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Katherine Elaine Eyden Roubos
Cultivating Resilience:
Antidotes to White Fragility
In Racial Justice Education

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores what skills, tools and approaches may be helpful antidotes to white fragility in racial justice education. This study is in response to the challenge posed by white fragility, as defined by Robin DiAngelo (2011) in which white people experience such extreme emotions in response to learning about racism in the USA that they become either defensive such that they are unable to engage in a learning experience, or so swept up in guilt or shame that they require substantial emotional tending in order to continue to engage in the educational experience. Robin DiAngelo frames this phenomenon as a lack of stamina rather than a permanent or personality-based inability to engage (2011), thereby inviting inquiry into what tools, skills or approaches may serve to build that stamina, or increase resilience in racially charged learning and conversation.

This qualitative study responds to DiAngelo's framework of stamina building by applying clinical understandings of trauma—in particular, neurophysiological responses to perceived threats—to the manifestations of white fragility. Drawing on theoretical frameworks that bridge the neuropsychology of trauma, patterns of white fragility in racial justice education, and best practices in trauma-informed pedagogy, this study explores what personal and pedagogical tools, skills and approaches may serve as antidotes to patterns of white fragility with the goal of increasing internal resources to sustain engagement in racial justice education.

This qualitative study collected data through interviews with white facilitators of white racial justice education groups/classes and through a workshop/focus-group on white fragility

and its antidotes. The two-part design acknowledges the unique knowledge and information available from both facilitators and participants.

Three high-level findings on antidotes to white fragility emerged from the interview and workshop data. First, facilitators expressed that mindfulness is both a crucial component of personal transformation and a supportive factor in effective personal and group engagement with difficult content. Second, caring relationships were named as the primary factor supporting sustained engagement with racial justice work for both participants and facilitators. Third, the use of embodied and narrative-based pedagogical approaches including storytelling, art, play, theater, and meditation as well as a culture of “radical love” supported the development of the other two factors of mind-body awareness and relationship development.

Further, this study finds preliminary evidence that the phenomenon of white fragility manifests differently based on one’s racial identity development phase. Participant descriptions of fragile and resilient moments align with patterns of neurophysiological responses to and recovery from perceived threats; further analysis and additional research is needed to explore the applicability of trauma-informed pedagogy in racial justice education.

CULTIVATING RESILIENCE: ANTIDOTES TO WHITE FRAGILITY IN
RACIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION

A project based on independent investigation,
in collaboration with the White Noise Collective,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2016

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I have enjoyed every phase of this project from start to finish. The project has been consistently exciting and rewarding thanks to relationships with the incredible group of people supporting me and this project, and our collective sense of the applicability of this work toward our visions of racial justice and collective liberation.

I am deeply grateful to my research advisor Amelia Ortega for her support throughout the course of this work. She modeled how to simultaneously mentor and collaborate; she brainstormed ideas, questioned frameworks, and explored implications with me as a thought-partner, while generously offering expertise by sending relevant articles, helping me name the processes I wanted to use in the academic language needed for the project, and guided me to scope the project at a level that has been both meaningful and manageable. She has helped me know through direct experience that research can be exciting, applicable, accountable, relational, and fun.

This research would not have been possible without the support and collaboration of the White Noise Collective (WNC) leadership and members. They connected me with facilitators to interview, filled our workshop/focus group from their listserv, and collaborated on language, framework and application. This incredible group of women and genderqueer thought/action leaders inspire me with the rigor of their analysis, the depth of care and commitment to each other and the work, and the generosity of their time, skills, and organizational support. Nicole Wires supported me in early conceptualizations of the scope and frame of the work and brought my proposal to WNC to ask for formal support. Bej Alisheva offered feedback on language and frameworks, encouragement to keep going, and shared rides to two-stepping with me to keep the joy flowing. Julia brought stellar insights and real talk from her organizing experiences to both the workshop and the debriefing dinner. Zara Zimbardo generously offered her home to host our workshop/focus group. She and her devoted dog Lulu were delightful, skilled co-facilitators; Zara's calm presence, skills in embodied practices, and collaborative approach made our planning sessions and the workshop itself fun and inspiring. Jay Helfand was always down to discuss the findings and often was more interested in my work than I was! They showed up early to the workshop with snacks and fresh ginger tea to set up the space and manage registrations, and they are a pillar of logistical and life support in ways that make me know I'm not in it alone. I am so moved by your votes of confidence and look forward to future collaborations!

Deep thanks to Deb Schneider, my clinical supervisor this year at the San Francisco Art Institute, for teaching me the art of asking excellent questions as a tool for personal and relational transformation. Her integrated use of Narrative Therapy approaches supported and influenced the ways I asked questions, used language, and conceptualized the framework of white fragility throughout this project.

I am hella grateful to the thesis buddy triumvirate of Robyn Douglass and Manuel Ortiz and I. We put in mad hours at cafes all over the bay together, got each other to focus when we

wouldn't have otherwise, shared power cords, stickers, rides, snacks, jokes, commiserations, inspirations and distractions, and generally helped each other feel like we were actually part of a social work school and a research community that existed beyond our Smith email inboxes.

Gratitude also goes out to the Sparkle Goat House, the collective community I call home. Thank you for all the cooking, cleaning, tending, laughing, roller-skating, adventuring, and general family mayhem. To Emma who did the weekly shopping and house finances, Nicole who kept the kitchen organized holds us to a high bar of cleanliness, Becca who green-thumbs our beautiful garden and manages so many of the mundane logistics of having a home, Wren who brings song into all rooms and adventures with me into the great outdoors, Michael who shares a passion for racial justice and personal accountability, and to Justin who brings home stories of his work in community organizing that keeps the need for change feeling real, urgent and possible.

I hold deep respect and gratitude for East Bay Meditation Center, my teachers Arinna Weisman and Larry Yang, and my extended dharma community for modeling the possibility of engaging with racism and white privilege from a place of embodiment, love, honesty and connection. These practices and communities are the foundation of anything I know from direct experience about the importance of body-based wisdom, the process of regulating affect and emotions, working with shame, fear, anger and dissociation, and building transformative relationships.

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And finally, deep thanks to our ancestors in the movement for racial justice, to our present day leadership including Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi who co-founded the Black Lives Matter movement, and to the next generation of humans who will inherit the fruits and fallout of our efforts.

GUIDING PRINCIPALS OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

Guiding Principals

1. Research builds relationships
2. Research surfaces existing, collective wisdom rather than extracting information to produce new knowledge

The process of academic research can be isolating. Knowing this, and knowing that a culture of isolation is both a byproduct and a perpetuation of white supremacy, I sought to make the process of this research one that built relationships and connections.

The process of academic research requires a negotiation of constructed objectivity, producing power differentials and relational divides between the describer and the described. Rather than approach research as the extraction of information and production of knowledge, I sought to approach research as a way to surface collective wisdom, so that, though the process of naming and sharing our lived experiences we can more clearly see our contributions, our struggles, and our path forward together.

STATEMENT OF POSITIONALITY

As a clinician and as a researcher, I intend to hold a continual awareness of the ways in which my identities and lived experiences inform my perspectives, approaches, words and actions. Acknowledging the implicit power present in the role of clinician and researcher, I believe in the importance of being explicit and transparent about the identities I hold. Briefly: I am white, I grew up in a suburb of Minneapolis, MN in which 97% of my public school's study were also white. I was raised primarily by my mother, who was working and in school for most of my childhood, with support from my dad, step-mom, aunt, and many family friends. I have lived in the San Francisco Bay Area since 2003 and consider it home. I identify as queer and genderqueer, I do not live with any major visible or invisible disabilities, and I hold more formalized education privilege than my parents or grandparents did. Living in the intersection of these many privileges and some oppressions, I am committed to working toward collective liberation in whatever positions I may hold as a clinician, organizer, researcher, and community member.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify what tools, skills, and approaches can be used as antidotes to white fragility in anti-racism education experiences. Universities, graduate programs, and even high schools increasingly view coursework on racism, privilege and oppression as a critical component of higher education (Spanierman, Poteat, Beer, & Armstrong, 2006). In the context of the Black Lives Matter movement, an increasing variety of community based and faith-based organizations are offering educational experiences about race, racism, privilege and oppression. As these programs expand, there is an opportunity to survey best-practice research and experiment with new forms of intervention to increase the effectiveness of racial justice education.

Racism – at all its pervasive levels from intrapersonal to institutional – is held in place in large part by a collective unwillingness on the part of white people to see clearly what is happening and respond accordingly. While the majority of social work research focuses on targeted or oppressed groups, scholars have called for increased examination of dominant groups in order to look at the cause rather than just the effect, and to shift responsibility for systemic racism and social inequality more clearly toward those holding power within those systems (DiAngelo, 2011; Todd, 2011). Despite a professional mandate to undermine systems of oppression, some scholars indicate that Social Work as a discipline has fallen behind in developing a critical examination of whiteness as it relates to the profession (Jeyasingham, 2012).

Teaching white people about systemic oppression and white privilege in a way that engages them in a process of reflection and action is a unique pedagogical challenge. In one study by Sue, Rivera, Capodilupo, Lin, & Torino (2010), researchers used focus groups to identify common themes and feelings in white people's response to talking about racism; the results indicated that predominant feelings included anxiety, helplessness, and feeling misunderstood. Common fears reported in this same study include getting called out as racist or taking responsibility for the impact of white privilege on others. Facilitators, too, must learn how to use their own identities and experiences to respond to student defensiveness and shame (Dunn, Dotson, Ford & Roberts, 2014).

White people's emotionality and sensitivity in race and privilege conversations has predictable patterns and has recently become a place of scholarly interest. In the *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, Whiteness scholar Robin DiAngelo coins the term "white fragility" in reference to these patterns (2011). She defines white fragility as,

"A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation" (p.54).

While these patterns are increasingly identified and explained within academic discourse, more research is needed to assess effective interventions and pedagogical approaches in response to these patterns. This study aims to contribute to knowledge regarding pedagogical approaches that support greater collective and individual resiliency.

This study uses a trauma-informed framework through which to understand white people's response to information about their role in perpetuating racism in the USA. The

application of a trauma-informed framework to the issue of white fragility leverages burgeoning areas of research (neuropsychology and trauma) to better understand and respond skillfully to current challenges in racial justice education. For the purposes of this research, “trauma-informed” means taking into account the neurophysiological responses to perceived threat, rather than relating to the aftermath of surviving a specific traumatic event. “Trauma-informed” interventions are most obviously relevant for populations who have experienced specific, overwhelming or life-threatening events; however, I argue that these interventions may also be useful for people who, consciously or unconsciously, perceive themselves to be threatened in racial justice conversations.

The findings of this qualitative study begin to identify tools, skills and approaches that may serve to increase resilience for white participants in these educational experiences and subsequent racial justice work. The following chapters describe the historical, theoretical and methodological basis for this study and its relationship to the current literature, followed by a summary of the main qualitative findings of the study, a critical discussion of these findings, and suggestions of areas for continued research.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

There are two primary frameworks guiding this study: First, literature demonstrating the social construction of whiteness, models of white identity development, and the state of pedagogical best practices for anti-racism education; Second, current research on the neurophysiological response to perceived threats and emerging theories of how trauma is transmitted biologically and culturally across generations. The relationship between these two sets of information inform how the researcher approaches both the process and the content of this study's inquiry into antidotes to patterns of white fragility. What follows is a more detailed review of the content outlined above.

Whiteness as Social Construct

Racism – at all its pervasive levels from intrapersonal to institutional – is held in place in large part by a collective unwillingness on the part of white people to see clearly what is happening and respond accordingly. While the majority of social work research focuses on targeted or oppressed groups, scholars have called for increased examination of dominant groups in order to shift responsibility for systemic racism and social inequality more clearly toward those holding power within those systems (Todd, 2011).

Whiteness studies emerged in the 1980's, identifying the socially and historically constructed nature of Whiteness as a way to demonstrate the insidious, structural ways privilege is distributed (Decker, 2013; Frankenberg, 1993; Morrison, 1993; Roediger, 1991). Scholars demonstrated the constructed, evolving nature of Whiteness by analyzing the process by which

European immigrants who initially experienced racial stigma and oppression, gradually “became white” by adapting to cultural norms and joining with normative white culture to reinforce the otherness and un-Whiteness of African Americans (Decker, 2013).

One intention of Whiteness studies is to render Whiteness the subject of examination, with the hope that if the characteristics and effects of Whiteness become visible and commonly acknowledged, it will be possible to undermine and uproot this cultural, economic and historical phenomenon (Decker, 2013; Ryden & Marshall, 2013). Whiteness studies attempt to render obvious and explicit the normative, privileged center of racial oppression (Ryden & Marshall, 2013).

Critiques of the rise of Whiteness studies include concerns that a focus on Whiteness will reify and reinforce, rather than deconstruct and undermine (Ryden & Marshall, 2013). Another concern with Whiteness studies is that, by deconstructing Whiteness as a cultural construct rather than a personal identity, it may be used to obviate responsibility of individual white people to actively work to deconstruct systems racial privilege and oppression (Ryden & Marshall, 2013). These critiques are important to keep in mind to prevent Whiteness studies from being coopted as yet another force of white supremacy.

According to some scholars, Social Work as a discipline has fallen behind in developing a critical examination of Whiteness as it relates to the profession (Jeyasingham, 2012). In this work, Whiteness is understood to be a pervasive, driving force of racism. It is my intention to use this study to contribute to social work and community-based organizations’ critical analysis of race and Whiteness and to facilitate effective strategies to undermine the insidious personal and structural violence of Whiteness.

White Identity Development Model

With the development of Whiteness studies came models of white identity development, an effort to make the process of identifying with an invisibilized norm more obvious, explicit, and predictable. These models describe states rather than processes; as such, they do not include interpersonal or pedagogical suggestions for how to move from one stage to another. Since the early 1980s, scholars have proposed and revised several different models of White Identity Development (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1999; Ponterrotto, 1988; Tatum, 1992). While the details vary in significant ways, each model maps a process that moves from total lack of awareness of race (including one's Whiteness), racism, and white privilege through various stages of resistance and reaction to the reality and history of racism, and, ultimately, toward a new identity of Whiteness that is neither defensive nor guilt-ridden, but actively responsive to the impact of racism.

Major differences between models are seen in the varied descriptions of the final stages of white identity development. The most frequently cited model, developed and revised by Helms from 1984-1999, is sometimes read to imply that in the final stage of Autonomy it is possible for white Americans to relinquish or move beyond their white privilege. Subsequent scholars have critiqued this characterization on the basis that white people are intrinsically operating in and benefiting from a system of white privilege that cannot be relinquished at an individual level regardless of the level of personal identity development or awareness of race-based privilege and oppression (Kendall, 2012; Malott, Paone, Schaeffle, Cates & Haizlip, 2015). Recent scholarship focused on white anti-racist activists demonstrated that WRID (White Racial Identity Development) is a complex, non-linear, and never-ending process that cannot possibly attain resolution while concurrently operating within the context of white supremacist culture

(Malott et al., 2015; Miller & Fellows, 2007). In light of the life-long process of white racial identity development, white people's ability to be humble, persistent, and resilient is a crucial factor in their ability to continually work to reduce the sway of internalized privilege/entitlement and to take thoughtful action against the insidious nature of systemic racial oppression.

Learning about the historical, systemic nature of racism and white supremacy in the United States can threaten white people's often unconscious beliefs in their benevolence and goodness, and beliefs that they have earned whatever success and material comforts they have through hard work and merit alone. Questioning the basis for one's identity and the level of one's complicity in an unjust system is threatening – if not to the physical body, then certainly to the ego. In this context of feeling threatened, looking to trauma literature to better understand patterns of mind-body reactivity can clarify the challenges present in anti-racism education and potentially point the way toward new approaches to those challenges.

Evolving Definitions of Trauma

Clinical interest in trauma has evolved substantially over the past several decades. The first trauma-specific diagnosis, PTSD, emerged as a description of the experiences of war veterans returning with undeniable, unexplainable severe symptoms that precluded them from reintegrating into their previous daily life. A review of recent meta studies on trauma interventions indicates that the majority of research on trauma still focuses on those instances originating from war or community violence, non-consensual sexual events, betrayal of trust by caregivers or institutions, or chronic abuse and neglect (Afari et al., 2014; Van Emmerik, Kamphuis, Hulsbosch, & Emmelkamp, 2002).

More recently, research on the neurophysiology of trauma has highlighted the interconnected experience of both mind and body during and after traumatic experiences (J.

Fisher & Ogden 2009; S. Fisher, 2014; Levine, 2010; Ogden, Minton & Pain, 2006; Ogden, Pain, & Fisher, 2006; Rothschild, 2000; Siegel, 2012; Van Der Kolk, 2007; Van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007; Williams & Poijula, 2013). Such research has expanded the scope of what can be considered traumatic by shifting from a focus on discrete external events (i.e. sexual assault, combat violence) to a focus on the subjective experience of trauma as a state of overwhelm, helplessness, and intense hyper or hypo arousal of the mind and body in response to a perceived threat (J. Fisher & Ogden 2009; S. Fisher, 2014; Levine, 2010; Ogden et.al, 2006a; Ogden et al., 2006b; Rothschild, 2000; Siegel, 2012; Van der Kolk, 2007; Van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007; Williams & Poijula, 2013).

Based on this expanded, subjective and psycho-physiological understanding of the experience of trauma, some researchers now conceptualize it a common occurrence (Van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2007), and have categorized three common reactions to perceived threats as “fight, flight or freeze,” with some literature adding “submit” or “appease” to the list as well (Corrigan, Fisher & Nutt, 2011; J. Fisher, 2011). These states are reflected in behaviors that are reactively aggressive, retreating or avoidant, or dissociative or compliant in nature. When an experience pushes someone beyond their personal window of tolerance, they may react by fighting, fleeing, or, if these options are thwarted, by freezing (J. Fisher & Ogden, 2009; Levine, 2010). Figure 1 below describes behaviors that are often associated with these various forms of reactivity. Regardless of which reaction pattern emerges, these states are also linked to experiences of shame, aggression toward the self, blaming and othering, or a sense of confusion about one’s internal experience (Rothschild, 2000). In Figure 1, shame is framed as an aspect underlying all reactions; it may arise as a fear of being excluded from a group for doing

something wrong, directed toward the self for violating one’s own values, or a fear of being viewed as a perpetrator in a way that is at odds with one’s sense of self.

Reaction to perceived threat	Emotional and Behavioral Manifestations	
Fight	Shame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defensiveness • Irritability • Loss of Temper
Flight		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance • Anxiety • Fear
Freeze		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbing • Detachment or dissociation • Giving up easily

Figure 1. Reactions to perceived threats with related emotional and behavioral patterns. Adapted from “Grand Rounds: Treating PTSD in Primary Care, a Collaborative Approach.” Published March 18, 2014, retrieved May 16, 2016 from <http://www.slideshare.net/MCChangaris/pres-grand-rounds-ptsd-and-primary-care>.

Using Trauma Frameworks to Understand White Fragility

When thinking about how to support people who benefit from white privilege in better expressing a resilient response during conversations about racism and privilege, understanding the neurobiological basis of typical reactions to emotional overwhelm or perceived threats can serve as a map to explain what emotional landscape may underlie “white fragility.” One aspect of white privilege is that it allows those with that privilege to move through the world without thinking or talking about race (Miller & Garran, 2007). Often, classroom or community group conversations about race are the first time a white person has been asked to engage in a reflection about race-based privilege and oppression – this is especially true for middle and upper class white people (Feagin, Vera & Imani, 1996). Furthermore, white students are not just learning new information about race, but learning information that directly contradicts information they may have received in their earlier education or cultural communications and brings self-concept

and worldview into question. In contrast, people of color have been developing a racial identity and navigating racial oppression from childhood; surviving this oppression has required the development of inner resources, community support, and an ability to regulate one's emotional responses to racism (Chang, Astin, & Kim, 2004). Most white people have not been forced to engage with race and therefore come to the conversation with skill and experience deficits that compromise their ability to engage with persistence, humility and openness in the process.

Using a neurophysiological map of reactions to perceived threats may point the way toward group and individual interventions that will help white people develop greater inner resources, community support, and increased capacity for emotional regulation in conversations about race. The following section examines these reactions in more detail.

Neurophysiology of Responses/Reactions to Perceived Threats

Research on the neurophysiology of trauma is complex and constantly evolving. This project focuses specifically on systems related to the perception of threats, reactions to those perceived threats, emotional intensity and regulation, and memory. The distinction of a perceived threat is important here; if white people have not built coping skills and are afraid to talk about race, they may *perceive or experience* the conversation to be highly threatening when their physical safety is not, in fact, in danger at all. Thus, the perceived threat is a subjective, psychological one in which one's self-concept and beliefs about the world come into question. Understanding the neurophysiological basis for a perceived or experienced threat of this nature is crucial for thinking about what pedagogical and personal practices may help white people maintain an awareness of their relative physical safety despite emotional duress, and understand that while they may be feeling attacked as an individual, the issue is, in fact, vast and systemic in nature.

Two neurological systems are particularly involved in the experience of strong emotions—the Limbic system’s Hippocampus and Amygdala in particular—as they relate to perceived threats, trauma activation and re-regulation. Each of these sub-systems impacts memory, attention, emotion, or sense of self/other—all-important capacities for effective engagement in conversations on race. If these systems are temporarily overwhelmed due to a perceived threat or are chronically out of balance due to ongoing traumatic circumstances, it can derail our capacity to learn or connect (S. Fisher, 2014, Van Der Kolk, 2014 p. 62). Figure 2 below offers a visual representation of three major parts of the brain, placing the limbic system in the context of other mental functions.

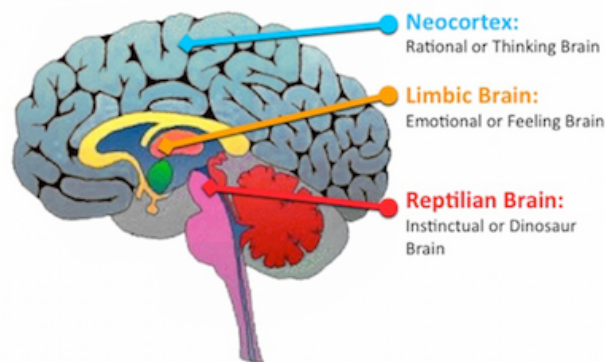


Figure 2. Triune brain: Placing the limbic system and emotional processing in context. Batra, A. (2015). Retrieved May 25, 2016 from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/brain-smart-lockers-iot-architecture-alok-batra>.

The Limbic system is currently understood to “maintain and guide the emotions and behaviors necessary for self-preservation and survival” (S. Fisher, 2014, p. 77). Brain scans of people recalling upsetting experiences also indicate that when the Limbic system is highly activated the area of the brain involved in verbal communication goes “offline” and becomes relatively non-functional, rendering the person unable to express the essence of their internal experience and reducing their ability to resolve misunderstandings through verbal exchanges (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 62). Areas of the brain involved in long-term planning, sequencing

events, and understanding cause and effect are also compromised when the limbic system is activated due to a perceived threat (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 65).

Within the Limbic system, the Hippocampus and the Amygdala are especially relevant to the regulation and processing of emotion and memory. The Amygdala, a pair of small almond-sized nuclei in the temporal lobe, “establishes the emotional valence of incoming stimuli,” and is charged with reacting to threats, both real and perceived (S. Fisher, 2014, p.78.). The Amygdala specializes in creating rage, fear and shame responses, as a survival-reaction to perceived threats. The amygdala, when activated by strong emotion/perceived threat, increases the body’s blood pressure, heart rate, and oxygen intake, among other physical changes, readying the body to defend itself against the threat (Van der Kolk, 2014, p 62).

The amygdala grows when exposed to the “stress hormone” cortisol. This growth creates a feedback-loop called “kindling” in which a perceived threat activates the amygdala resulting in a fight/flight/freeze response, thus increasing the likelihood that situations will be perceived to be threatening and therefore reacted to from a fight/flight/freeze mode in the future. This effect has also been referred to as the “stupid car alarm,” going off based on internal programming, when there is no longer any actual threat in the vicinity (S. Fisher, 2014, p 64). Understanding this function is important because it highlights the neurobiological basis for the rage, fear and shame that arise when people perceive themselves to be threatened, even if it is only a perception. (Yehuda, Halligan & Grossman, 2001).

The Hippocampus affects memory – how it is created, stored, and recalled. The hippocampus creates verbally-infused memory as well as memory that is based on the felt-experience of the event, often without narrative concept or language available to describe or explain it (S. Fisher, 2014, p. 77). High cortisol levels, part of the body’s response to temporary

or chronic stress, can shrink the hippocampus over time, compromising a person's ability to remember past experiences or to verbalize those experiences through language, concept and narrative (S. Fisher, 2014, p. 77). Because the hippocampus is involved in memory, participant's capacity to learn and retain information will be impacted if they are internally experiencing extreme stress without effective tools to reduce their level of activation. Supporting participants to manage their arousal level may support increased content retention.

Implications of Reactivity to Perceived Threat for Anti-Racism Pedagogy

These physiological responses have significant implications for group dynamics and the capacity to take in important information during tense or emotionally charged conversations. If participants are interpreting themselves to be under threat and do not have tools to manage and mitigate that experience, their capacity to absorb information, understand another person's experience, understand the implications of historical and systemic oppression, or see the cause and effect of their personal choices within that context of oppression and privilege will be severely compromised. One conceptualization of the spectrum of reactivity and engagement is framed as a window of tolerance. In this framework, the window of tolerance includes experiences, thoughts, and emotional intensity that are tolerable while continuing to learn and engage with oneself and others. When any of these exceed a level that feels subjectively tolerable, reactive patterns arise in an effort to tolerate the intolerable; these reactive patterns may temporarily compromise one's ability to learn and connect. Figure 3 below presents a visual representation of this framework and specifies some emotional patterns of reactivity.

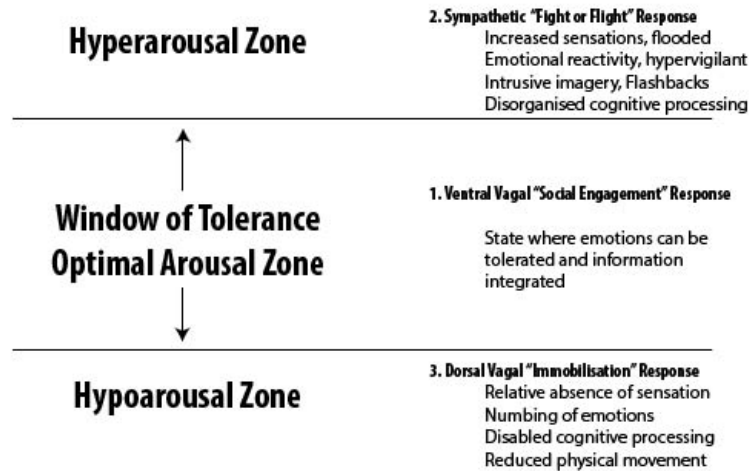


Figure 3. Window of tolerance. Adapted from Ogden, Minton & Pain, 2006, p.27, 32; Corrigan, Fisher & Nutt, 2010, p.2. Retrieved on May 25, 2016 from: <https://worthit2bme.com/fightflightimmobilize/therapeutic-window-of-tolerance/>

The window of tolerance framework is echoed in some models of what supports optimal learning. For example, in the model below, Senninger (2000) does not explicitly frame his Learning Zone Model as a trauma-informed approach to pedagogy, however his model could be viewed as an invitation to expand the space between comfort and panic, akin to descriptions of staying within a “window of tolerance.”



Figure 4. The learning zone model. This image visually represents the idea that there is a comfort zone, a panic zone, and a learning zone which is located between the extremes of comfort and panic. Adapted from Senninger, 2010, p. 26.

Senninger's model defines an optimal learning zone as existing in the space between comfort and panic; this implies that a certain amount of discomfort is productive and even necessary to learning, but too much stress or discomfort may result in sub-optimal learning.

Understanding the common neurophysiological reactions under stress point to the need for interventions that help participants learn to respond rather than react when feeling attacked or threatened while engaging in difficult conversations. According to trauma expert Bessel Van der Kolk, "As long as the mind is defending itself against invisible assaults, our closest bonds are threatened, along with our ability to imagine, plan, play, learn, and pay attention to other people's needs" (Van der Kolk, 2014, p. 92). Knowing what may be happening in the brain under stress, and understanding the implications for our ability to learn, connect, and respond with empathy and care can lay the groundwork for developing more effective interventions.

Working With Reactivity: Making the Body-Mind Connection

According to current trauma research, when talk-therapy alone does not relieve these more instinctual levels of protective reactivity, mindfulness and body-based interventions aimed at calming the limbic system and engaging the frontal lobe's capacity for self-awareness can facilitate healing (Ogden, Pain, & Fisher, 2006, p.276). Traditional talk-therapy presupposes that what we think influences how we feel, whereas more somatically-oriented therapy approaches presuppose that in cases of trauma responses, how our bodies feel influences how we perceive and think about ourselves and our situations (Ogden et al., 2006, p.267). Body and awareness-based interventions are able to communicate with the less-verbal limbic system in ways that conceptual communication cannot (Ogden et al., 2006, p.267).

Historical Racism and Transgenerational Trauma

How does the scientific basis of trauma and trauma responses apply to dynamics of race-based privilege and oppression today? The predominance of PTSD as the primary framework for and definition of trauma serves to limit the scope of trauma to an individual surviving a discrete event, obfuscating the collective transgenerational manifestations of trauma and its ongoing impact on all members of our society (Robben, & Su'arez-Orozco, 2000). However, despite the recent emphasis on PTSD as the most recognized form of trauma, historical race-based oppression is frequently described in terms of trauma in literature and practice.

In the past twenty-five years, a substantial body of literature has developed a framework for understanding transgenerational trauma, based on studies of descendants of holocaust survivors and, more recently, linking the history of racism, slavery and the genocide of indigenous peoples in what is now the USA to the current health, wealth, criminalization and education disparities for descendants of these communities. (Alexander, 2012; Apprey, 1993; Aferiot, 1998; Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, & Altschul, 2011; Czyzewski, 2011; Gee & Ford, 2011; Sotero, 2006). Joy DeGruy Leary's book *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* (2005) offers a clear argument for understanding racism as trauma, and outlines the transgenerational impact of slavery and institutionalized racism on black people and all people of color in the USA today. Other authors leverage a trauma framework to explain how ambiguous or covert forms of racism build on historical race-based trauma in ways that are cumulatively or exponentially traumatic (Alexander et al., 2000; Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2009; Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005; Duran, 2011; Franklin, Boyd-Franklin, & Kelly, 2006;; Sue, 2010; Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009)

These new ways of holding the impact of slavery, genocide and race-based oppression frames these experiences not as a series of actions that live in the past, but rather as acts that continue to live on in the reality of racism and white privilege in the United States today. Deepening the connection between racism and trauma, the transgenerational impacts of racism and genocide in the United States are increasingly framed through an understanding of the neurobiological and somatic effects of trauma. (Duran, 2011; Duran, Duran & Brave Heart, 1998; Leary, 2005; Walters et al., 2011). Not only has this body of work described the process and impact of intergenerational trauma, it has also expanded to define and explore the incredible capacity for survival and resilience in oppressed communities (Brave Heart, 1998; Brokenleg, 2012; Denham, 2008; Ramirez & Hammack, 2014). This study builds on literature that has already directly linked historical race-based oppression, transgenerational trauma, and narratives of resilience from within these communities most directly impacted by the violence of white supremacy.

Where is Whiteness in Transgenerational Trauma?

Given that the social constructs of Whiteness and Blackness are inevitably in reference to one another, cannot exist without the other and that the continuation of white privilege is a primary force in maintaining the momentum of racism in the United States (Altman, 2006; Baldwin, 1963; Morrison, 1993; Roediger, 2010), it is interesting to note the scarcity of literature exploring the transgenerational legacy of Whiteness and its connections to trauma, oppression and resilience.

Theories of collective trauma differ from the exploration of transgenerational or intergenerational trauma in that they include a conceptualization of the transgenerational effects of atrocities on the dominant or perpetrating group. In “Cultures Under Siege,” Robben and

Orozoco describe the impact of mass trauma as “rupturing social bonds, undermining communality, destroying previous sources of support and may even traumatize those members of a community, society or group who were absent when the catastrophe or persecution took place” (2005, pp. 24). Erikson argues that the “social tissue of a community can be damaged in ways similar to the tissues of mind and body” (as cited in Robben & Orozco, 2005, p.24). Similarly, Audergon posits that “whole communities are traumatized and dynamics of trauma involve all of us and affect the course of history. An orientation to understanding trauma is needed that is at once personal, communal and political” (2004, p.16).

What, then, is the dominant group’s transgenerational inheritance of perpetrating race-based slavery and genocide? Audergon highlights the dynamics of silence accompanying atrocity, historical revisionism, and an impatience to ‘move on’ as legacies of a dominant group’s historical perpetrations (2004). It is often the case that those in the next generation of a dominant group feel innocent, untouched or unrelated to the past atrocities because it was not their immediate personal responsibility (Audergon, 2004). Meanwhile, the marginalized groups are still actively and obviously experiencing the impact of the historical trauma, and there is no option for them to forget or move on (Audergon, 2004).

A collective form of trauma response becomes obvious in the schism that develops between the perceived reality of the dominant group and the perceived reality of the marginalized group, and a disconnection between the dominant group’s current identity and their ancestor’s actions of the past. The desire to distance oneself from one’s history and the potential for personal responsibility, or to diminish or avoid discussing the magnitude of the atrocities could be seen as a flight response, an effort to distance oneself from the threat of being implicated as a perpetrator. Dehumanization of oppressed groups and denial or repudiation of the

violence of past or present privilege and oppression could be seen as a form of fight response, protecting a dominant member of the society from the threat of shame, guilt, and responsibility. Potentially the most widespread and insidious, a freeze response can be seen in a collective dissociation, a splitting off of current identity from connection to lived or historical events. A freeze response may also manifest as a collective amnesia, a revising of history, and a general sense of non-responsibility toward the current state of injustice.

White Fragility

What happens in a classroom or group when Whiteness is confronted with the violent impact of white privilege and historical trauma? Models of collective trauma predict that the dominant group will engage many defenses including denial, revising history, and a sense of personal disconnection from past perpetrators (Audergon, 2004). Patterns of collective defensiveness play out in individual and group learning spaces as well; facilitating conversations on racism and white privilege has proved consistently challenging and emotionally volatile. White people's emotionality and sensitivity in race and privilege conversations is predictable and has recently become a place of scholarly interest.

In the *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, Whiteness scholar Robin DiAngelo coined the term "white fragility" in reference to these patterns. She defines white fragility as

“a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (2011, p.54).”

While these patterns are increasingly identified and explained within academic discourse, more research is needed to assess effective interventions and pedagogical approaches in response to these patterns.

DiAngelo's framework of fragility effectively casts the problem as an issue of stamina building—a white-people weakness. DiAngelo argues that it is “critical that all white people build the stamina to sustain conscious and explicit engagement with race (2011, p.67).” Similarly, Kenneth Hardy charges people in positions of privilege take on the work of “developing a thicker skin” (2005). This framework implicitly asks us to consider what strategies and practices would result in greater stamina, or thicker skin, on the part of white people in conversations about race-based privilege and oppression.

I argue that while white people must be held accountable to taking action to end racism, including building stamina or resilience, and developing thicker skin as DiAngelo and Hardy suggest. Conceptualizing this fragility as a byproduct of Whiteness, rather than a characteristic related to white skin or white people in particular, both expands the application of the concept and re-aligns the concept with an understanding of the social-historical construction of race. This study examines the fragility inherent in Whiteness and asks how to promote greater resilience, stamina, or thicker skin in an effort to undermine it.

State of Anti-Racism Education for White People

Teaching white people about systemic oppression and white privilege in a way that engages them in a process of reflection and action is a unique pedagogical challenge. Teachers must learn how to use their own identities and experiences to respond to student defensiveness and shame (Dunn, Dotson, Ford & Roberts, 2014). In one study by Sue, Rivera, Capodilupo, Lin, & Torino (2010), researchers used focus groups to identify common themes and feelings in white

people's response to talking about racism; the results indicated that predominant feelings included anxiety, helplessness, and feeling misunderstood. Common fears reported in this same study include getting called out as racist or taking responsibility for the impact of white privilege on others. These observations are highly aligned with neurobiological descriptions of reactions to a perceived threat, with DiAngelo's descriptions of white fragility, and echo Hardy's call for white people to have thicker skin in conversations about race.

While some research is starting to develop an understanding of white people's emotional patterns in learning about race and racism, more research is needed to assess effective interventions and pedagogical approaches that include emotional regulation skills and interpersonal support (Chang et al., 2004; DiAngelo, 2011; Feagin et al., 1996; Quaye, 2014). There are many approaches – boot camp, intergroup dialogue, spiritually or community based groups dedicated to increasing white people's understanding of racism and their engagement with anti-racism work. However, studies evaluating the effectiveness of these various efforts are scarce. The majority of research focuses on classroom settings in academic institutions; community based education is less well documented. The limited research available on existing best-practice models including Intergroup contact, morally-based didactic education, and stereotype retraining all demonstrate only modest short term impacts (Lillis & Hayes, 2007), indicating that there is room for new tools in our pedagogical approach.

The terms multicultural, diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency are the groundwork for some social work (and other helping professions') education on race and racism (Lee & Greene, 1999). Shine (2011) critiques this framework, insisting that content on structural and historical racism should comprise the foundation of the curriculum, including an analysis of white privilege. Literature on the nature of anti-racism education in social work schools

identified gaps in instructor training and skill proficiency, challenges in pedagogy, and a lack of concrete pedagogical approaches to working with resistance in the classroom.

Social work faculty members have discovered that discussing racism in the classroom is a challenge (Mildred & Zuniga, 2004; Millstein, 1997), describing the process as akin to “walking through a minefield” (Schmitz, Stakeman & Sisneros, 2001, p. 613). Lack of training and experience on the part of instructors is one component of this challenge (Mildred & Zuniga, 2004); Torres and Jones (1997) have observed, "few educators have had sufficient education in the most basic components of multicultural social work" (p. 177). White instructors, in particular, lack the experience, training and personal work necessary to feel comfortable holding conversations on race and racism in a classroom (Shine, 2011). Miller, Hyde and Ruth (2004), Shine (2011), and Mildred and Zuniga (2004) suggest that instructors need to have done their own “personal work” before supporting classroom conversations on racial identity, racism and white privilege. Despite the well-documented nature of the issue, relatively few authors have addressed specific pedagogical interventions or approaches to better work with the challenging nature of conversations on race and racism.

Pedagogical best practices from current literature include “starting where the students are,” building self-awareness, and providing factual content (Mildred & Zuniga, 2004; Van Soest, 1994; Schmitz et al., 2001). One widely agreed upon best practice in anti-racism education for white people is a culture of “no shame no blame,” in which a student’s ignorance or resistance can be met with unconditional care while still sticking to the facts of racial injustice (Shine, 2011, Mildred & Zuniga, 2004; Garcia & Van Soest, 1997). Another area of agreement in the literature is the importance of mixing didactic with experiential learning, and bringing attention to both the content and process of group learning (Nagda et al., 1999; Schmitz et al.,

2001). Other authors suggest including approaches that reach “beyond the cognitive level normally offered in university teaching” and that attend to the intense emotions that arise in the course of addressing issues of power and privilege (Mildred & Zuniga, 2004 p. 362; Garcia & Van Soest, 1997; Torres & Jones, 1997). Another commonly referenced approach is to encourage students to get comfortable being uncomfortable (Shine, 2011). These contributions establish meaningful directional guidance; however, more research is needed to clarify actual processes by which any individual learns to be more comfortable with discomfort. This study attempts to contribute more nuanced and specific concepts and processes to fill this gap in the literature.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify what tools, skills, and approaches can be used as antidotes to white fragility in anti-racism education experiences. This study is in response to the challenge posed by white fragility, as defined by Robin DiAngelo (2011) in which white people experience such extreme emotions in response to learning about racism in the USA that they become either defensive such that they are unable to engage in a learning experience or so swept up in guilt or shame that they require substantial emotional tending in order to continue to engage in the educational experience.

For the purposes of this study, resilience is demonstrated by:

1. Staying with the conversation.
2. Giving and receiving information and feedback from facilitators and peers without becoming highly defensive, reactive, or shut down/dissociated for long periods of time.
3. Managing the guilt and shame that can arise in learning about the history and current reality of race and racism in the United States.

This study uses a trauma-informed framework through which to understand white people's reactivity around racially charged content, conversations and relationships. This qualitative study collected data from interviews with facilitators of anti-racism groups and a community based workshop/focus group with the intent to identify what tools, skills and approaches may serve to increase resilience in these educational experiences and subsequent racial justice work.

The study methodology is comprised of two parts:

1. Interviews with white facilitators of white anti-racism educational courses or community groups.
2. Workshop/Focus group debrief with participants on the topic of study, offered in collaboration with the White Noise Collective (WNC), a grassroots community organization in Oakland.

This two-part design acknowledges the unique knowledge and information available from both facilitators and participants.

Guiding Principles

Feminist scholarship has largely accepted the inevitability of power inequalities in the research process and shifted to considering how that power “influences knowledge production and construction processes” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). In seeking to hold carefully the power dynamic between the researcher and the researched, the process of developing the language, questions, and methodology of this project was based on three guiding principles:

1. The process of research can build relationships that last beyond the scope of the project.
2. Research can surface existing wisdom rather than extract information to create ‘new’ knowledge.

3. Engaging relevant community in the development of language, questions and format enhances the quality of the work, increases collective learning and builds relationship.

Interviews were structured to begin by asking about an interviewee's preferred language around their work, and the meaning of that language in their own words; this returns some power to the interviewee to choose the language and definitions used to discuss their work and experiences. Relatedly, interviewees were asked to share some part of their personal story of coming into racial justice work before discussing their experiences as leaders, professionals or experts. Placing personal narrative before professional reflections in the interview flow prioritizes relationship building, acknowledges the personal as political, and allows the interviewee to position their contributions within a larger context. All interviews covered a structured set of questions, however, improvisation was expected as follow up questions emerged differently from the context of each interview. Holmgren refers to this conversational responsiveness as "cofielding," based on the work of feminist scholars who hold qualitative interviews as an act of mutual performance in which narratives are co-constructed...and information is transformed into shared experience (Holmgren, 2011; DeVault & Gross, 2007; Fontana & Frey, 2005; Olesen, 2005; Denzin, 2001).

Sample

Because the research focuses on white people's experiences in anti-racism education situations, participants of the workshop must self-identify as white. Because the collaborating community organization, White Noise Collective, targets white women and genderqueer people with an interest in discussing Whiteness and racial justice, focus group participants were female or genderqueer identified, participated voluntarily, and had some previous experience discussing white privilege and racial oppression.

Facilitators must have at least two years of experience in holding conversations about racial justice for white people. Their experience must include sustained courses with a minimum of 9 contact hours with students over a minimum of four weeks, or an equivalent experience. This requirement is intended to focus on highlighting the skills and tools required for ongoing engagement vs. a one-time workshop. Facilitators all have experience teaching in community-based settings.

All participants are located in the Bay Area. This study is intended to be purposive rather than generalizable, focusing on the knowledge and perspective of a particular geographic area known for its historical anti-racism work increases the relevance of findings to Bay Area communities. This approach was practically feasible given that the region's wealth of racial justice activists and educators.

Participants represent a variety of ages, genders, spiritual traditions, class and education backgrounds and sexual orientations. By design, all participants identify as white. Facilitators ranged in age from 26 to 65, three identified as men, three as women, and two identified as gay or queer. Facilitator's years of experience in leading white anti-racism groups ranged from two years to more than fifteen years of experience; The sixteen focus group participants ranged in age from 24 to 68, about half identified as queer, one-third identified as genderqueer, and about half identified as Jewish.

Recruitment

Participants for the facilitator interviews were recruited in three stages based on a snowball approach. According to Atkinson & Flint (2001), snowball sampling may be used as a formal methodology to access hard-to-reach populations and is especially useful for interview-based qualitative, explorative, descriptive studies. This study fits all of these criteria, and is not

intended to be generalizable or representative of a broader demographic. White facilitators of anti-racism/racial justice education occupy a more privileged demographic than the traditionally defined highly marginalized “hard-to-reach” population. However, snowball sampling is considered an effective method to reach both highly marginalized groups and communities with specialized social networks, as both rely on social capital and network memberships (formal or informal) to attain sufficient trust and investment to encourage participation (Noy, 2008; Moyser & Wagstaffe, 1987).

I employed a snowball sampling methodology by reaching out through social media platforms and contacts in my personal/professional networks with the request to forward the interview invitation to relevant contacts in their communities. Due to the highly-politicized culture of racial justice education and organizing in the San Francisco Bay Area, my target demographic for interviews was, indeed, a specialized social network; leveraging social networks to reach this group is a logical approach based on current uses of snowball sampling in the literature (Spreen, 1992; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997; Noy, 2008; Moyser & Wagstaffe, 1987; Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Participants for the workshop and focus group were recruited through the email list of WNC, the content of which was also forwarded to personal contacts and potential participants through word of mouth or online communication platforms.

There are a few areas of potential limitations due to this sampling approach. Participants are more likely to come from a middle class and college-educated background, based both on the researcher’s background and on the main demographic of White Noise Collective; it is likely that the social networks are similar to those doing the outreach. Due to this researcher’s personal networks, and the high level of political engagement from queer-identified people, the LGBTQ community is likely to be strongly represented in the participant interviews and workshop

participants. The workshop/focus group offered through the White Noise Collective was comprised of women, trans and genderqueer identified people who have already engaged with issues of white privilege and racial oppression to some extent, as that is the target demographic of the organization.

Research Design and Data Collection

The study methodology was comprised of two parts: Interviews with white facilitators of racial justice education spaces for white people, and a workshop/focus group comprised of white people who have some experience engaging in conversations about racism and privilege. Details on process, consent, and audio recording are outlined here.

Collaborative development. In line with the principles of relationship building, surfacing existing community wisdom, and active community engagement, the development of the language and frameworks for this researched evolved over time through a process of community feedback. Incorporating feedback from the White Noise Collective resulted in numerous protocol change requests to the HSR board. One reflected a change in conceptual framework and related changes in language from “White Resilience” to “Antidotes to White Fragility”; the reason for this change was feedback from White Noise Collective members who heard from community members that the first term, “white resilience” could be misconstrued as advocating for the maintenance of white supremacy. This shift required a change in language throughout the proposal and outreach materials. Snowball sampling was also added as an intended method based on repeated requests from contacts to forward the interview request form to particular individuals they felt would be a good fit for the project. A later protocol change request reflected minor changes to the facilitator interview protocol based on feedback from White Noise Collective members, and a final protocol change request included new content for

the workshop/focus group outreach and curriculum. All protocol change requests and approvals are included in the appendix. Engaging the collective wisdom, thoughtfulness and support of a community-based organization resulted in a process that was more responsive to the broader, constantly changing context of the work.

Interviews. Interviewees received the Participant Informed Consent document (Appendix C) and were asked to complete a short online questionnaire prior to the interview that provided basic demographic information and ensured that their facilitation experience met the study requirements. Participants consented to audio recording of the interview and indicated their confidentiality preferences by signing a consent form in person at the time of the interview. Participants were sent a soft copy of these forms after indicating their interest in participating.

All interactions across facilitator interviews were consistent with the one variable being the exact location of the in-person meeting to accommodate interviewee schedule and location constraints. Interactions were comprised of a set interview guide with follow up questions to explore information brought by the individual interviewee. Interviews lasted about one hour per participant.

Workshop and focus group. The workshop spanned four hours on a Saturday afternoon at hosted at the home of a White Noise Collective organizer. The whole workshop and focus group was audio recorded. All participants were informed in advance of the workshop that they would be participating in a research study and completed a pre-workshop survey. Participants consented to audio recording of the workshop and indicated their confidentiality preferences by signing a consent form in person at the time of the workshop (Appendix D).

The format of the workshop was influenced by the principles of Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR, while most frequently used with communities who do not have access to

the privilege and language of traditional academic discourse, is relevant and useful in this community as a tool that builds connection and thereby resists a hallmark characteristic of white supremacy, which is a culture of isolation. In line with the principals of Participatory Action Research (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006; Kindon, S. L., Pain, R., & Kesby, M., 2007), I was one of the co-facilitators of the experiential learning & focus group workshop for WNC. My participation as a co-facilitator of the workshop and the focus group debrief was explicitly acknowledged in the research methodology and considerations made for how this dual-role may affect participant responses.

Also in line with the principles of PAR, the workshop served multiple purposes. Participants received information from facilitator interviews and participated in reading, discussion, and activities based on information gathered through interviews with facilitators. However, participants were also asked to bring their personal experiences of white fragility and resilience to the conversation, thereby participating in teaching each other and contributing to the collective wisdom in the room while simultaneously creating data for the research project objectives. Finally, in a focus group reflecting on their experience of the workshop, participants were actively engaged in a relational process while simultaneously generating information of use for a broader community.

Audio files and transcriptions of the interviews were saved in a secure manner and coded to protect confidentiality. I transcribed the interviews personally. When the information is no longer needed, and after a period of three years, the recording and transcription will be destroyed as required by the Federal guidelines for Human Subject Research. Signed consent forms will be maintained in a secure location separate from the other materials, and will similarly be destroyed after three years, or if the participant withdraws from the study.

Analysis

Data analysis was approached by looking for themes and trends within the content of the interviews and focus group and seeking to understand the data in relationship to current literature. Interview content was understood in context of the particular identity and work of the individual interviewee and an effort was made to understand how their positionality may affect the data collected. Given that there is not extensive literature answering the questions posed in this project, analysis emphasized coding major themes, identifying unique suggestions, and relating this back to the guiding theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

This study asks what can be done personally and pedagogically to reduce the impact of white fragility, increasing white people's resilience in racial justice education and in collective movement work toward ending white supremacy. Three high-level findings on antidotes to white fragility emerged from the interview and workshop data. First, facilitators expressed that mindfulness is both a crucial component of personal transformation and a supportive factor in effective personal and group engagement with difficult content. Second, relationships were named as the primary factor supporting sustained engagement with racial justice work for both participants and facilitators. Third, the use of embodied and narrative-based pedagogical approaches including storytelling, art, play, theater, and meditation as well as a culture of "radical love" supported the development of the first two factors of mind-body awareness and relationship development.

Another finding emerged unexpectedly from patterns of participant responses: Participants reflected that the triggers for their emotional reactivity changed over time as their racial identity (Hardiman, 1982; Helms, 1995; Helms & Cook, 1999; Ponterotto, 1988; Tatum, 1992) evolved. All but one facilitator noted their greatest current reactivity arose with other white people who were expressing racist comments, beliefs or behaviors. Descriptions of this transformation in what triggers emotional reactivity indicate that different tools for resilience are needed throughout a white person's racial identity development trajectory.

Mindfulness

All facilitators interviewed stated that self-awareness, body awareness, and mindfulness in particular as a tool for that mind-body awareness, were crucial for them personally in cultivating more resilient responses and reworking patterns of white fragility. This skillset was named as a useful support for facilitators and participants alike, as a personal practice and as a pedagogical intervention. Facilitators tended to emphasize a body-mind connection in their descriptions of mindfulness. One described awareness of a ‘triggered’ moment as,

“F6: It’s something like a body scan, it’s usually a physical – it’s not just intellectual, it’s not an idea or meaning I made up in my head, it’s some physical sign, heart beating fast, uncomfortable gut feeling, a tension, alert, alarm kind of feeling.”

Another emphasized using awareness of ‘triggered’ moments as a tool for developing greater tolerance for discomfort and creating the groundwork for future behavior change, “F1 These days I’m practicing knowing: This is the sensation of the trigger, notice it, really notice it because next time you come into this sensation you can really make a different choice.”

Facilitators indicated that mindfulness, meditation, and somatic-awareness practices supported them to respond rather than react in moments of tension or stress. One stated,

“F6: I think breath is such a powerful thing. Part of it is like, having the awareness to notice, oh, I’m reacting really strongly to what they just said – having that internal clarity to filter, feel and notice, is the first step. And then have the wherewithal to like take a second and breathe, then consciously choose how to react.”

Another stated, “I know it’s gotten easier as I’ve had a regular meditation practice, a greater sense of spaciousness, more space, between the moment someone says something that is “wrong” and my need to jump in and correct it, for example.”

In addition to the personal benefits of mindfulness as a tool for greater mind-body awareness, facilitators indicated that integrating mindfulness practices into the culture of the group can support participants to manage their own emotional landscapes and respond to each other with less reactivity. One facilitator reflected that self-awareness supported learning because,

“F1: one of the basic things is recognizing panic. There’s the comfort zone the stretch zone and the panic zone, the idea in good learning is that you can recognize when you are getting close to the panic zone and slow yourself down and move yourself back....I find as soon as I can recognize that that’s what’s going on, I can reel myself back in and apologize.”

This observation indicates the utility of mindfulness in supporting self-awareness, emotional regulation, and reworking old patterns of reactivity within a learning environment.

One facilitator stated that mindfulness practice helped participants tolerate their discomfort and turn toward their experience more fully, “F4: you have to feel it, you have to become friends with the discomfort. And when you can get to the point where a very uncomfortable feeling becomes interesting to you...you’re ready to start doing more work.” In this framing, mindfulness and the ability to tolerate strong affect are key building blocks to full engagement in racial justice education.

Facilitators named a few specific pedagogical practices that seemed to encourage the cultivation of mind-body awareness in their groups. One facilitator uses noticing group process

as a tool, “F2: my technique is to call things as they're happening and to name them. Because I think a part of white supremacy is to act like nothing is happening.” Another facilitator integrates the use of feeling charts or lists of feeling words, encouraging participants to practice getting specific about their feelings as they arise. He explains,

“F4: we may not even recognize that as shame or guilt, so once you can name it, then that can be really helpful, it's like ‘oh this is shame that's happening right now’...it's amazing how powerful it can be to be specific, name what's going on.”

These pedagogical suggestions indicate that mind-body awareness can be taught and encouraged when modeled by facilitators, and by incorporating these skills into the fabric of the group norms and pedagogical practices.

Relationship and Community

All facilitators named having a community of people (both white and people of color) working toward racial justice as the main external factor supporting their sustained engagement in racial justice work. As one facilitator stated, “F6: The first thing and potentially the most important is relationships” and another agrees, “F3: community support – like –whew – having a net, having people you can call and be like “this shit is hard”...is the only thing that's enabled me to stick with it.” Some facilitators described intentionally developing community, while others felt they fell into it,

“F5: I found myself surrounded with awesome collaborators who are as passionate about this as I am, who were like “yes, we totally need to do this” and we keep coming back and keep coming back, holding each other and encouraging each other and loving each other.”

Another facilitator emphasized relationship as a primary vector of learning,

“It's like just cuz you read Paul Kivel's book or whatever, you could have a fuckin' library of every racial justice white thing there is to read, if you're not processing it with somebody, I think it's a world of healing that's being passed up.”

Just as relationships were cited as the primary support for facilitators' sustained engagement, so too was the importance of trust and relationship building within a learning group. Facilitators spoke to the importance of creating a “safe enough” relational container for group work that allowed people to be honest without fearing ostracization from the group. Facilitators named modeling vulnerability, self-awareness and a sense of fierce love or unconditional positive regard for all participants as conducive to community building and the creation of a safe enough container. Facilitators also described developing trust through playfulness, theater, movement, sound, creativity, and storytelling to engage with direct experience rather than intellectualization; the efficacy of these approaches were affirmed in responses from workshop participants.

Facilitators acknowledged that the qualities listed above often elicited concerns from fellow racial justice advocates that they were “being too gentle” or pandering to a demand for comfort from white people. On the topic of safety and comfort, one facilitator stated,

“F1: I can't manage to create perfect safety for myself and my most intimate connections, I'm not going to promise that – it's about feeling safe enough...Jesus, Buddha, they recognized that suffering is basic to our human condition – it's more like we need to have the resilience for dealing with reality – that's what we want to learn, not how to be safe.”

Another facilitator stated that,

“F3: Resilience to me is intertwined with trust. For me [the work] is in the context of relationships... the more I get to know people, the more really honest we can be, the more trust I have and the more resilient I can feel... I’ve noticed that folks are willing to go into uncomfortable arenas if they trust the space and the people around them to take them not beyond what is harmful to them, but take them to a place of learning, growth, of connection.”

Caring relationships seemed to allow for the process of rupture and repair; establishing a groundwork of trust and mutual positive regard allowed for greater vulnerability, and less fear of making relationship-ending mistakes. Relationships are also a source of inspiration and encouragement, and a way to process material relationally rather than just internally or intellectually.

Pedagogical Approaches to Promote Resilience

While facilitators agreed on the importance of trust and relationship for group learning, they expressed varying levels of confidence in their ability to foster these qualities, and each relied on different tools to establish the culture of a group. Key components mentioned by facilitators included: Using story, theater, art, play and embodied activities; cultivating an unconditional positive regard toward and among participants; and integrating mindfulness into the fabric of the group through frequent “noticing” practices, group meditation, incorporating feeling charts, and other mindfulness-related tools (as noted in the Mindfulness section above).

Pedagogy: Storytelling, theater and play. Several facilitators rely on the use of storytelling, theater or improvisation games. One facilitation team included an improvisation teacher who leads warm-up activities in each class, which “F5: builds connection quickly and

keeps it fun.” On the utility of storytelling, one facilitator commented that, “F1 as people tell their stories they just get clearer and clearer, they start to see what Whiteness is in themselves.” Another facilitator gave an example of using a theater of the oppressed approach to practice responding to racist comments,

“I think this thing we’re talking about is a set of skills that can be learned practiced and developed and it’s best done collectively– and it just takes practice. In a forum theater process, you can see person A try something, see if it works out, and then we can be like “oh how did that work?” and person B tried something different – and by the end of the day you’ve felt into a number of things, so you’re more prepared.”

These practices seem to support an environment in which everyone is equally part of the problem and the response to the problem, rather than singling people out as especially advanced or behind. Another advantage of embodied approaches is that participants experience content directly, and create their own knowledge and insights based on that personal experience. This adds richness, depth and personal meaning to learning through readings and lectures, which are based on information coming in from the outside, rather than being generated from one’s own direct experience.

Pedagogy: Fierce love and unconditional positive regard. Facilitators spoke to the importance of bringing qualities of compassion, fierce love, or unconditional positive regard into the group culture; facilitators, they said, must model vulnerability, fierce love, and compassion for the group. Rather than caving to demands for comfort, one facilitator framed this culture of compassion as movement building, “F3: Writing people off will never get us to a movement around justice. It won’t.”

One facilitator reflected,

“F2: it really requires this deeply, deeply loving generous gentle process of real deep acceptance and real deep just tenderness and love. So that's it's like, you're ok, this is ok. This shit that you're like afraid to even look at, it's ok. The way shame gets interrupted and released is by speaking on the story, giving room to uncover that stuff—and that happens in a loving environment. I don't think it happens in a highly intellectualized, brainiack factoid thing.”

Facilitators' emphasis on the importance of care and embodiment as factors enabling transformation highlights a potential gap between those guidelines and the norms of academic or professional diversity, inclusion, or anti-racism education.

Another facilitator highlighted the importance of bridge-building, rather than othering,

“F3: If I feel like I can build a bridge – not a bridge of higher-than-thou, I-understand-this-better-than-you, but a we are in this struggle together bridge – the pain that is coming out of your mouth, the harmful impact that's happening right now, I'm there too...if I can see myself in someone who is enacting harm, if I can make that bridge in a way that's centered around love – for me that's what works.”

This quality of staying with one's own discomfort without turning away from the pain of another is particularly salient to the ethics, skills and values of any helping profession. Implications for professional preparation programs are explored in the discussion chapter.

One facilitator spoke to the importance of leadership modeling these qualities of fierce love and unconditional positive regard, and the deleterious impact of being unable to do so.

“F6: The pushes are all the terrible shit we learn, all the baggage and reactions to it – that’s going to push you out, I don’t wanna deal with this I’m out, you know – but a process or organization...that’s really truly grounded in fierce love is a pretty strong pull to counterbalance that kind of push...[It] has to include some version of “there’s space for me here”...And this gets to spiritual place because when I’m really grounded in my power and it’s way bigger than me, I feel like I can hold whatever bigotry and whatever. When I am small, ego and petty, then I get reactive and my reaction pushes other people out, I become the push out because I can’t hold the space that they need to work their stuff out.”

The importance given to leadership (teacher, facilitator, or other position of power within an organization or group) based in fierce love raises questions about the kinds of training and support such leadership may need in order to embody this quality in conversations on racism and white privilege, and whether or not those trainings and supports are widely available.

White Fragility and Racial Identity Development

An additional finding emerged from a pattern of responses rather than in direct response to a question or hypothesis; this finding indicates that white fragility manifests differently depending on one’s phase of white identity development. One mode, which is most closely aligned with the form of white fragility that Robin DiAngelo popularized, is demonstrated in becoming defensive, angry, shamed, dissociated or checking out when confronted with any amount of information about the current and historical reality of racism in the U.S. However, among people who are ideologically aligned with an understanding of the social construction of Whiteness and the history and current reality of racial oppression in the U.S., a different mode or manifestation of reactivity was observed. The way these white people expressed their patterns of

reactivity – anger, frustration defensiveness, shame, anxiety, dissociation – was very similar to the other mode of white fragility, but the triggers were different.

People operating from the second mode were more likely to react to other white people saying racist things or enacting white fragility in conversations. Some voiced feeling more tension working in multiracial groups due to self-consciousness about their embodiment of Whiteness, while others felt greater anxiety about their continued enactments of white privilege being at odds with their new identity as an anti-racist white person. Facilitators reflected that reactivity to getting “called out” was especially strong when the person identified strongly as anti-racist. Thus, patterns of reactivity and fear are present throughout the phases of white identity development, but seem to manifest differently depending on the identity, beliefs and goals of the person. Unique patterns of behavior and identity development may benefit from tailored tools and facilitation skills to adequately address, intervene or support differentially.

Focus Group Findings

A total of 16 participants attended the 4-hour workshop/focus group offered in collaboration with the White Noise Collective. The workshop was hosted by a member of the collective in their home. Snacks were provided and some participants brought food to share as well.

Themes raised through facilitator interviews of the importance of mind-body awareness, building relationships, and the evolving nature of white fragility were also prominent findings from the focus group. Workshop content included psychoeducation on the neurophysiological basis for fight-flight-freeze responses to perceived threats, and how these response patterns may be relevant to understanding personal and collective patterns of white fragility. Workshop pedagogy was informed by best practices cited in facilitator interviews; approaches included

activities that invite somatic-awareness, practice emotional grounding skills, and engage in theater of the oppressed-inspired explorations of content.

Participants expressed that the mindfulness, grounding practices, and embodied exploration tools helped them “get more real.” After one such activity, a participant noticed, “I realized I hide and get defensive at once, and I’m trying to protect myself but it actually feels awfully uncomfortable and doesn’t really protect me from anything and I don’t want to keep doing it.” Another participant noticed,

“In those fragile moments, I’m realizing because we had to be so aware in our bodies for this, I’m really just terrified my ugly bits are going to get exposed, but you know, we all have ugly bits...it’s okay to let them hang out and be seen sometimes, I think it’s the only way I can actually work with what’s happening.”

Another participant stated, “I’ve never been able to be so consistently present while talking about race.” The White Noise Collective leadership has integrated some of these pedagogical approaches into subsequent workshop offerings with positive feedback.

Given facilitators’ emphasis on the importance of relationship building as an antidote to white fragility, participant interactions at the workshop were also observed as data. All but one participant arrived on time, all stayed for the duration of the workshop, and many requested a follow-up workshop to continue to engage with the content offered. During the two 10-15 minute breaks, participants did not engage with their phones or other technologies, but rather gathered in the kitchen and on the porch to continue conversations with each other. During one break, an older participant commented to me,

“I usually feel out of place or judged in these spaces because I don’t use the right language, but I feel great here, it’s like, since we’re more in the body than the

brain, and we're acknowledging we all have this fragility experience it feels like we're in it together rather than competing with each other."

Following the workshop, several participants decided to share a meal together, other participants offered rides, and at least half of the participants stayed for more than a half an hour chatting or helping with clean up. These observations and participant comments indicate that the container created in the workshop was conducive to relationship building.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This qualitative study explored what skills, tools and approaches may be helpful antidotes to white fragility in racial justice education. The methodology is grounded in principles of utilization-focused evaluation, uses feminist theory's prioritization of personal narrative as a basis for collective knowledge, and incorporates elements of participatory action research by encouraging workshop/focus group participants to generate and share knowledge with each other as part of the data collection process. This two-part approach included perspectives from both facilitators and participants.

The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study bridge the neuropsychology of trauma, patterns of white fragility in racial justice education, and best practices in trauma-informed pedagogy. The visual below builds on content discussed in Chapter 2 to demonstrate the conceptual alignment between patterns of reactivity to perceived threats and patterns of reactivity on the part of white people in racial justice education spaces.

Reaction to perceived threat	Emotional and Behavioral Manifestations		Patterns of White Fragility in Racial Justice Education
Fight	Shame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defensiveness • Irritability • Loss of Temper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argumentation • Discrediting • Anger
Flight		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance • Anxiety • Fear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing the subject to other oppressions (gender, class) • Leaving or not coming back
Freeze		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numbing • Detachment or dissociation • Giving up easily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silence or lack of engagement • Spacing out • Multi-tasking

Figure 5. Patterns of emotional reactivity align with patterns of white fragility. Content drawn from DiAngelo (2011) and Figure 1.

The main findings of this study are summarized below, followed by a discussion of connections to trauma-informed work, implications for social work and community based racial justice education, limitations, and recommendations for future research. Three high-level findings on antidotes to white fragility emerged from the interview and workshop data. First, facilitators expressed that mindfulness is both a crucial component of personal transformation and a supportive factor in effective personal and group engagement with difficult content. Second, relationships were named as the primary factor supporting sustained engagement with racial justice work for both participants and facilitators. Third, the use of embodied and narrative-based pedagogical approaches including storytelling, art, play, theater, and meditation as well as a culture of “radical love” supported the development of the first two factors of mind-body awareness and relationship development. The relationship between these three findings is visually represented in the following figure:

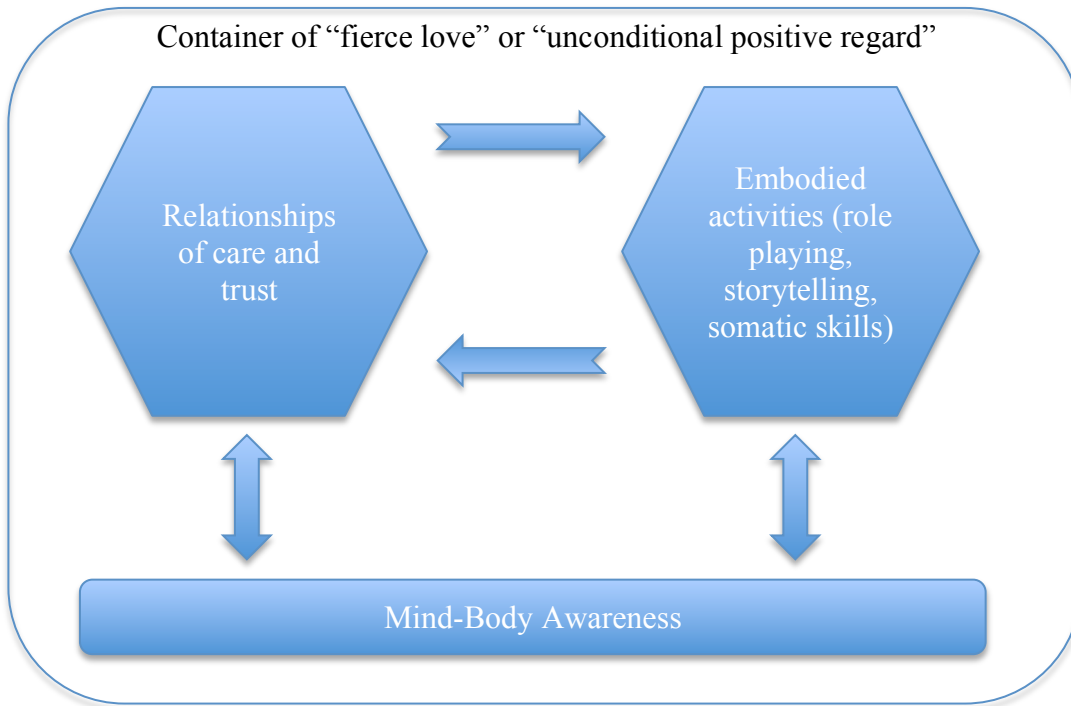


Figure 6. Antidotes to white fragility in racial justice education. This figure represents the relationships between the three major findings of this study.

In the image above, mind-body awareness forms the foundation from which embodied activities and relationships of care and trust can form, and the experience of these activities and relationships can also serve to heighten mind-body awareness. Experiential activities build relationship, and trusting relationships support the vulnerability and honesty that come with embodied explorations of racism and privilege.

The three antidotes to white fragility in the visual above are congruent with primary elements of trauma-informed care. Each organization, clinician, and academic may contribute a slightly different perspective on the most important tenants of trauma-informed care. However, three pillars of trauma informed care presented in the image below (Bath, 2008) seem to be common denominators found in much of the related literature (Najavits, 2007; Elliott, Bjelajac, FalLOT, Markoff, & Reed, 2005).

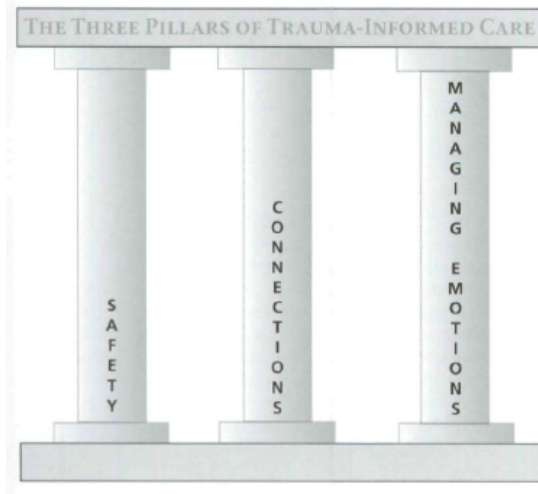


Figure 7. Three Pillars of Trauma-Informed Care. This figure visually represents three primary components of trauma-informed mental health care. (Bath, 2008).

Of these three components, this study’s finding of the importance of mind-body awareness aligns most closely with the trauma-informed pillar of managing emotions. Mind-body awareness is a key component of differentiating between past and present experiences, supports emotional regulation, and increases capacity to respond thoughtfully rather than react habitually (Ogden et al., 2006). This study’s finding of the importance of caring, trust-based relationships aligns most closely with the trauma-informed pillar of connections. Facilitators named supportive peer relationships as the primary factor in maintaining engagement in and inspiration for racial justice work. Participants named fears of being excluded, judged, or ostracized for saying the wrong thing; these fears can preclude people from working through their most vulnerable emotions. Developing relationships that can tolerate difference and challenge with care may allow for deeper levels of awareness to emerge.

Reflecting on work that traces the transgenerational impact of trauma (Leary, 2005; Audergon, 2004), one symptom of such trauma is a compromised sense of connection to oneself and to others. What if the transgenerational inheritance of perpetuating white supremacy is being

manifested, in part, through a culture of individualism and isolation? In this light, the work of building relationships of care and trust in the context of racial justice organizing is an act of subversion, resistance and resilience.

This study's finding of the importance of embodied activities and play in a culture of "fierce love" aligns most closely with the trauma-informed pillar of safety. Facilitators clearly refuted the utility and possibility of creating a safe or comfortable environment for students, and even suggested that the demand for safety or comfort was connected to white fragility as an inability to tolerate the discomfort inherent in addressing the realities of racism. However, facilitators and participants alike emphasized the importance of creating a group culture of "unconditional positive regard" or "fierce love," and the use of embodied activities to develop and reaffirm that culture of care. The pillar of safety could perhaps be re-defined as feeling safe enough to, as one participant put it, "let our ugly bits hang out and be seen." Feeling safe enough, then, may be the ground from which participants can access, share and build awareness of thoughts, feelings and experiences that they may normally avoid or repress.

On an adjacent topic, the findings indicated that white fragility may change in its expression over time, manifesting in a predictable progression as a white person moves through a process of racial identity development. This finding is in line with the framework presented in this paper in which white fragility is a reaction to a subjective, psychological perceived threat. Thus, as one's self-identification changes, the circumstances and beliefs that may threaten that identity also change. One implication of this finding is that more research would be useful to bring more nuance and specificity to the patterns of white fragility over time. Unique patterns of behavior and identity development may benefit from tailored tools and facilitation skills to adequately address, intervene or support differentially. More research is needed in this area.

Application and Recommendations

Our best practices need a paradigm shift. We need to include the body, relationship building, and playfulness in this work. We need to include art and soul and ancestors and community and food and laughter and crying. Ending white supremacy requires that we as white people let go our obsession with being good, perfect, right, safe, or comfortable, and let go our delusions that we have what we have solely thanks to hard work and talent. It requires that we reconnect with our full humanity to heal our patterns of oppression perpetuation.

In terms of pedagogical approaches to increasing sustained engagement of white people in racial justice education, this study suggests incorporating the following:

- Invite small group work in a way that builds relationship, with white accountability groups that meet within or outside of the formal group time for sharing, reflection and study together.
- Incorporate mind-body awareness practices into the educational space.
- Incorporate play and embodied activities that invite somatic-awareness, practice. emotional grounding skills, and engage in role-plays and other relational, embodied explorations of content.
- Provide psychoeducation about patterns of reactivity, emotional windows of tolerance, and offer tools for students to manage emotional responses.

Limitations of the Study

The participants of this study represent a range of ages, gender identities, sexual orientations and religious affiliations. However, the majority of participants have completed an undergraduate degree, live in the San Francisco Bay Area, and none are economically part of the poverty class. Participants voluntarily selected to be part of this study, demonstrating a baseline

of willingness and familiarity in discussing race based oppression and white supremacy. Findings, therefore, will be most reliably applicable to similar demographics. Future research should include perspectives from teens and young adults, geographies beyond the bay area, participants in non-urban environments, people who are participating due to work or other social obligations rather than voluntary interest, and participants with less formal education and/or non-middle-class backgrounds. This study was limited to data from white facilitators and participants; future research could focus on the knowledge and wisdom held by facilitators of color who have developed expertise in working with white people in racial justice education.

Implications for Racial Justice Education in Social Work and Community Based Contexts

Connections between this study's findings and trauma-informed interventions indicate that trauma-informed practices may prove a useful source of guidance for best practices in racial justice pedagogy. Trauma-informed practices have been the subject of burgeoning research; pulling best practices from this body of knowledge for application to racial justice education in academic and community based settings will require a paradigm shift in dominant cultural norms of pedagogy. Facilitators' emphasis on the importance of mind-body awareness, cultures of care and embodied activities as factors enabling transformation highlights a potential gap between these suggestions and the norms of academic or professional diversity, inclusion, or anti-racism education as documented in the literature review (Lee & Greene, 1999; Miller, Hyde & Ruth, 2004, Mildred & Zuniga, 2004; Shine, 2011; Torres & Jones, 1997).

While Shine (2011) proposes a content-first approach to education on race and racism, the findings of this study indicate that encouraging mind-body awareness (including emotional awareness and tools for emotional regulation) from the very first class may create a more conducive learning container. Shine (2011) indicates that the reason for a content-first, feelings-

later approach is due to the level of fear and defensiveness students may demonstrate (2011). In light of the findings of this study, it may be possible to engage student's fear and defensiveness through embodied activities without being detrimental to the learning space, which would also indicate a potential shift in best-practice approaches to anti-racism pedagogy.

Facilitator's expression of the need for a culture of "fierce love" or "unconditional positive regard" in this study aligns with previous literature's support for a classroom culture of "no shame, no blame" and unconditional care (Miller, Hyde & Ruth, 2004, Mildred & Zuniga, 2004; Shine, 2011).

Shine (2011) encourages facilitators to use journaling, film, small group discussion and guest speakers as approaches to increasing engagement from students. This study builds on these approaches to add embodied activities, mind-body awareness practices, the possibility of white caucus groups as additional relational support, and role-play or other collective, embodied investigation of white supremacy in various scenarios.

As the pedagogical approaches identified here are more clearly defined and applied, facilitators of racial justice education groups may benefit from trainings on these approaches and findings. In addition to training in pedagogical approaches, facilitators may benefit from a space in which to work through personal patterns of reactivity and develop more community with fellow racial justice education leaders. Offering additional support to community leaders and faculty/instructors will respond to the documented challenges of facilitating education on power, privilege and racism, and the need for instructors with more training and experience specific to these issues (Lee & Greene, 1999; Miller, Hyde & Ruth, 2004, Mildred & Zuniga, 2004; Shine, 2011; Torres & Jones, 1997; Schmitz et. al, 2001).

Areas for Future Research

There may be a need for additional training for facilitators of racial justice groups and courses. Findings from this study indicate the importance of a facilitator's ability to role model present moment mind-body awareness, appropriate vulnerability/humility, and unconditional positive regard. This quality of staying with one's own discomfort without turning away from the pain of another is particularly salient to the ethics, skills and values of any helping profession. Future research could assess the extent to which these elements are part of existing facilitator trainings, identify gaps, and suggest areas in need of additional training.

A related area for future research is the connection between personal trauma history, experience of oppression in other identities and patterns of reactivity in racial justice education spaces. Facilitators spoke to ways that their own experiences of oppression through marginalized identities (sexual orientation, socioeconomic class background, gender, gender presentation, ability, etc.) facilitated their engagement in solidarity efforts. At the same time, facilitators mentioned that their places of oppression create wounds that need healing too, and these needs for healing can, at times, conflict with the ways these facilitators have are being asked to show solidarity. A full exploration of this tension is beyond the scope of this project, but worthy of future attention.

Facilitators in this study spoke to the need to do personal healing in order to be able to hold space for others; clinicians may follow a similar edict. Questions arise, therefore, both about how facilitators and clinicians can be encouraged and supported to do the personal healing work needed to be able to hold space for others, and also about how participants can be guided to heal their personal traumas without derailing a class or group dedicated to racial justice education and action.

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Appendix A: Facilitator Interview Recruitment Letter

Do you facilitate white anti-racism educational groups? We want to interview YOU about antidotes to white fragility in racial justice work. Click [HERE](#) to indicate your interest by Feb 1st 2016.

This is a research study for the completion of a Masters in Social Work degree from Smith School for Social Work. This research study is being conducted in collaboration with the White Noise Collective based in Oakland, CA. Learn more about WNC at: www.conspireforchange.org

In this work I ask: How do we rework patterns of white fragility in ourselves and in our communities to undermine white supremacy and increase efforts toward racial justice? What promotes resilience rather than fragility while learning about racism and engaging in racial justice efforts?

This study intends to identify actions white people and facilitators of white anti-racism spaces can take to change patterns of white fragility and increase resilience, emphasizing the responsibility of white people to actively work to cultivate the inner strength to sustain engagement with racial justice education and activism.

White Fragility is defined by Robin DiAngelo as *“A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (2011).”*

For the purposes of this study, resilience would be demonstrated by:

- a. Staying with the conversation
- b. Giving and receiving information and feedback from facilitators and peers without becoming highly defensive, reactive, or shut down/dissociated for long periods of time
- c. Managing the guilt and shame that can arise in learning about the history and current reality of race and racism in the USA

I am scheduling interviews with a small sample of facilitators in the SF Bay Area; if you are interested in participating in this exciting project please complete the brief pre-interview questionnaire at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/322XWKP> . If you would like more information please reply to: CultivateWhiteResilience@gmail.com or text/call at: _____.

Thank you for your interest! Please forward to relevant individuals, groups, or listserves!

In solidarity,
Katherine Roubos

NOTE: The data collected from this study will be used to complete a Master’s in Social Work (MSW) Thesis through Smith College School for Social Work. The results of the study may also be used in publications and presentations; your contributions would remain confidential unless you specifically specify otherwise.

Appendix B: Workshop/Focus Group Recruitment Letter

Workshop: Antidotes to White Fragility

When: Saturday March 19th, 1-5pm

Where: Oakland, location given upon **RSVP**

No cost - donations to support Black Seed will be accepted.

What skills, tools and approaches are useful in encouraging white people to sustain balanced engagement with anti-racism/racial justice education and work? How can we cultivate resilience (as opposed to white fragility) in ourselves, our communities, and our movements?

Contribute to our collective learning! A participant-member of the WNC is completing a research study for the completion of a Master's in Social Work degree from Smith College in collaboration with the WNC; your participation in this workshop contributes to that research study. Participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality form and will remain anonymous.

Participants are asked to bring their personal experiences of white fragility and resilience to the workshop to share in collective and personal reflection. We will explore the role of the body, community, spirituality, intellectual knowledge and other themes that you bring from your experience. We will cover basic information about how the brain and body responds to *perceived* threats, and explore how to work with this toward greater resilience in moments of challenge.

White Fragility is defined by Robin DiAngelo as “A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (2011).”

For the purposes of this study, resilience would be demonstrated by:

- a. Staying with the conversation
- b. Giving and receiving information and feedback from facilitators and peers without becoming highly defensive, reactive, or shut down/dissociated for long periods of time
- c. Managing the guilt and shame that can arise in learning about the history and current reality of race and racism in the USA

Please forward to relevant individuals, groups, or listserves!

RSVP here

NOTE: The data collected from this study will be used to complete a Master's in Social Work (MSW) Thesis through Smith College School for Social Work. The results of the study may also be used in publications and presentations; your contributions would remain confidential unless you specifically specify otherwise. This study protocol has been reviewed and approved by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee (HSRC).

Appendix C: Facilitator Consent Form



2015-2016

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA

.....
Title of Study: Cultivating Resilience: Antidotes to White Fragility in Racial Justice Education

Investigator(s): Katherine Roubos, School for Social Work Masters Candidate xxx-xxx-xxxx
.....

Introduction

- In this work I ask: How do we rework patterns of white fragility in ourselves and in our communities to undermine white supremacy and increase efforts toward racial justice? What promotes resilience rather than fragility while learning about racism and engaging in racial justice efforts?
- This study intends to identify actions white people and facilitators of white anti-racism spaces can take to change patterns of white fragility and increase resilience, emphasizing the responsibility of white people to actively work to cultivate the inner strength to sustain engagement with racial justice education and activism.
- You were selected as a possible participant because you have facilitated anti-racism education experiences for white people through community based organizations.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to identify current and potential ways to cultivate resilience and reduce white fragility in anti-racism education experiences.
 - For the purposes of this study White Fragility is defined based on Whiteness scholar Robin DiAngelo's work as: *"a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (2011)."*

For the purposes of this research, resilience would be demonstrated by:

- Staying with the conversation
 - Giving and receiving information and feedback from facilitators and peers without becoming highly defensive, reactive, or shut down/dissociated for long periods of time
 - Managing the guilt and shame that can arise in learning about the history and current reality of race and racism in the USA
-
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my Master's in Social Work degree.
 - Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences, community forums and community-based organizations.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
 - Complete a very brief demographic pre-interview questionnaire
 - Participate in an interview of 45min-1 hour with the researcher of this study
- This interview will be audio recorded for accuracy in transcription and quotations. Interview may be conducted over Skype if there are geographical barriers to meeting in person.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There are no foreseeable or expected risks associated with participating in this study. However, I will be asking you about your personal experiences of White identity development and your experiences facilitating other White people in this process. These memories may evoke strong emotions of a positive and/or challenging nature. You can always elect not to answer any question I ask.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- The benefits of participation include having an opportunity to explore, reflect on and express what you have learned through your personal work and work as a facilitator of White anti-racism education spaces.
- The intended benefits to social work and society include:
 - Clarifying pedagogical techniques and individual practices that increase resilience and change patterns of white fragility within white anti-racism education spaces, and, by extension, racial justice organizing. This may ultimately improve the effectiveness of white anti-racism education in community and academic settings.
 - Identifying actions white people and facilitators of white anti-racism spaces can take to change patterns of white fragility and increase resilience, emphasizing the responsibility of white people to actively work to cultivate the inner strength to sustain engagement with racial justice education and activism.

Confidentiality:

Please read the options below and select your preferred confidentiality option by marking an X. You can also submit your confidentiality preference through the brief online pre-interview questionnaire noted in the email.

___ OPTION 1

- Your participation will be kept confidential; the researcher will be the only person who will know about your participation. You will not be cited by name or organization in any materials produced from this study. All identifying information and quotes will be disguised.

___ OPTION 2 (Please initial for either name or organization, or both)

- Your participation will not be kept confidential, your ideas and contributions may be attributed to you ___ by name (along with other facilitators who shared similar experiences) or ___ by identifiable descriptions of your affiliated organization in materials produced from this study.

Regardless of which option you select above, I will take the following precautions to protect your information and interview contributions:

- The interview will take place either at the researcher's office, a quiet local coffee shop, online via Skype, or at another public place of your choice that provides privacy. In addition, the records of this study will be kept strictly confidential.
- Your audio recording and transcript of our conversation will be kept in a password-protected file. I will be the only one who will have access to the audio recording, with the exception of a potential transcriber, who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Recordings will be destroyed after the mandated three years. They will be permanently deleted from the recording device.

- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments/gift

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely up to the point noted below. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by March 1, 2016. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis and final report.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Katherine Roubos at CultivateWhiteResilience@gmail.com or by telephone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. Please retain a copy for your records.
- You may also indicate your consent to participate, your confidentiality preference and your consent to audio record the interview for accuracy through the online pre-interview questionnaire included in the email.

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

.....

1. I agree to be audio recorded for this interview:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Workshop/Focus Group Consent Form



**Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Smith College School for Social Work • Northampton, MA**

.....
Title of Study: Cultivating Resilience: Antidotes to White Fragility in Racial Justice Education

Investigator(s): Katherine Roubos, School for Social Work Masters Candidate * xxx-xxx-xxxx
.....

Introduction

- In this work we ask: How do we rework patterns of white fragility in ourselves and in our communities to undermine white supremacy and increase efforts toward racial justice? What promotes resilience rather than fragility while learning about racism and engaging in racial justice efforts?
- This study intends to identify actions white people and facilitators of white anti-racism spaces can take to change patterns of white fragility and increase resilience, emphasizing the responsibility of white people to actively work to cultivate the inner strength to sustain engagement with racial justice education and activism.
- You are invited to participate through the White Noise Collective in the form of a one-time workshop.
- We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Purpose of Study

- The purpose of the study is to identify current and potential ways to reduce White fragility and cultivate resilience in anti-racism education experiences for White-identified people.
 - For the purposes of this study White fragility is defined based on Whiteness scholar Robin DiAngelo’s work as: *“a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (2011).”*
 - For the purposes of this research, Resilience would be demonstrated by:
 - Staying with the conversation
 - Giving and receiving information and feedback from facilitators and peers without becoming highly defensive, reactive, or shut down/dissociated for long periods of time
 - Managing the guilt and shame that can arise in learning about the history and current reality of race and racism in the USA
- This study is being conducted as a research requirement for my Master’s in Social Work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences, community forums and community-based organizations.

Description of the Study Procedures

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:
 - Participate in workshop of 4 hours with facilitators that include the researcher of this study.
- This workshop will be audio recorded for accuracy in transcription and quotations.

Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study

- There are no foreseeable or expected risks associated with participating in this study. However, we will be sharing our personal experiences of White identity development and moments of fragility and resilience. These memories may evoke strong emotions of a positive and/or challenging nature. You can always elect not to participate in a segment of the workshop if you so choose.

Benefits of Being in the Study

- The benefits of participation include having an opportunity to explore, reflect on and express what you have learned through your personal experiences and the experiences of community members.
- The intended benefits to social work and society include:
 - Clarifying pedagogical techniques and individual practices for white-identified people that overcome White Fragility and cultivate resilience within anti-racism education spaces, and, by extension, white anti-racism organizing. This may ultimately improve the effectiveness of anti-racism education, particularly for white-identified people.
 - Supporting a shift in cultural conversations from the problem of White Fragility to actions White people and facilitators of White anti-racism spaces can take to increase resilience, which emphasizes the responsibility of White people to actively work to cultivate the inner strength to sustain engagement with anti-racism education and activism.

Confidentiality:

- Your participation will be kept confidential; the researcher and fellow workshop participants will be the only people who will know about your participation by name. You will not be cited by name or organization in any materials produced from this study. Identifying information and quotes will be disguised.

To ensure confidentiality I will take the following precautions to protect your information and contributions:

- Any audio recording or transcript of our conversation will be kept in a password-protected file. I will be the only one who will have access to the audio recording, with the exception of a potential transcriber, who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Recordings will be destroyed after the mandated three years. They will be permanently deleted from the recording device.
- All research materials including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. All electronically stored data will be password protected during the storage period. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you.

Payments/gift

- You will not receive any financial payment for your participation.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researchers of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question as well as

to withdraw completely up to the point noted above. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of information collected for this study that I can attribute directly to you. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone by March 15, 2016. After that date, your information will be part of the thesis and final report.

Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Katherine Roubos at CultivateWhiteResilience@gmail.com or by telephone at xxx-xxx-xxxx. If you would like a summary of the study results, one will be sent to you once the study is completed. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

Consent

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep.

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

.....

I agree to be audio recorded during this workshop:

Name of Participant (print): _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Researcher(s): _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Facilitator Interview Guide

1. There are a lot of terms being used right now – anti-racism, racial justice, etc – What term would you prefer I use in discussing your work? What does that term mean for you?
2. What brought you to this work?
3. How would you describe the scope of your current work, specifically as it pertains to facilitating white racial justice/anti-racism education and organizing?
4. In your current work, what do you do (or would you do) when you get triggered in conversations about race or anti-racism work? (by triggered I mean getting defensive, feeling intense shame, anxiety, or experiencing dissociation).
5. How has your response to your own ‘triggered’ moments changed over time?
6. What influenced those changes?
7. What do you think an “ideal” response to a triggered moment would be? What, if anything, prevents you from enacting that ideal response? What, if anything, enables you to enact a more ideal response?
8. You’ve been committed to anti-racism/racial justice work for some time now. What has enabled you to stick with it?
 - a. If not mentioned, ask about internal/personal qualities that have enabled you to stay in anti-racism education and advocacy work
 - b. If not mentioned, ask about external/community support that has enabled you to stay in anti-racism education and advocacy work

Pedagogy

1. For the purposes of this research, White Fragility is defined using Robin DiAngelo’s description:

“A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.”
2. What do you think about in terms of managing white fragility in your educational group (specify as appropriate to each facilitator)?
 - a. What values guide how you respond to, intervene, or challenge participant’s ideas?
 - b. How might participants desire for comfort influence your work? How do you see the role of conflict or conflict avoidance, encouraging “dumb questions,” use of politically correct language, etc?

3. For the purposes of this research, resilience would be demonstrated by:
 - a. Staying with the conversation
 - b. Giving and receiving information and feedback from facilitators and peers without becoming highly defensive, reactive, or shut down/dissociated for long periods of time
 - c. Managing the guilt and shame that can arise in learning about the history and current reality of race and racism in the USA
 What have you seen best supports participant's capacity to rework patterns of white fragility? How would you define what resilience looks and feels like in action?
4. Are there other thoughts you have on what cultivates resilience when discussing race in an educational environment? If not specified, ask about:
 - a. What, if any, practices do you use to set a class/group culture or container?
 - b. What, if any, pedagogical approaches do you use to build community within the group or class environment?
 - c. What, if any, elements apart from reading, discussion, or lecture do you include in your pedagogical approach?
 - d. Have you ever included body-based or mindfulness practices in your class/group?
 - e. Previous involvement in personal transformation through relationships or community experiences (especially participants who have been part of working class or otherwise marginalized groups)
5. Can you share one or more incidents you recall from your time as a facilitator in which a student has gotten triggered in class in a way that affected the whole group or otherwise significantly derailed their learning or the collective conversation? (by triggered I mean getting highly defensive, feeling intense shame, anxiety, or experiencing dissociation) – in particular, I'm interested in a brief description of:
 - a. What triggered the student (if known)
 - b. How the student reacted (how you knew the student was triggered)
 - c. How their reaction affected you and the rest of the group (your perception)
 - d. How you responded, and how the class responded
 - e. Anything else about how it got resolved
6. Knowing what you know now, how might you hope to respond next time?
7. Is there anything I didn't ask that you'd like to share?

Appendix F: Memorandum of Understanding with White Noise Collective

This document outlines the parameters of collaboration between the White Noise Collective and Katherine Roubos, MSW candidate at Smith School for Social Work.

Research Project Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify what tools, skills, and approaches can be used to cultivate white resilience in anti-racism education experiences. This study is in response to the problem of white fragility, which is defined by Robin DiAngelo (2011) as:

“a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (p.54, 2011).”

For the purposes of this study, White resilience is demonstrated by:

- a. Staying with the conversation
- b. Giving and receiving information and feedback from facilitators and peers without becoming highly defensive, reactive, or shut down/dissociated for long periods of time
- c. Managing the guilt and shame that can arise in learning about the history and current reality of race and racism in the USA

This study uses a trauma-informed framework through which to understand White people’s response to information about their role in perpetuating racism in the USA. This study attempts to identify what tools, skills and approaches may serve to increase White resilience and decrease White fragility in these educational experiences and subsequent anti-racism work.

The study methodology is comprised of two parts:

1. Interviews with white facilitators of white anti-racism educational courses
2. Workshop/Focus group debrief with participants in a White Resilience workshop offered in collaboration with the White Noise Collective (WNC), a grassroots community organization in Oakland

This two-part design acknowledges the unique knowledge and information available from both facilitators and participants. Facilitators of white anti-racism courses may have a broader perspective of what has supported their own development and what is useful for white participants as they move through the phases of White identity development (Helms, 1993). Participants of a workshop focused on White Resilience will provide a sounding board for the skills, tools and approaches that may be useful in encouraging white people to sustain balanced engagement with Anti-Racism education and work.

Timeframe

This collaboration will be in effect from November 2015 – August 2016; any extensions or expansions of this agreement will be mutually agreed upon as necessary and relevant.

Roles of Participating Parties

As research lead, Katherine Roubos's responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Obtaining approval from Smith College Human Subjects Review committee for the research proposal.
- Coordinating with WNC leadership to set date, time and location for workshop between Feb-April 2016.
- Providing draft materials for WNC feedback on Facilitator Interview Guide, Workshop Agenda, and promotional materials.
- Collaborating with WNC leadership to promote, organize and facilitate workshop/focus group debrief.
- Creating, distributing, collecting, and keeping consent forms to participants in accordance with HSR protocol outlined in full research proposal.
- Audio-recording the workshop and storing audio-data in a password-protected file to protect confidentiality of participants.
- Analyzing data collected during workshop/focus group and integrating findings into data collected from facilitator interviews.
- Providing a copy of research findings to WNC.

As a collaborating, grassroots community-based organization, the White Noise Collective's responsibilities include:

- Providing feedback on Facilitator Interview Guide, Workshop Agenda and promotional materials.
- Coordinating a date, time and location for the workshop/focus group debrief in collaboration with the research lead.
- Promoting workshop to WNC constituency and communicating with potential participants around event logistics.
- Supporting facilitation of workshop/focus group with research lead.

We, the undersigned, agree to this collaboration within the scope, timeframe and responsibilities outlined above. We agree to abide by all research protocols and requirements outlined by the HSR committee and Smith School for Social Work.

WNC Leadership Name (print): K Nicole Wires

WNC Leadership signature: 
Date: 12/1/2015

Research Lead Name (print): Katherine Roubos
Research Lead signature: Katherine Roubos Date: 11/25/15

Appendix G: HSR Review Committee Approval Letter 1



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

December 9, 2015

Katherine Roubos

Dear Katherine,

You did a very nice job on your revisions. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Congratulations and our best wishes on your interesting study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Amelia Ortega, Research Advisor

Appendix H: HSR Protocol Change Request Form 1

**2015-2016
RESEARCH PROJECT PROTOCOL CHANGE FORM
Smith College School for Social Work**

You are presently the researcher on the following *approved* research project by the Human Subjects Committee (HSR) of Smith College School for Social Work:

Study: Cultivating White Resilience in Anti-Racism Education Spaces (see below proposed change in title)

Researcher: Katherine Roubos

Research Advisor: Amelia Ortega LCSW

.....

I am requesting changes to the study protocols, as they were originally approved by the HSR Committee of Smith College School for Social Work. These changes are as follows:

1. Change in Study Title: From “Cultivating White Resilience in Anti-Racism Education Spaces” to “Cultivating Resilience: Antidotes to White Fragility in Racial Justice Work”
2. Changes in language throughout attachments: This does not affect any proposed procedures or processes, but does affect the specific language used within the approved documents. The changes in language are intended to increase accuracy of description and communication of the study’s theoretical frameworks and intended scope. Main change is shifting away from term “white resilience” which, upon reflection, sounds like a ‘white power’ phrase rather than a tool for racial justice. Alternate language includes “antidotes to white fragility” and “reworking/changing patterns of white fragility in racial justice work”. These changes to language have been made for consistency in the following places:

- a. HSR application (revised, attached here with all changes)
 - i. Study description: pp.1-3
 - ii. Attachments A, B, C, D, E, and G. No changes to Attachments F and H.

3. Add Snowball Sampling to Methodology

The currently-approved strategy is to post the approved recruitment statement on relevant Facebook groups and listserves. I am requesting to add a snowball sampling approach (see p. 4 of HSR application).

According to Atkinson & Flint (2001), snowball sampling may be used as a formal methodology to access hard-to-reach populations and is especially useful for interview-based qualitative, explorative, descriptive studies. This study fits all of these criteria, and is not intended to be generalizable or representative of a broader demographic. White facilitators of anti-racism/racial justice education occupy a more privileged or elite demographic than the traditionally-defined highly marginalized “hard-to-reach” population. However, snowball sampling is considered an effective method to reach both highly marginalized and socially elite groups, as both rely on social capital and network memberships (formal or informal) to attain sufficient trust and investment to encourage participation (Noy, C., 2008; Moyser & Wagstaffe, 1987).

In this study, I will employ a snowball sampling methodology by reaching out to people in my personal/professional networks with the request to forward the interview invitation to relevant contacts in their communities. Due to the highly-politicized culture of racial justice education and organizing in the SF Bay Area, my target demographic for interviews is, indeed, a socially elite group; leveraging social networks to reach this group is a logical approach based on current uses of snowball sampling in the literature (Spreen, 1992; Faugier and Sergeant, 1997; Noy, C., 2008; Moyser & Wagstaffe, 1987; Atkinson, R., & Flint, J., 2001).

References

Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2001). Accessing hidden and hard-to-reach populations: Snowball research strategies. *Social research update*, 33(1), 1-4.

Faugier, J., & Sargeant, M. (1997). Sampling hard to reach populations. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 26, 790-797.

Moyser, G., & Wagstaffe, M. (Eds.). (1987). *Research methods for elite studies*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of social research methodology*, 11(4), 327-344.

Spreen, M. (1992). Rare populations, hidden populations, and link-tracing designs: What and why?. *Bulletin de Methodologie Sociologique*, 36(1), 34-58.

.....

I understand that these proposed changes in protocol will be reviewed by the Committee.

I also understand that any proposed changes in protocol being requested in this form cannot be implemented until they have been fully approved by the HSR Committee.

I have discussed these changes with my Research Advisor and he/she has approved them.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Signature of Researcher: Katherine Roubos

Name of Researcher (PLEASE PRINT): Katherine Roubos **Date:** 1/13/16

PLEASE RETURN THIS SIGNED & COMPLETED FORM TO Laura Wyman at LWyman@smith.edu or to Lilly Hall Room 115.

***Include your Research Advisor/Doctoral Committee Chair in the 'cc'. Once the Advisor/Chair writes acknowledging and approving this change, the Committee review will be initiated.

.....

Appendix I: Protocol Change Request Approval Letter 1



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

January 14, 2016

Katherine Roubos

Dear Katherine,

I have reviewed your amendments and they look fine. The amendments to your study are therefore approved. Thank you and best of luck with your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Amelia Ortega, Research Advisor

Appendix J: HSR Protocol Change Request Form (2)

**2015-2016
RESEARCH PROJECT PROTOCOL CHANGE FORM
Smith College School for Social Work**

You are presently the researcher on the following *approved* research project by the Human Subjects Committee (HSR) of Smith College School for Social Work:

Study: Cultivating White Resilience in Anti-Racism Education Spaces (see below proposed change in title)

Researcher: Katherine Roubos

Research Advisor: Amelia Ortega LCSW

.....

I am requesting small changes to language in the interview guide (attachment A) that was originally approved by the HSR Committee of Smith College School for Social Work. These changes are as follows:

1. Change in language of interview guide:

- a.** Language changes were relatively minor, made to remove “white resilience” from the language of the interview guide, to include “racial justice” in addition to “anti-racism” as terms throughout the guide, and to ensure that language is based in understanding of neurobiology of responses to perceived threats without implying that white people are actually ‘traumatized’ by participating in education about racism and privilege.
- b.** Revised interview guide is included on the following page of this document

.....

I understand that these proposed changes in protocol will be reviewed by the Committee.

I also understand that any proposed changes in protocol being requested in this form cannot be implemented until they have been fully approved by the HSR Committee.

I have discussed these changes with my Research Advisor and he/she has approved them.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Signature of Researcher: Katherine Roubos_____

Name of Researcher (PLEASE PRINT): Katherine Roubos **Date:** 1/31/16

PLEASE RETURN THIS SIGNED & COMPLETED FORM TO Laura Wyman at LWyman@smith.edu or to Lilly Hall Room 115.

****Include your Research Advisor/Doctoral Committee Chair in the 'cc'. Once the Advisor/Chair writes acknowledging and approving this change, the Committee review will be initiated.*

.....

Appendix K: Protocol Change Request Approval Letter (2)



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

February 2, 2016

Katherine Roubos

Dear Kat:

I have reviewed your amendments and they look fine. The amendments to your study are therefore approved. Thank you and best of luck with your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Amelia Ortega, Research Advisor

Appendix L: HSR Protocol Change Request Form (3)

**2015-2016
RESEARCH PROJECT PROTOCOL CHANGE FORM
Smith College School for Social Work**

You are presently the researcher on the following *approved* research project by the Human Subjects Committee (HSR) of Smith College School for Social Work:

**Study: Cultivating Resilience: Antidotes to White Fragility in Racial Justice Education and Work
Researcher: Katherine Roubos
Research Advisor: Amelia Ortega LCSW**

.....

I have included additional detail on the outreach, registration and confirmation materials for workshop/focus group participants. This includes a revision of one previously approved attachment and the addition of two new attachments. All of them contain similar text.

.....

I understand that these proposed changes in protocol will be reviewed by the Committee.
 I also understand that any proposed changes in protocol being requested in this form cannot be implemented until they have been fully approved by the HSR Committee.
 I have discussed these changes with my Research Advisor and he/she has approved them.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above.

Signature of Researcher: Katherine Roubos_____

Name of Researcher (PLEASE PRINT): Katherine Roubos Date: 3/6/2016

PLEASE RETURN THIS SIGNED & COMPLETED FORM TO Laura Wyman at LWyman@smith.edu or to Lilly Hall Room 115.

****Include your Research Advisor/Doctoral Committee Chair in the 'cc'. Once the Advisor/Chair writes acknowledging and approving this change, the Committee review will be initiated.*

.....

Appendix M: Protocol Change Request Approval Letter (3)



School for Social Work
Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

March 7, 2016

Katherine Roubos

Dear Kat:

I have reviewed your amendments and they look fine. The amendments to your study are therefore approved. Thank you and best of luck with your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elaine Kersten".

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Amelia Ortega, Research Advisor