to name a few (Harro, 2010). Under the influence of the dominant stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners (Chang, 1993; Mayuzumi, 2008), I internalized oppressive thoughts about Asianness.6

5 I sensed subtle hostility from the students from the first day of my class. However, some students expressed their doubt more explicitly by saying “I cannot understand what you are saying because of your accent” or “I want to talk about my grade to your professor, not you.” There are many studies examining the unique challenges that Asian female faculty members experience including the students’ resistance to their authority and academic competence (see Hune, 2011; Lee & Johnson-Bailey, 2004; Li, Beckett, & Lim, 2005; Mayuzumi, 2015).

6 In the Orientalist discourse, Asianness is regarded as an exotic way of being that is at a great distance from Western and European ways of being (He, 2006; Hune,
This internalized oppression reinforced self-fulfilling negative stereotypes (Padilla, 2001). Even when people gave me a “compliment” about the fact that they could hardly catch my “Asian accent,” this message signified Asianness as something to be erased. This experience resonates with Mayuzumi’s (2008) study discussing the racialization of Asian accents. Mayuzumi (2008) points out that the notion of accent draws a line between “white and non-white, citizens and immigrants, competency and non-competency, and mainstream and periphery” (p. 175). In the hierarchy of accent, the accent of faculty of color is considered less legitimate and desirable than that of European faculty (Creese & Kambere, 2003; Mayuzumi, 2008).

The stereotypes and dominant discourses do not merely operate on the ideological level. The intersection of sexism and racism is routinized and shapes the “normal” ways of thinking and treating groups of people unequally (Ng, 1993). I found that my struggle with establishing the teacher authority and dealing with hostility was not merely caused by my personality nor a few “rude” students, but intertwined with race, gender, and power relations. When women of color thwart gender and racial expectations, we can face microaggressions that attempt to punish our unexpected behaviors (Harris & González, 2012). I slowly picked up my own strategies to deal with microaggressions in the classroom by dressing up very professionally every single day, emphasizing my qualifications the first day of my class, and overpreparing for my classes. I came up with a few strategies to talk with people when they were insensitively asking my ethnicity or commenting on my Asian female body. I learned how to shift the conversation to lead the person to rethink about the offensiveness of their questions or comments. It became critical for me to excise the strategies to subvert the racial and gender expectations in and outside of the classroom (Harris & González, 2012; Niemann, 2012; Rodriguez, 2009).

(Un)Learning and Deconstructing Whiteness in a Classroom

If you have so many problems with racism in the U.S., why don’t you go back to your country?

2011; Mayuzumi, 2015). Despite the long history of Asian immigration to the United States, Asian Americans are still considered perpetual foreigners in U.S. society due to nativist racism (Chang, 1993). The dominant discourse surrounding Asian and Asian Americans reinforces a sense of foreignness and the model minority myth, which makes the oppression of Asian Americans invisible (Chang, 1993; S. Lee, Park, & Wong, 2016). Moreover, Asian women are frequently depicted overly feminine and exotic in pop culture and media (Nemoto, 2006). In addition to the model minority myth stereotyping Asians passive and docile, Asian women are hyper sexualized and—often considered obedient and servile (Cho, 2003; Mayuzumi, 2008; Nemoto, 2006).
In our current globalized context after the long history of European colonization, there is no place that one can escape from racism (Du Bois, 1989). Globalized whiteness transcends national boundaries, and it has developed into a formidable hegemonic force (Boucher, Carey, & Ellinghaus, 2009; Leonardo, 2002; Moreton-Robinson, Casey, & Nicoll, 2008). This is why I cannot naively claim that I was unaware of racial relations simply because I was raised in my home country where my racial/ethnic affiliation was dominant. Nor could I assume other countries, especially non-Western countries, would be far from upholding the globalized racial hierarchy. Especially under the current influence of multinational media production and circulation, it is almost impossible to be unaffected by the Western racial hegemony. When growing up, I consumed many Hollywood movies and understood the U.S as a middle-class White country. In my English classes, my pronunciation was laboriously corrected until I spoke with a “proper” American accent. As a young woman, I held up the standard of white beauty and was constantly discontented with my Asian body like my other friends. These few examples demonstrate the pervasive nature of globalized racism as a perspective and cultural practice, which operates flexibly depending on the geopolitical and historical contexts.7

It became clearer that I could not just walk away from the racial dialogue as I moved to the U.S. The first few years, I naively claimed my innocence of not knowing the racial discourse by positioning myself as an outsider. I did not see myself performing and upholding whiteness in order to effectively survive and climb up the ladder of transnational social status. I intentionally and unintentionally avoided any racial talk with the idea that talking about race would put me in a dangerous position. I wanted to be under the radar to survive graduate school; at the same time, I wanted to be recognized as a “good” student and teacher. The desire to be a good teacher, particularly, hindered any discussions around uncomfortable topics.

Nevertheless, I had to confront the fact that I was unknowingly socialized to perform certain aspects of whiteness and opt into the system of white dominance. Especially in the classroom where I wanted to engage the students in conversations about racial injustice, I had to first deconstruct whiteness with them. The invisibility of whiteness made it difficult for me to start the conversation. As Frankenberg (1993) puts it, the normativity of white dominance conceals its effect and presence in the racial discourse and how it

7 For more theoretical explanations about the flexibility of whiteness, see Boucher, Carey, and Ellinghaus (2009), Leonardo (2002) and Takaki (1993). Leonardo (2002) and Takaki (1993) lay out the historical context of Irish immigration and the embracement of whiteness in the context of the U.S. Leonardo (2002) also touches upon how the model minority myth of Asian immigrants has been co-opted into the discourse of whiteness.
is intrinsically linked to racism. By naming whiteness, everyone is placed in the racial relations, not just people of color (Frankenberg, 1993; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998; Leonardo, 2002). When I first spoke the word, whiteness, I immediately sensed the defensiveness on the students’ faces. In the racial dialogue, whiteness functions to position Whites as racially innocent (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2014). This often leads for the students to deny racial legacies and racism (Leonardo, 2002) and consequently, they dissociate any systemic racism with their personal lives.

When whiteness is pervasive in the classroom, talking about race symptomatically, not just superficially, increases emotional tensions (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). I, as an emerging social justice educator, also had a hard time tackling the systematic aspect of racism. As many anti-racist scholars discuss, the majority of White students and students of color have significantly different perspectives on racial matters (Bonilla-silva, 2006; Leonardo & Porter, 2010; Tatum, 1992, 1994). Most White students understand racism as prejudice whereas students of color consider racism systemic (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). In order to encourage the students to look into how racism works not only on a personal level, but institutionally and systematically, I had to provide many factual data and counternarratives. This approach brought tension and sometimes caused heated debates between the students. I was often concerned about the consequences of causing discomfort, which might lead to the negative evaluation on my teaching.

Another difficulty I faced was the students’ silence. I first thought the students who were quiet in class were either shy or participating in their own ways. When a few students expressed their anger about the class topics of whiteness and racism through their writing assignments, I realized that their silence could be an indication of resistance. Ladson-Billings (1996) discusses this type of silence as resistance, which often manifests in education courses on race, gender, and class. In a predominantly White classroom, students tend to respond to the course content making them feel uncomfortable by withdrawing from the discussion or remaining silent (Ladson-Billings, 1996). This does not mean that silence always means active resistance. I was also aware that some of my students decided to remain silent because they were afraid of saying something offensive or being misunderstood by their classmates (Lewis, 1990). Under the ideology of colorblindness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), talking about race is considered a taboo; one who sees race becomes a racist. For fear of being called a racist, the racial dialogue is particularly difficult for the majority of White students. Moreover, the ideology of individualism and meritocracy hinders them to examine their own socialization into whiteness (DiAngelo, 2018).
Through my experience of teaching racial issues, I found the students' silence, when it is an indication of disengagement, destructive to further develop communal and critical learning. Understandably, the students had more things to share when the issue was associated with their disadvantaged sides of their social identities. The female students were more eager to talk about gender issues than male students. Although several White students were willing to talk about their privilege as a heterosexual person who was temporarily able-bodied, the same group was resistant and silent in the conversations about race. Consequently, the students of color ended up with added responsibilities to continue the conversations on race.

One way to navigate and deconstruct whiteness in my classroom was to utilize emotional responses as a learning moment. I addressed possible feelings of resistance and discomfort to learn about racism in advance. I shared several stories of my experiences regarding having conversations about race before I started the group discussion. The stories included my honest reflection on the process of developing racial consciousness and navigating the racial dialogues as well as the emotional responses accompanied to the process. I explained to my students what possibly causes those emotional responses and what other scholars have been discussing. Tatum (1992) suggests that this kind of disclosure minimizes students’ negative emotional responses and allows both the teacher and students to utilize them for learning. I found that admitting possible discomfort accompanied with raising critical racial consciousness was helpful to ease the tension to a certain degree. Furthermore, I was able to help the students to contextualize their learning by asking the reasons behind their emotional responses and what aspect of their identities/experiences are related to their emotional response (Case & Cole, 2013).

**Resilience and Growth as a CRF teacher-scholar**

Reflecting on my teaching experience as a female teacher of color created inner tensions and emotional struggles to a great degree. Nonetheless, it also allowed me to positively rethink my own position and roles as a critical educator. It prompted me to think about what it meant to be a teacher and scholar at odds with whiteness. Although surviving the U.S academia as a bilingual female teacher of color is challenging, I learned that our very presence in academia opens up a possibility to disrupt pervasive whiteness and unequal racial and gender power structures in higher education (Rodriguez, 2009; Vargas, 1999).

My positionality and personal experiences became a pedagogical tool for both myself and students for empowerment and growth. I shared my own process of reflections with the students as a way to encourage and model critical reflexivity (Warren, 2011). I also
learned from CRF educators to bring in our own strong voices and experiences into the classroom. bell hooks (1994) writes about mutual vulnerability, which means that professors bring narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions. When I was teaching the course on diversity and social justice, I shared my stories in relation to the class topics before I asked my students to link their lives to the theories. In so doing, I was taking “the first risk” to link my narratives to academic discussions and to be vulnerable in the classroom for our mutual growth (hooks, 1994). Sharing my own stories seemed to help my students contextualize the theories they were learning. More importantly, it allowed myself and the students to collectively reflect on our experiences and grow through the process. This became a key part of my pedagogical practices, which emphasized engagement through the contextualization of personal experiences (Berry, 2010). Taking off my armor, opening up myself with the students, and taking the risk of being vulnerable in the classroom where I was already vulnerable was not easy. It will be never easy. In spite of my fear and hesitance, I learned that the practice of collective reflexivity can connect stories of different struggles and pains. I was able to reflect on my stories through different vantage points that the students offered and so did the students. Collective reflexivity helped us witness the various spaces and times that we were processing our experiences.

The reflection on my positionality also reminded me that the students’ social identities and personal experiences were a crucial part of their learning process. Thus, knowing our students—specifically their perspectives and possible psychological barriers of processing certain ideas—is substantial to develop meaningful conversations, particularly regarding the topics of social (in)justice (Case & Cole, 2013; Lal, 2000). The discourse of whiteness helped me contextualize the students’ emotional responses to the racial dialogue. Through reanalysis of the data, I found that the danger of reductionism also affects White students as it puts them in the situation of double bind where they had to choose to be either allies or enemies (Ellsworth, 1997). Similarly, I was able to reconsider White students’ negative emotional responses as a process of gaining racial consciousness. Instead of naming particular White student negative responses to the critical race discourse as resistance, guilt, or fragility, Flynn (2015) uses the term “White fatigue” (p. 115). This White fatigue describes the dynamic of the learning process for those who understand the moral imperative of antiracism but who are not yet “situated to fully understand the complexity of racism and how it functions as an institutional and systemic phenomenon” (p. 115). With this frame, I reconceptualized the students’ struggles and emotional fatigue in the process of anti-racism and racial identity development.

Revisiting narratives that I wrote enabled me to realize my personal and professional growth through struggles as a teacher who taught
the course solely dedicated to social justice for the first time. I was
able to grow through taking the risk of being fully present with my
body and mind in the classroom. As one of my students described,
it was being in the classroom without an academic façade. Ironically,
this practice of vulnerability (hooks, 1994) allowed me to be resilient
with my struggles, both internalized oppressive thoughts and
external pushbacks.

Concluding Thoughts: Creating a Transformative Space

This reflective study shares my teaching experience to provide
narratives as tools for other educators to examine their experiences
as the “Other” teachers in the U.S. education system (Gutiérrez y
Muhs et al., 2012). The analysis of my experiences brings up necessary
questions about the next step. In what ways can this act of writing in
the space of academia lead to classroom and community-based action
to disrupt the oppressive norm? As Hughes and Giles (2010) point
out, what might be the possible creative and metaphorical tools that
translate the complex groupwork of CRF into social justice action?
I would like to share a few thoughts that have evolved around the
concept of space as a partial answer to these questions. I intentionally
use the metaphorical term of space here to open up the numerous
possibilities of creating space within/through the specific context and
location.

The first concept we can tackle in our teaching is the notion of a safe
classroom. For whom do we want to make our classrooms safe?
Rodriguez (2009) insists that educators should let go of the myth of
the safe classroom since “teaching social justice issues will always
take place in an uncomfortable space” (p. 492). Leonardo and Porter
(2010) also problematize the myth of the safe classroom by pointing
out that individuals of marginalized groups tend to get more offended
and agitated when engaging in so-called “safe” conversations about
race. The concept of safety in teaching race is usually employed to
protect White students’ feelings; as a result, “a space of oppressive
colorblindness” is established (Leonardo & Porter, 2010, p. 147). From
this perspective, it is necessary to redefine what we mean by feeling
safe in raising critical consciousness. We should rather work to create
a space where students are willing to be challenged to unlearn their
colorblind racism despite its potential discomfort. In critical teaching
and learning, the safe classroom has to be a space where students and
the teacher take a risk and cope with the conflicts together (hooks,
2010).

In an institutional space, we need to extensively examine the realities
of racism if we believe in teaching for diversity (Hughes & Giles,
2010). It is important to remind ourselves that even a well-intended
effort to promote diversity can be co-opted by a white dominance.
Bell’s (1980) theoretical insight on interest convergence, for instance, effectively demonstrates how the institutional efforts for diversity are conflated with the interests of the dominant group. As Hughes and Giles (2010) point out, the diversity work frequently fails to receive institutional approval and support, when that work does not directly benefit all students, which are more often than not, White students in predominantly White institutions. Matias (2016) similarly addresses the issue when promoting diversity in higher education usually focuses on what diverse faculty, staff, and students can contribute to the campus while it overlooks the campus climate that is unwelcoming to diverse faculty, staff, and students. Based on these critical insights, we, as art educators and teacher educators, should take our praxis and its impacts into account beyond our classrooms. One potentially transformative action that can take place at an institutional-level is a concerted effort to shift colorblind culture in our teacher education programs to have more diverse bodies of faculty and art teacher candidates (Desai, 2010).

In the context of writing as a commitment to challenge the status quo, it is important to create a space where identities that are previously considered neutral are challenged by voices and stories that are systematically ignored. As an academic working in the U.S., one convenient example is space like the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*, which calls for the critical and sensitive reflection of our academic and pedagogical endeavors for racial justice. This call for voices attempting to rupture Whiteness, allows myself as a woman of color to have the courage to speak up. This space might also provide tools to carefully observe and reflect on one’s identity, which passes unnoticed due to normativity and privilege. In this space of conflict, we are invited to ask at what and whose expense one’s identity left unmarked and privileged. This critical self-analysis can provide a ground for the collective reflection and action. Many art educators have been sharing critical and reflective works examining racial issues (see Acuff, 2018; Knight, 2006; Kraehe & Acuff, 2013; Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter, 2018; Travis, Kraehe, Hood, & Lewis, 2018). This commitment has laid the groundwork for other art educators to teach, research, and act for transformation. In line with this critical reflexivity, constructing the theoretical journeys from the location of our struggles as the members of marginalized groups should be recognized and encouraged (hooks, 1994; Hughes & Giles, 2010; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015). For me, like many other female teachers of color, these have been instrumental in informing resilience.

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8 Derrick Bell (1980) argues for the notion of interest convergence through the analysis of legal cases during and after the Civil Rights Movement. Interest convergence means that White elites promote racial equity and diversity only if it benefits their individual or group interests (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). It became one of the central tenets of CRT and has been widely employed as an analytic and conceptual tool to highlight the racial injustice in the U.S society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).
and ensuring survival in academia. I believe this transformative space, where we encounter narratives from multiple localities and collectively reflect and grow through our experiences, is crucial to theorize and learn from our pains.

Author note: The data presented in this article is drawn from the author’s doctoral dissertation completed in 2017.

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She colored the grass blue.
As if sun could sweep
under her feet. Lift her
as droplets into air,
into wide sky without frame.
Carry her to better,
to anywhere else but here.

When my niece was in kindergarten, her teacher offered her a coloring worksheet, a picture of an outdoor setting. My niece filled up the illustration with a spread of lines, shading, and color. After some time alone coloring, her teacher noticed her work and walked over to my niece and corrected her coloring choices, telling her that “the grass should be green, and the sky should be blue.” The teacher later marked her coloring wrong on the paper, in red pen, reiterating that the grass and the sky should be true, representational. Her marking communicated that there is no room for creative thinking here.

My niece, who is now a teenager, and at one point wanted to be a fashion designer, makes art less and less these days. She was a motivated and talented visual artist as a young child—but that desire whittled away—in part due to a lack of inspiration and opportunities to nurture her creative interests and efforts. In her school there was little room for girls to take creative intellectual risks, to channel creative ideas, and receive feedback and encouragement towards innovative thinking.

In the classroom, my niece’s identity and creative notions were not reinforced as valuable contributions to the learning environment. She had no room to both think creatively and be a Black girl. To survive school, with its ongoing intimate and subtle academic assaults on her identity and ability, in a predominantly white cultural space, she leaned into a performance of self-loathing, interrogating her gender, race, and socio-cultural sensibilities. She learned to make herself small in order to attempt to make the learning space and her teachers comfortable with her innovative thinking, her body, gesturing, and voice. She pretended not to notice or be emotionally impacted by microaggressions from peers and teachers.
She turned that trauma into silence and bent into her body and mind all the ongoing external micro-assaults. She began to self-censor as to not disrupt the learning environment with her bold ideas, expressive gestures, sensory sensitivities, and creative intuition. Navigating a learning environment that did not see her or her creative abilities and contributions took a toll on her self-esteem. By high school, she emotionally withdrew, and eventually her ability to access a flexible and imaginative mindset nearly disappeared.

Without practice, creative notions, including risk, imagination, and flexibility, can weaken over time. In some of her most critical and impressionable years, something or many things reinforced that creative thinking and art making was not for her and not valuable as a skillset. In tandem, her very identity and way of being in the world were also disregarded and silenced, for seven hours a day, five days a week. That too, took a huge toll on her psyche. Outside of the home, there were few people helping her develop a whole sense of self. Moreover, there were very few people if any, encouraging her to take art classes or making art classes available to her, or at the very least impressing upon her a kind of permission to make, see, think, be.

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She chiseled a draft. Did not yet have the shape of sounds to draw from her mouth. To color a space the way she imagined it. Name it strange and safe. The way circles and needles canopy the ceiling. Cast a crown, a wonder, a glory, in all this alone.

Growing up as a young artist and creative thinker, I could not imagine there were options for me to pursue a career in the arts. What a notion—making a living with art—manipulating with creative thinking and tools. Art as a career or a place for my creative sensibilities to land was not a discussion my mostly white K-12 teachers were having with me. And to be fair, neither were my parents or other adults with influence in my life. Often societal norms and historical precedence reinforce themselves in practice. I cannot speak for other Black girls—but no one made me aware that
making a living with my creativity was an option for me. Even my mother, a staunch supporter of me being exposed to the arts, and way maker for all of my creative endeavors, never explicitly gave me “permission” to consider a career in the arts. Perhaps she too could not imagine such a thing as the arts leading to a job. However, in some ways, my mother’s creative way-making did serve as a kind of quiet “permission.” But my options post-high school were never fully discussed or explicitly encouraged. I had the love and support of the adults around me—which was half the battle—but as a first-generation college student of color, interested in the arts, I had to find the academic, psychological, emotional, field experience, and resourcefulness necessary to make my own way to an arts career. Along the way, mentors and friends were essential to me finding my way.

My parents grew up in a government-mandated segregated America, and the assumption was, as a Black girl, to navigate the social and societal constraints, laws, and barriers, my way forward would be more traditional: a 4-year college degree, followed by a sensible, practical field like healthcare, law, education, or business. It took many years before the adults in my life, especially my parents, could trust my burgeoning and nuanced career in the arts. It took a long time before my well-meaning parents, who made their living in the service industry, utilities and manufacturing, believed art could “pay the bills,” and contribute something valuable and necessary to a household and society. Perhaps, the idea of making and teaching art was a wholly impractical notion to my parents who worked hard their entire lives so that I could grow up with more opportunities than they ever had—and ultimately pursue a post-secondary education. Perhaps my parents assumed art was not a sustainable career option. However, if a career in the arts seemed impractical or implausible, why did my mother take me to so many museums, enroll me in music theory classes, private piano and flute lessons, and creative writing workshops? Did she not think I might work my creative into a job someday? Perhaps my mother thought that art might smooth my blue-collar edges, offer me more range in my performance of Blackness, expand my sphere of thinking, problem solving, being in the world. Imagine growing up with all of that art exposure and training, and no idea what to do with it.

Today, I am an artist educator, and I currently work in an arts space as a museum educator and serve as Associate Director of Education at the Wexner Center for the Arts. For many years I was one of few people of color working in the space and the only programmer of color—which aligns with US national statistics of how few people of color are working in the arts as programmers, educators, curators, and administrators in museums, galleries, and arts spaces. A recent segment on NPR’s Code Switch, cites a 2015 Mellon Foundation report
which found that 84 percent of the staff in US museums are white, with 4 percent black, 6 percent Asian, and zero percent Native Hawaiian or Native American. The article highlighted commentary from UCLA professor and art historian Steven Nelson, who discussed the disparities in the fine arts field and noted that encouraging interest in arts careers must start in high school and college.

I would go further and suggest that the nuanced development of the brain and emotional intelligence in children and adolescents makes K-12 a ripe and necessary environment for exposure to the arts, arts careers, and experimentation with creative thinking in the arts and design. The field I work in, art education, is also aligned with US national diversity averages as it pertains to people of color pursuing or working in arts careers. I know there are people of color working in the field in academia and in art museums—but our presence, perspectives, and prominence in the field of practice and academic literature are sparse.

My role in the museum is serving K-12 schools, building community partnerships and developing and facilitating programming. And in many schools today, access to art education programming, artists-in-residence and artist educators, are limited or nonexistent for many children, especially children of color—so I am mindful that the practice and programming I do is urgent and significant. Over the years, I resolved that part of my critical work as an artist educator was standing still in the art space as a woman of color—persisting, as difficult as it often is, in a historically unlikely context. In a field that is predominantly white, existing as a person of color, being in the line of sight, for the art participant, youth and adults, colleagues, for notions of my younger self, is a critical act of erecting oneself in a space that is narrow. It is an act of enduring. As African American visual artist Mickalene Thomas, suggests in her work, it is radical seeing and being seen. Doing the work of art education in a field that has unclear notions and indecisive objectives on inclusion is a complex and necessary work.

Historically, and in the present, the lingering perception, the field, the cannon, and landscape, suggests that the arts: making, administration, curating, programming, research, has little room for people of color. That is evidenced in every aspect of the business of the arts, from front of house to back of house, in administration roles, in leadership, curatorial practice, and in research and scholarship. In some ways, even as institutions are in critical conversation and are developing equity practices, a glaring and assumptive exclusion still lingers, and blatant disparity and inequity exist in advancement and compensation. Who is responsible for developing a pipeline of diversity, a sustainable practice of training new innovators and creative professionals? What is the role of art education in K-12?
As a practitioner in the field, I am in some ways standing still while doing and questioning the work. I am in the practice of engaging colleagues in intercultural dialogue and programming. I dare the institution and those in and around it, to be bold in its equity and inclusion practices, and have the courage to change and sustain the change needed to provide access and support to those who have historically and who are presently marginalized in the systems and spaces in our society. I am asking hard questions and engaging in critical conversations with those in and beyond the field. I am pushing and being pushed. I am uncomfortable daily. I do not take the value and possibilities of this work for granted. I am critical, curious, and coloring in the space.
White Warnings

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ABSTRACT

How white scholars engage in anti-racist scholarship is a paramount concern for the field of art education. But there is a double bind facing white art education scholars engaged in qualitative research. Reflexivity is a hallmark of trustworthy qualitative research yet being reflexive necessarily entails white people discussing their own entanglements in racism. Ironically, this reflexivity re-centers whiteness and reinvests whiteness by showing that it is capable of seeing itself for what it is. In this paper, I use an example from my own research that illuminates this double bind. To work this double bind, I propose that white art education scholars with anti-racist commitments must run towards white warnings, or cues that their praxis might threaten their social and institutional standing, as well as whiteness itself.

Keywords: whiteness, white warnings, reflexivity, critical race theory, gentrification, creative city, creativity

Introduction

In this paper, I reckon with my efforts to understand how, why, and whether I should tell the story of my complicities in white racism as an art educator and researcher. Through auto-ethnographic research, I discovered how discourses of whiteness created the gentrifying conditions for me as a community-based art educator to become entangled in the displacement of one of my own students and her family from their home. Since this discovery, I have confronted the challenge of how and whether to tell this story without reasserting the power and profitability of whiteness through reflexivity. To break this circularity of white reflexivity, I argue that white art education scholars with anti-racist commitments must seek out scholarship that triggers white warnings, or psychosomatic signals that suggest that their unfolding line of inquiry might threaten white dominance and profitability.

How white scholars engage in anti-racist scholarship is a paramount concern for the field of art education. The call for this special issue has observed that 80 percent of the National Art Education Association (NAEA) membership identify as white. Most, if not all, white people in the field probably assume that they are one of the “good” whites—
meaning that they see themselves as those who are not racist like overt white supremacists (see Sullivan, 2014). But white people are always entangled in the structural power and profitability of whiteness. Nonetheless, white people are turning to engage with anti-racist work more than ever, largely because of the provocation of the Black Lives Matter movement. The timing of this special issue in the *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* reflects, I think, this shift in our field. It is late, but better than never.

While overt white supremacy has played a role in the stubborn absurdity of ongoing racial injustice, the harsher truth is that “good” white people tend to consent to and invest in structural and institutional racism—with and without conscious intention—because it is profitable for them to do so (Lipsitz, 2006). The irony is that white anti-racist work can recapitulate white racism. Indeed, critical race scholars have pointed out numerous problems that occur when “good” white people attempt to engage in anti-racist practices. There is a tendency for “good” white people to reassert their own feelings and interests without creating conditions that might contribute to the flourishing of black and brown life (see Sullivan, 2014). For example, when white people confess their complicities in racism, they are signaling that they should no longer be seen as a person who has been blinded by racist ideologies. But the social positioning of white people as enlightened on the question of race is not the aim of anti-racist work. The flourishing of black and brown life is.

The tendency of “good” white people to center whiteness and reassert its power through anti-racist work hinges upon particular ontological assumptions about whiteness itself. Critical race scholar Cheryl Harris (1993, p. 1714) established that whiteness has been constructed legally in the United States as “property” that white people can possess and pass on intergenerationally. George Yancy (2016) argues that white people make a vital mistake when they presume that this white property is possessed internally. When “good” white people search introspectively for this white self—in an effort to reckon with their own complicit racism—they will not find a white self *in there*. Instead, Yancy (2016) argues, their white self is located “at a great distance,” constituted through transactions with:

- history, white power, white epistemic regimes,
- repetitions of white norms, implicit white alliances, white axiological frames of reference,
- white communities of intelligibility, white modes of being-in-the-world, and so on. (p. xxiii)

The political implication of this ontological orientation to whiteness is that white introspection is doomed to fail as an anti-racist strategy. The atomistic individualism of white introspection can often end
up doing “nonperformative” work (Ahmed, 2006, p. 105). This introspection—this search for the white self in there—can often end up with white people attempting to make white life less shameful and less painful for themselves—rather than changing the conditions that might contribute to the flourishing of black and brown life.

For white art education researchers, the nonperformative nature of reflexivity, what Sara Ahmed has called “stealth narcissism,” poses a problem. Reflexivity through self-exposure and self-awareness is considered a hallmark of trustworthy qualitative research (Davies, 1998). The problem for white art education researchers with anti-racist commitments is how to be reflexive in their research without reinvesting in the white self as property they possess or as an affect that needs to be rendered more tolerable. Indeed, white art education researchers who employ qualitative methods face a double bind (although the stakes of this double bind should not be overstated). If they choose to reveal and analyse their position in the text, then they center whiteness and its affective needs. If they choose not to do so, they forego the opportunity to analyse white entanglements, including their own, in systems of white power. Working with this double bind requires seeing the white self as a discursively constituted political subject. With this ontological assumption, white people can direct their anti-racist efforts towards changing the conditions and repetitions that might “call/hail a different kind of subject” (Yancy, 2016, p. xxiv). By “un-suturing” themselves from the white self that they presume to possess “in there,” they can then turn to try to contribute to a world in which black and brown life can flourish without the white threat of symbolic and material theft and violence. The aim of this paper is to provide a conceptual tool emerging out of my own research experience so that “good” white people might be able to discern the difference between “stealth narcissism” and “un-suturing” whiteness.

Given the double bind outlined above, I am ambivalent about using my own story in this analysis. I risk recapitulating what I am suggesting is an ineffectual, if not counter-productive, narrative trope that re-centers whiteness. And yet, to not tell my story risks passing over an experience that I think provides an illuminating example of how and why white art education researchers can and should shift their ontological assumptions towards whiteness in their research and activism. There is no easy way forward here. For better and for worse, I turn “inwards” and “outwards” to critically analyse my lived experience of whiteness as an art educator and researcher.

The racial politics and aesthetics of the Creative Capital

Returning “home” to conduct ethnographic art education research after years away provided me an unexpected opportunity to find
my white self “at a great distance” (Yancy, 2016, p. xxiv). My home was New Urban Arts, a storefront studio in Providence, Rhode Island. New Urban Arts provides free arts and humanities education programs to high school students during the after-school hours and the summertime. I founded New Urban Arts in 1997 when I was a senior in college at Brown University through a public service fellowship. I led the organisation for a decade before going to graduate school in 2007. During that time, and since I have left, the majority of young people who have participated in New Urban Arts are young people of color from low-income and working-class backgrounds. In 2012, I returned to New Urban Arts through a post-doctoral fellowship at Brown University’s Center for Public Humanities to study how and why young people theorised the significance of the studio in their lives. Using an ethnographic research design, I participated alongside these young people and interviewed current and former youth participants. I became interested in several themes, including how and why young people thought of New Urban Arts as a “home away from home,” a “safe space,” and a “second family.” These terms resonated with what Michelle Fine and her colleagues discovered in their research of youth arts and humanities programmes that operate “beyond the borders of schooling” (see Fine, Weis, Centrie, & Roberts, 2000).

I interviewed former youth participants whom I knew when I was the director of New Urban Arts to investigate these themes further. I interviewed Mariana, who was then in her mid-twenties. Mariana is brown-skinned and identifies as Latinx. When she was a high school participant, she sat by the storefront window near my office, looking outside towards her school while I worked at my desk. She recalled how she remembered Yo La Tengo’s And Then Nothing Turned Itself Inside-Out often playing from my computer speakers. She sometimes sat there with a close friend, chatting with her quietly enough so that I could not hear the topic of their discussion. Sometimes they laughed and other times they cried. These were tender moments near my office, and I remember never wanting to interrupt them. These moments seemed to me to be an example of what students meant by

1 In 2012, nearly 380 students enrolled to participate in New Urban Arts, with an average of 44 students participating in the studio each afternoon. Nearly 60% of youth participants in 2013 identified as female. Using racial categories provided by the local school district, 41% of students identified as Hispanic, 26% multi-racial, 14% African/African-American, 14% White, 4% Asian, and 1% Native American. More than one-quarter of these youth participants identified as LGBTQ+, and more than seven out of ten qualified for free or reduced-price lunch at school. The majority of students (76%) lived in neighbourhoods where the poverty rate for families with children was twice the national rate (33%). This demographic profile is representative of New Urban Arts’ student body throughout its now twenty-year history.
New Urban Arts being a safe space beyond the borders of schooling. When I asked her to explain these tender moments years later, Mariana said that she needed time in the studio to cope with racial and class-based traumas that she experienced in and outside school. The most significant event, she said, was being displaced from her home a few weeks before her high school graduation in 2008. Her family’s rented apartment, which was located less than a mile from the studio, was razed to make way for a parking lot for a luxury loft conversion of a large red-brick industrial building next door. It was the first time that I had heard of this traumatic event in her life. Her story of displacement challenged me to think more deeply about how New Urban Arts, and indeed my white leadership, was entangled in the cultural political economy of Providence.

Mariana’s displacement from her home is an example of the human toll caused by what bell hooks (2000) called “state-orchestrated racialized class warfare” (p. 137)—this time, in the name of white creativity. When Mariana graduated from high school in 2008, several neighborhoods in Providence were gentrifying, including the West End, where her family lived and New Urban Arts is based (see Strongin, 2017). The discourse of creativity was a driving force in reconfiguring the city for the benefit of more affluent and white people (Denmead, 2019b).

When I arrived in Providence in the 1990s as an undergraduate at Brown University, the city was often characterized to me in racially coded terms. The city was “seedy,” “dangerous,” “rough,” and “unsafe.” The message to me was clear. As a white person, I should avoid crossing particular borders in the city to protect my own life from people of color who were constructed as predatory threats to my white existence (see Haymes, 1995). To protect my white self, I was expected to stay on College Hill where Brown University and

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2 Following the Second World War, Providence endured decades of industrial disinvestment. Capital moved factories south and then offshore in search of cheaper labor. The city was vulnerable to offshoring because its manufacturing industries were relatively low-skilled. People of color migrated to the city and were segregated within it through racist real estate practices such as redlining. And white people isolated themselves in particular Providence neighborhoods and fled to the surrounding suburbs. In 1950, the city was more than 95% white. Today, Latinx communities comprise more than forty percent of the overall population (180,000 in the 2010 census), as well as the majority of the public school population. These residents are often first and second-generation immigrants from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Bolivia, and Colombia. In the 2010 census, these ethnic communities were more concentrated in the West End and Elmwood neighborhoods, as well as Upper and Lower South Providence. The African-American population, which comprised 16% of the city’s population in the 2010 census, has tended to concentrate in the Mount Hope and South Providence neighbourhoods.
the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) were located. Moreover, through the symbolic construction of urban space as “seedy” and “dangerous,” the discourse of whiteness actively diminished the economic value of land through the semantic chain it constructed for urban space. Constructing this semantic chain of “brown and black neighborhoods” equals “dangerous and disordered space” equals “cheap and/or vacant land” has been key to what Shannon Sullivan (2014, p. 126) calls “white ontological expansiveness.” This system of meaning legitimizes white occupation of communities of color in the name of progress and development. This white ontological expansiveness is a key aspect of racial capitalism, which assigns value to things, including land, that can be exchanged for wealth through the prism of whiteness.

In the 1990s, the city’s mayor started to transform the image of Providence. The mayor, Vincent “Buddy” Cianci, who was white, rebranded Providence “The Renaissance City.” He created an arts and entertainment district in the downtown area where art could be bought and sold tax-free. Cianci was following the example of other waterfront urban development projects (e.g., Baltimore, Maryland). In addition to this rebranding, he uncovered rivers in the downtown area and built a park that allowed people to stroll up and down the riverfront from new office buildings to a downtown shopping mall. This new park, WaterPlace Park, featured gondolas taxiing couples up and down the river for romantic evenings, as well as outdoor art events that attracted white people who historically would not have congregated in the downtown area at night because it was “seedy.”

Through re-imagining the city as a “Renaissance City,” Providence was becoming racially recoded as white by way of being ethnically re-coded as Italian. Moreover, through constructing a new identity for the city based on the arts, Cianci was privileging the image and identity of students and alumni from RISD, one of the world’s premier art schools. This school is one of the most expensive higher education institutions in the United States because it offers so little financial aid, and historically, the overwhelming majority of graduates from RISD have been white. Through branding the city as the Renaissance City, Cianci started to establish the discursive conditions to suggest that Providence was deemed available for the legitimate inhabitation of white people. Here, we see how one of the early iterations of creative city politics was designed to “lactify” the city. Frantz Fanon (2008) used the term “lactification” to describe the ways in which black people lighten their skin and/or internalise a white colonial consciousness. I am using the term to describe the “whitening” of a city through attracting white people and upholding white cultural norms and practices in the city as superior. “The Renaissance City” died as a viable urban image for Providence when Cianci was forced to resign in 2002.
He was convicted on one count of racketeering conspiracy (his second felony) before he then served a five-year prison term (2002-2007). His vision for Providence, however, as an arts-friendly and lactified city did not die. The next elected mayor of Providence, David Cicilline, who was also white, rebranded Providence from “The Renaissance City” to “The Creative Capital.” Here, Cicilline was “xeroxing” an urban renewal policy discourse that had been adopted in cities throughout the world (Pratt, 2009, p. 7). This “conventional creative city script,” as Gordon Waitt and Chris Gibson (2009, p. 1230) put it, is associated with urban theorist and consultant, Richard Florida. Florida (2003) proposed that entrepreneurial mayors should attract creatives to their cities based on the promise that their cities will provide them access to like-minded talent, a diverse population, and technology-based industries.

The key protagonist in Florida’s script for urban renewal is “the creative.” While the race of “the creative” is almost always unmarked and invisible, it is clear that “the creative” is presumed to be white. After all, operating in an American context, Florida’s thesis appeared to presume that cities lacked creativity at the precise moment that “urban” became interchangeable with “black” and “brown” (and in spite of obvious evidence, such as hip-hop). Florida never proposed that cities embrace the creativity of the communities of color that already inhabited these cities. As a result, Arlene Dávila (2012) has argued that urban progress within the conventional creative city script was always articulated to the very presence of “the highly educated, white, liberal, Brooklynite independent writer” (p. 73). That discursive subject is common in Providence because they are attracted to Brown University, where I went to school, and RISD. Indeed, one of the key aims of creative city politics in Providence was to keep these undergraduates from leaving the city once they graduated based on the expectation that they might kickstart the economic and cultural life of the city.

Indeed, in retrospect, my success as the founder of New Urban Arts depended upon this image being available to me due to my position as someone who was identifiable as white, and who graduated from an elite university known for attracting and producing such white “creatives.” In other words, this urban policy discourse of creativity was summoning people such as myself to be “creative” because our very presence signalled urban progress, thus attracting capital investment. The “white creativity” of Providence was not a characteristic that I naturally possessed; it was a characteristic that was bestowed upon me and made my career as an art educator possible. It also provided an epistemic horizon which established what I thought was possible for my white self (including starting a youth arts and humanities program). Curiously, creativity has become part of this “possessive investment of whiteness” (Lipsitz, 2006). That
is to say, creativity has helped increase the cash value of whiteness by increasing the property values of urban space that white people are more likely to own, and actively investing in the subjectification of white creativity is a strategy for securing those and other profitable returns, whether those returns come in the form of social, cultural, economic, or political capital.

In addition to this performative function of “white creativity” within the particular context of urban renewal, a new aesthetic was being fashioned in Providence to hail these white creatives and profit from their associations. For example, there are numerous red-brick industrial buildings scattered throughout Providence, which are remnants of the city’s industrial past. These buildings are now associated with young white artists who rebel against their own racial and class standing by moving into historically segregated and disinvested urban neighbourhoods—a pattern that was established in New York City in the 1980s (see Deutsche & Ryan, 1984). Through moving into these live-work spaces, these young artists position themselves as adventurers, settlers, and pioneers in “urban jungles” and “urban wastelands.” People of color who lived in the neighborhoods before their arrival provide a backdrop of exotic otherness and titillating danger until these inhabitants are economically and culturally displaced by waves of affluent and/or white people who follow the trend established by those artists. As such, white ontological expansiveness and the racist pattern of non-white commodification are most clearly expressed through the contemporary phenomenon of culture-led urban gentrification (Sullivan, 2014, p. 126).

In Providence, state and city policy capitalized on this historic and racist trend. It pooled together industrial buildings scattered across the city into the first thematic historic district of its kind in the country (see chapter five in Denmead, 2019b). Then, city and state policy made subsidies available to developers, as well as tax credits to wealthy residents. This welfare for the wealthy and the white contributed to the rapid transformation of industrial buildings, some occupied and some vacant, into luxury lofts. The building next to Mariana’s house, which housed factories where her family had once worked, was included in this thematic district.

During our interview, Mariana and I had not yet realized that New Urban Arts, under my leadership and through her cultural labor, was implicated in constructing this new affluent and white urban aesthetic in the name of creativity. But I started to reconstruct a timeline soon after the interview—a timeline that shook me. It became clear to me that both of us were caught up in revitalizing the neighborhood at her expense and at the expense of the residents who lived in the West End.
This timeline begins when Mariana joined New Urban Arts in 2003. That year, she participated in making a mural outside our studio.

![Figure 1: Mural by New Urban Arts. Photograph by Tyler Denmead.](image)

The mural was located less than a mile from her family’s apartment, and it was intended to counter negative and stereotypic representations of people of color who lived in her neighbourhood. Youth participants, including Mariana, walked the streets of the West End, interviewing residents, before representing a selection of them and their interests on the street mural. In 2005, a reporter for *The New York Times*, Bonnie Tsui, wrote an article, titled “In Providence, Faded Area Finds Fresh Appeal,” which was published in the paper’s travel section (2005). The article featured a photograph of the mural. Two young Latinas were walking in front of the mural, smiling. These two young women could have easily been New Urban Arts’ participants walking home after leaving the studio. The article then proceeded to celebrate the transformation of the West End into a hip, creative enclave. It reported that artists were “flocking” to the neighbourhood, “looking for the last affordable loft spaces” (Tsui, 2005). These artists, Tsui (2005) wrote, were “helping to fuel a community-led revitalization effort that has resulted in brilliantly restored buildings and a crop of hip restaurants, cafes, and boutique shops appealing to new young residents.”

Whiteness is unmarked and invisible in this representation of the West End. Understanding the racial dimensions of this representation requires decoding rhetoric such as “artists” and “community.” Community operates here as a euphemism for the people of color who lived in the West End before the artists arrived and transformed their “faded area.” “Faded area” suggests that the “community’s” neighborhood was, in effect, placeless before the artists arrived.
Indeed, the term “artists” provides a rhetorical short-cut for the highly educated, white, liberal, Brookynite independent writers such as me who were being celebrated and summoned through this urban policy discourse of creativity. After all, the “artists” are looking for the last loft spaces affordable to them. The “fadedness” legitimizes their white ontological expansion into the community’s neighborhood in their search for cool loft spaces. Words with positive connotations—“revitalization,” “brilliant restored,” “appealing,” “flocking”—signal that this white ontological expansion should be read as positive, as progress.

At the same time, the “community” is represented as if they are welcoming, if not, leading this transformation of the neighbourhood. The photograph of the mural, and the young, smiling Latinas walking in front of it, are employed in this representation to show that the “community” is indeed welcoming this transformation, if not leading it. The costs of this transformation to them—including displacement—are thus obscured. In the process, the mural reduces this “community” to a flat “spectacle of ethnicity” (Hall, 2017, p. 93), whereby the waves of white people being beckoned to the neighborhood can position themselves as well-meaning and tolerant of racial difference by locating themselves against the backdrop of New Urban Arts’ mural. The mural certainly did not cause Mariana’s displacement from her home a few years after this article appeared. But it helped mobilize a left-leaning white fantasy of “multicultural love” (Sullivan, 2014, p. 153), where interracial co-existence in urban space provides a means for white people to experience “racial redemption and freedom from self-hatred” (p. 158). This narrative nurtures a positive white affect and perpetuates habits of white ownership and ontological expansion without contributing to action that might redress the racist construction of urban geographies. So, the mural was caught up in a possessive investment in white urban creativity, and therefore, so was my leadership and my research as a white art educator.

“Discovering” state-sanctioned racialized class warfare

I have wrestled with this story over the past several years from various vantage points (see, for example, Denmead, 2019a). I have become interested in the racial politics of representation that complicate its telling and my position. When I first reconstructed this timeline—mural, New York Times article, displacement—I was excited by its analytical power as much as I was distraught by its implications for white urban art educators in this era of creative capitalism. Perhaps, I thought, I could make up for my naivety about public murals by using this story to illuminate how the cultural labor of youth arts and humanities programs can be co-opted for the purposes of white ontological expansion through creative-
infused gentrification. In the tradition of praxis, my contribution to consciousness-raising would lead to more informed social action among urban art educators, both white and non-white. With this aim and assumptions, I returned to the field to ask several participants in my research about their views on this story. I expected these participants to be outraged by my discovery and, in turn, motivated to action. Yet, several interactions suggested to me that these assumptions were problematic.

For example, I interviewed Gabriela another former youth participant who cared deeply about gentrification. Gabriela identifies as Afro-Caribbean. She replied to my telling of this critical incident in underwhelming terms.

Her response amounted to, “Duh.”

Gabriela had not known the specifics of this story. But she understood its general contours: Young people of color do something positive for their neighborhood, and their labor is stolen by white people in power who reconfigure the city for their own benefit. That storyline was already familiar to her. So, rather than being impressed or surprised by my “discovery,” and rather than being called to action herself, Gabriela suggested that, in so many words, I go back to the library and read some black scholars who have already written about gentrification. In addition, Gabriela wanted to know why I felt compelled to tell this story now.

“Do you feel guilty?” she asked.

This questioning challenged me to reflect on my desire to tell this story, to position my white self as a person who possesses the discovery of this story.

Through this process of white self-criticality, I became more aware of the ways in which owning and telling this story recapitulates self-serving white tropes. For example, my sense that I had “discovered” this story of displacement was ultimately a form of white self-congratulation. I did my homework, as Gabriela asked me to do, by reading some analyses of gentrification by black scholars. For example, James Baldwin critiqued the discourse of urban renewal in 1960s San Francisco by saying, “urban renewal is just another word for negro removal” (Graham, 1963). And bell hooks (2000) wrote about gentrification as “state-orchestrated racialized class warfare” (p. 137). Both analyses point to the ways in which state power is mobilized to reconfigure urban space for the benefit of whiteness. My shock at my “discovery” (and Gabriela’s proverbial shrug) illustrate how late I was in understanding a phenomenon already well-understood and well-expressed by public intellectuals of color.
Yancy (2016) has referred to this self-congratulatory white performance of discovery as a form of “suturing” (p. xv). Here whites “install forms of closure, forms of protection” from epistemic events that destabilize and disrupt the normative expectations of whiteness (Yancy, 2016, p. xv). Through this sense of discovery, I attempted to keep my own whiteness intact, or “sutured,” by showing that my whiteness is now free from being infected by white ignorance (see Mills, 2007). This example from my research illustrates a risk for white art education scholars. Considering whiteness, per suggested by the call for this special issue, could lead to white people congratulating themselves for their “discoveries” rather than recognizing legacies of scholarship and activism that have been actively ignored to protect and invest in whiteness.

Gabriela also wanted to know if I was compelled to tell this story because I felt guilty. When Audre Lorde, the Black poet, feminist, and civil rights activist, wrote about dealing with white people’s hurt feelings, she said that she could not hide her anger towards racism to spare white people from being hurt, from making them feel guilty (2007, p. 130). Her analysis shows how people of color, often women of color, are taxed by white people who demand that their feelings be centered and managed. This tendency hinges upon the fact that white people have little emotional capacity for dealing with themselves as a white problem (see DiAngelo, 2011). Moreover, white guilt bestows moral authority on people of colour and then demands that they are responsible for “white redemption and deliverance from racism” (Sullivan, 2014, p. 129). White fragility and desire for redemption thus reproduces racist resource extraction by expecting people of color to manage and heal white people’s emotions. Here again, whiteness “sutures” itself by directing white people’s attention to resolving their hurt feelings so that they can position themselves above, beyond, or outside the racial fray (Yancy, 2016). White art educators must be wary of how their consideration of white identities in anti-racist research can recapitulate racist resource extraction and recognize how emotions themselves are resources.

This white self-criticality also opened up new areas of inquiry that had not been suggested to me by research participants. For example, I became skeptical of how telling this story reproduces problematic forms of white spectatorship. I wondered whether this story of displacement represented people of color as passive objects of history, as bearers of pain and suffering.\(^3\) Holding Mariana and her pain at the center of the story becomes a form of white voyeurism, giving white people permission to stare at the suffering of people of color (when white people too often only see people of color as bearers of

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\(^3\) I am borrowing from Susan Sontag’s analysis of voyeurism in photography. See Sontag (1977).
pain and suffering). White voyeurs can feel sympathy through this spectatorship, while, at the same time, letting themselves off the hook by convincing themselves that they personally had nothing to do with the particular event on display. Moreover, those with an inherited private safety net can feel perversely better about their own social position precisely because they do not have to deal with the trauma of displacement. In this sense, the spectatorial relation in this story serves as a “distancing strategy” for white people who see themselves as un-implicated in perpetuating white racism (Applebaum, 2012, p. 10), or even superior for being able to see themselves as un-victimized, un-tainted, and pure. This recognition has produced an ambivalence about centering or de-centering whiteness that should characterize any effort by white art education scholars who engage in anti-racist scholarship.

Telling this story of displacement also risked positioning young people of color and their families as cogs in the Creative Capital machine (in the classical Marxist tradition). This approach would presume that young people in the story suffered from false consciousness and they needed my enlightened viewpoint, my capacity to reconstruct the timeline, to see their oppressive conditions more clearly. Here, I would be representing myself as the absolute and universal subject of the Enlightenment, a subject position which is articulated to whiteness. But, as Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) commented, it is not empowering to presume that young people of color are politically blind and disempowered. Indeed, my research illustrated that I was late in my understanding of white ontological expansion, and I needed assistance from young people, such as Gabriela, to see these circumstances more clearly, more ordinary.

White art education researchers must give credit where credit is due and resist the assumption that their (white) discovery is discovery.

Curiously, this process of white self-criticality, even now, remains circular. It is easy to see how the racial awareness that I have put forward in the preceding paragraphs are also self-serving. I can still be criticized (quite rightly) for continuing to elevate my racial standing by performing a whiteness that is enlightened. This discursive move keeps whiteness intact by suggesting that whiteness is indeed capable of having an “oracle voice,” a voice that is distanced from its ongoing legacy of violence and self-reward (Evans, 2008 quoted in Yancy, 2016, p. xvi). The insidious thing about whiteness is that it can shore up its power and profitability even as it admonishes itself for its undeserving power and profitability. In this sense, whiteness is “non-performative,” as Sara Ahmed (2004) has argued, because it does not do what it says and therefore must never be trusted.

Whiteness is pathetic because it only emerges through acts of symbolic and material theft and violence, and its efforts to legitimate
or overcome that theft and violence have the strong historical tendency to perpetuate more of the same. This recognition that whiteness is incapable of doing what it says, that it is pathetic and must never be trusted, does not necessarily lead to despair. Indeed, I would suggest that white art educators need to understand whiteness as pathetic and untrustworthy to work towards a more productive and critical approach to anti-racist scholarship, even if that orientation risks being enervating.4

“Un-suturing” white creativity

George Yancy (2016) argues that a white person who has presumed or performed their “arrival” as race-conscious limits epistemic introspection of the “constituted white racist self” (p. xiv). Yancy (2016) argues that white people should instead “un-suture” whiteness by finding this “white racist self” at a “great distance” (p. xxii). Here, Yancy draws on Judith Butler and her book Giving an Account of Oneself (2005) to argue that whiteness is a “site of dispossession” (2016, p. xxii), a subjectivity that white people do not and cannot objectively possess as property. As a white person, Yancy argues, “I owe myself to things that are not me (yet paradoxically me), things that make me who I am as a problem…” (2016, p. xxiv). This understanding of whiteness as a site of dispossession means that white people cannot disavow themselves of their white racist selves by overcoming an epistemology of “white ignorance” (Mills, 2007, p. 13). Moreover, white people cannot simply un-identify as white; white people are white as long as there are racial disparities in education, wages, health care, housing, welfare, and the right to live. As long as these disparities persist, white people are the inheritors of this white racist self, a self that both exceeds white people and yet always locates white people.

What white art educators must do then is recognize the “need to change the conditions, and the repetitions that call/hail a different kind of subject—a different me,” a “me” not overly determined by that “white racist self” (Yancy, 2016, p. xxiv). This commitment to change the conditions that call/hail a different kind of subject, a different “me,” requires white people to be “addressed from elsewhere, from a place of alterity.”

4 This viewpoint differs from that of Shannon Sullivan (2014) who argues that anti-racism must stem from “white self-love” rather than white self-loathing (p. 153). She argues that white people must dissent with whiteness out of love, to “seek the ongoing and improved life of that which it criticizes, not its death.” Trying to rescue whiteness from death through white self-love seems to me to be, however, yet another mark of white privilege given the fact that whiteness itself was born out of the social death of black people (Patterson, 1982).
This place of alterity exceeds the conditions that claim and locate whiteness as a profitable resource in racial capitalism. However, those who identify and are identified as white should be very sceptical of the possibility of being “addressed from elsewhere.” Whiteness is always reasserting itself in new ways, “ambushing” its own efforts to disinvest itself of its power and profitability (Yancy, 2016, p. xiii). Indeed, too much is at stake for whiteness to let go so easily. Given the circularity of white reflexivity, being “addressed from elsewhere” can quickly slip into being “addressed from an elsewhere” that reinvests in white power and profitability.

While the pathway forward (rather than around) is not straightforward, there are several lessons for white art educators that spring from this analysis. First, white art educators need to put themselves in a near-constant state of “crisis,” as Yancy (2016, p. xiv) has put it. White art educators must interrogate over and over the complex psychic and socio-ontological ways in which they are embedded in the double binds and perverse circularities of whiteness (rather than seeking “arrival” or “closure”).

Second, white art educators must redirect their scholarship towards more critical interventions into whiteness itself. Yet, how will white art educators know if and when they are addressing themselves from elsewhere as they pursue these lines of critical inquiry? After all, white art educators should be wary of claiming to know when they are being addressed from elsewhere, as that claim simply reproduces the absolutist and universal proclamation of whiteness. However, white art educators can become more attuned to clues that signal when a different kind of subject is being summoned from otherwise conditions. Indeed, white art education researchers should run towards ideas that trigger what I now recognize as white warnings. White warnings suggest that the pursuance of those ideas might threaten their social and institutional standing as white people, as well as whiteness itself. These warnings provide clues. They signal this “un-suturing” of whiteness, that white people may be beginning to inhabit otherwise possibilities, which may be late and may be provisional, but at least are not never.

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