

VOIGT, JULIE ANN, Ph.D. Narratives and Stories of an “Anti-Racist Racist:” Making Whiteness Visible, Bridging the Gap between the Individual and Systems of Oppression. (2017)

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The central purpose of this research is to make whiteness visible, to help white students’ overcome resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities in the classroom. This research uses autoethnography, as a methodological approach with an emphasis on an analysis of the interactions between individuals and institutions. This research draws upon the emphasis on institutions from “institutional ethnography.”

The methodological approach is framed by letter writing with elements of the “storytelling project model” using personal narratives and composite stories from the classroom. The theoretical framework for this research incorporates various theories, including constructivism theory, standpoint theory, critical theory, critical race theory, and critical Whiteness theory.

This research examines my lived experiences and reflections, in the context of institutional social relations with the application of theoretical analysis, which work to deconstruct my whiteness to produce an authentic and rich explanation of white resistance to and denial of racism. This research is about bridging the gap between the individual and structure in order to alter oppressive cycles, seeking to raise awareness and create a space for open dialogue on racism to promote a more socially just society.

NARRATIVES AND STORIES OF AN “ANTI-RACIST RACIST:”
MAKING WHITENESS VISIBLE, BRIDGING THE GAP
BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND
SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

by

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To Buck

My partner and friend, who I am forever connected to

By the “Red Thread of Fate.”

APPROVAL PAGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Statement of Purpose	12
Rationale and Significance	13
Research Questions	17
Theoretical Framework.....	17
Overview of Methodology.....	19
Autoethnography	21
Institutional Ethnography	22
Limitations	23
Concerns and Fears.....	28
Overview.....	30
II. EPISTEMOLOGY, ONTOLOGY, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	32
Social Constructionism.....	33
Standpoint Theory	37
Critical Theory	44
Critical Race Theory.....	54
Critical Whiteness Theory	58
Summary.....	60
III. “VULNERABLE SELVES” AND “EVOCATIVE STORIES”: WHY WRITE AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY?	64
Autoethnography a Methodological Approach.....	65
Criticism of Autoethnography as a Methodological Approach	67
Additional Works Using Autoethnographic Narratives	72
Letter Writing: Dear Critical Hope	74
The Storytelling Project Model.....	76
Composite Stories from the Classroom.....	81
Personal Narratives.....	81

Letters to Self: Critical Reflection on the Writing Process	83
How to Read My Letters.....	84
Summary	84
IV. LETTER ONE: RESPONSE TO AMERICAN IDEOLOGY: THE STORIES OF THE AMERICAN DREAM AND RACIAL IDEOLOGIES	86
Composite Stories from the Classroom: Dear C. Hope “What Was Wrong with President Trump Wanting to Make America Great Again?”	87
Cultural Conformity Narrative: Year 1996, “It’s People like Her that Don’t Deserve to Live in America. She’s a Traitor!”	106
Emerging Stories: An Analysis of “It’s People like Her that Don’t Deserve to Live in America. She’s a Traitor!”	109
Transforming Stories: Letter to Self: Year 2017, Critical Reflections on the Writing Process	116
V. LETTER TWO: RESPONSE TO POST-RACIAL IDEOLOGY: “RACE DOESN’T MATTER ANYMORE!”	123
Composite Stories from the Classroom: Dear C. Hope “Aren’t We Post-Racial, Mrs. V?”	124
Cultural Conformity Narrative, Year 2000 “Race Isn’t a Problem Anymore, Patrick!”	139
Emerging Stories, Year 2000: An Analysis of “Race Isn’t a Problem Anymore, Patrick!”	143
Transforming Stories: Letter to Self, Year 2016, Critical Reflections on the Writing Process	162
VI. LETTER THREE: RESPONSE TO COLORBLIND IDEOLOGY	170
Composite Stories from the Classroom: Dear C. Hope: “Mrs. V, I Don’t See Color, I am Colorblind!”	171
Cultural Conformity Narrative: Year 1983, “No, I Want Her!”	174
Emerging Stories: An Analysis of “No, I Want Her”	175
Cultural Conformity Narrative: My Stories, Year 1993, “Love Affair Not Allowed”	187
Emerging Stories: An Analysis of “Love Affair Not Allowed”	190
Transforming Stories: Letter to Self, Year 2017, “Critical Reflections on the Writing Process”	199
My Final Letter to Dear C. Hope	205

VII. FINAL DISCUSSION AND THOUGHTS ON WHITE RESISTANCE TO AND DENIAL OF RACISM, WHITE PRIVILEGE AND RACIAL INEQUITIES.....	210
Summary.....	211
Exposing “Stock Stories” of the American Dream and White Supremacy.....	214
Exposing “Stock Stories” of Post-Racial Ideology.....	222
Exposing “Stock Stories” of Colorblind Ideology.....	224
Additional Reflections on the Writing Process.....	225
Limitations.....	231
Application of the “Reflexive Storytelling Paradigm” in the Classroom.....	232
Closing Statements.....	234
REFERENCES.....	236
APPENDIX A. BEHIND TRUMP’S VICTORY: DIVISIONS BY RACE, GENDER, AND EDUCATION.....	262
APPENDIX B. BEHIND TRUMP’S VICTORY: DIVISIONS BY RACE, GENDER, AND EDUCATION.....	263
APPENDIX C. HOW THE FAITHFUL VOTED: A PRELIMINARY 2016 ANALYSIS.....	264
APPENDIX D. WOMEN IN THE U.S. SENATE, 1965-2017.....	265
APPENDIX E. WOMEN CEOS IN FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES, 1995-2007.....	266
APPENDIX F. ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW.....	267
APPENDIX G. ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW.....	268
APPENDIX H. ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW.....	269
APPENDIX I. ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW.....	270
APPENDIX J. ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW.....	271

APPENDIX K. HISPANIC DROPOUT RATE HITS NEW LOW, COLLEGE ENROLLMENT AT NEW HIGH.....	272
APPENDIX L. RACIAL, GENDER WAGE GAPS PERSIST IN U.S. DESPITE SOME PROGRESS	273
APPENDIX M. ON VIEWS OF RACE AND INEQUALITY, BLACKS AND WHITES ARE WORLDS APART	274
APPENDIX N. ON VIEWS OF RACE AND INEQUALITY, BLACKS AND WHITES ARE WORLDS APART	275
APPENDIX O. SO FAR, THE BLACK UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAS ONLY RECOVERED IN STATES WHERE IT WAS HIGHEST BEFORE THE GREAT RECESSION	276
APPENDIX P. WHO’S POOR IN AMERICA? 50 YEARS INTO THE ‘WAR ON POVERTY,’ A DATA PORTRAIT	277
APPENDIX Q. WHO’S POOR IN AMERICA? 50 YEARS INTO THE ‘WAR ON POVERTY,’ A DATA PORTRAIT	278
APPENDIX R. CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA, BY RACE.....	279
APPENDIX S. CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA, BY RACE.....	280
APPENDIX T. CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA, BY RACE.....	281
APPENDIX U. CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA, BY RACE.....	282
APPENDIX V. FALL IN HOMEOWNERSHIP CONTINUES AMID “HOUSING RECOVERY”.....	283
APPENDIX W. BLACKS AND HISPANICS FACE EXTRA CHALLENGES IN GETTING HOME LOANS	284
APPENDIX X. SHARE OF CONVENTIONAL LOAN APPLICATIONS THAT ARE APPROVED HAS GROWN SINCE 2004	285

APPENDIX Y. HOMEOWNERSHIP HAS DECLINED THE MOST AMONG YOUNGER HOUSEHOLDS AND BLACK HOUSEHOLDS.....	286
APPENDIX Z. WHITES MAKE UP LARGER SHARE OF CONGRESS THAN OF U.S. POPULATION.....	287
APPENDIX AA. CHANGES IN THE RELIGIOUS MAKEUP OF CONGRESS	288
APPENDIX BB. THE IDEOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY SCALE 5 FACTS ABOUT CONSERVATIVES.....	289
APPENDIX CC. HOME OWNERSHIP RATES, 1995-2013	290
APPENDIX DD. EMPLOYMENT RATE, 2003-2013	291
APPENDIX EE. WHOSE HERITAGE? PUBLIC SYMBOLS OF THE CONFEDERACY	292
APPENDIX FF. RACIAL, GENDER WAGE GAPS PERSIST IN U.S. DESPITE SOME PROGRESS.....	293
APPENDIX GG. RACIAL, GENDER WAGE GAPS PERSIST IN U.S. DESPITE SOME PROGRESS	294
APPENDIX HH. THE RISE OF RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION BY INCOME	295
APPENDIX II. IN GREATER DALLAS AREA, SEGREGATION BY INCOME AND RACE	296

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. The Wheel of Oppression.	40
Figure 2. The Storytelling Project Module	79
Figure 3. Reflexive Storytelling Paradigm: Connecting Stories and Narratives of Internalized Dominance with Systems of Oppression and Power.....	80

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Mrs. V why do we have to talk about this? Racism is no longer a problem! Why can't we just be seen as human beings? We are all the same! I didn't own slaves and anyways, talking about racism only causes more problems! People are just too sensitive and should get over the past and stop playing the "race card!" There have been plenty of times when I was the minority and I wasn't treated fairly. Minorities are just as racist as whites, and now they have the upper hand with jobs and education, which is really "reverse racism!" If parents will just teach their kids to treat everybody the same, like my parents did, then racism wouldn't be a problem. We all just need to be colorblind, and we have much bigger problems than racism! People need to appreciate living in this country, or they need to go back home! Things are a lot worse in other countries and we should just be grateful for what we have! Talking about racism just makes me feel bad!

I frequently encounter comments such these from my white students in class every semester which is what has brought me to the purpose of this dissertation. The purpose of this dissertation is to address the problem of white students' resistance and denial regarding white privilege in the United States, in particularly within my own classroom. In this chapter, I include a statement of purpose along with my rationale for why I believe this topic is pertinent, given the current U.S. social, political, economic, and historical context. In addition, I include the research questions and an overview of the theories of my theoretical framework. I include an overview of the methodology and my justification for using an autoethnographic approach for this dissertation. In addition, I discuss potential limitations of this approach, as well as my own personal concerns and

fears regarding using this approach to address white students' resistance and denial.

Finally, I provide an overview of the organization of the chapters in this dissertation.

Statement of the Problem

I once read, "People usually do research on the issues they're trying to work out in their own lives" (Goodman, 2011 p. 1). This statement is true for me. As an educator and sociologist, I have struggled with white students' resistance and denial when I have addressed racism, white privilege, and racial inequities in the classroom. In addition, I have sought to understand the context—be it social, political, economic, or historical—of the impacts of dominant ideologies and concepts of power on my own resistance and denial when I have been confronted with accepting the truth of racism, White privilege, and racial inequities. I relate and empathize with my white students, because I see a reflection of myself in their responses to racism. First, I make no claims of superiority in comparison to my students, nor do I claim that I am free of all my own resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities. In addition, I do not claim to be absolved of racist thinking or action, nor do I believe that I will ever be able to claim such absolution. However, I believe people are capable of disrupting racist thoughts and actions. Therefore, this dissertation will be a means to disrupt white resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities, for my students as well as for me.

When I use the term *white students*, I am generalizing. In my experience in the classroom, most of the resistance to and denial of racial inequality comes from my white students. However, this is not all encompassing; some students have spoken up and pushed back against resistance to and denial of injustices. Further, I recognize and

appreciate the complexity of human behavior and the intersectionality of the various social identities that shape people and their experiences. Experiences differ depending on these identities. In addition, I appreciate the idea of being an individual, in the sense that each person is unique and able to make personal choices, and therefore should be held accountable for his or her actions.

However, I am critical of hyper-individualism, in which I question the absolute belief that people always make their own choices, or the perspective that people should not be held accountable to our communities and/or society as a whole. Hyper-individualism according to McKibben (2003) is characterized as an extreme form of individualism in which the individual is an absolute, unquestionable entity, discounting the relations that tie humans to community, place and time (p. 19). McKibben (2003) states that “only in relatively recent times have people decided that ‘because I want to’ is a sufficient [enough] reason to do whatever you want without reference to anyone else” (p. 131). It is the mindset, that regardless of the consequences to others, “I want, what I want, when I want it” (p. 131). The “culture of hyper-individualism” disregards any sense of personal responsibility to community, and according to McKibben (2003) in “Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age” hyper-individualism is at the epicenter of consumerism and Capitalism as an economic system (p. 103). According to Strong (2016) in “Farming dwelling thinking” the most affluent of our society exercise the most power and pander to extreme forms of hyper-individualism which gain the most acknowledgement and “envy” from greater society (p. 28). Power is possessed by the most affluent who benefit in shaping culture (p. 28). McKibben (2003) cynically stated

that due in part to the “culture of hyper-individualism,” “The gap between the rich and everyone else is not a cause for concern, but for celebration” (p. 103). The “culture of hyper-individualism,” hinders our ability to see ourselves in relation to greater society. It hinders our ability to observe how structure and social systems operate within our own personal and interpersonal relations.

The “culture of hyper-individualism,” hinders our ability to view racism in our social systems as systemic and structural. Systemic racism is defined as

a diverse assortment of racist practices; the unjustly gained economic and political power of whites, the continuing resources inequalities; and the white-racist ideologies, attitudes, and institutions created to preserve white advantage and power (Feagin, 2001, p. 16).

A systemic approach is historical and views racism as an accumulations of racist actions overtime but institutional racism is focused on the racialized practices that take place within institutions based upon racialized hierarchies, which “reward groups along racial lines” economically, politically, socially and psychologically, reproducing and vindicating racial inequities (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, pp. 442-469). White students are too busy with, “I want, what I want, when I want it,” to realize the consequences of systemic and structural racism within our social systems (McKibben, 2003, p. 131). White students need a “systems perspective” to grasp the consequences of systemic and structural racism within our social systems. Accord to Senge (1990)

Tells us that we must look beyond individual mistakes or bad luck to understand important problems. We must look beyond personalities and events to understand important problems. We must look into the underlying structures which shape individual actions and create the conditions where types of events become likely (p 7).

U.S. society carries a historical legacy of domination, extermination, enslavement, and the capitalization of Black and Brown bodies. This is U.S. history, and these atrocities are part of the nation's inheritance. This dissertation is intended to shed light on the connections between history, biography, power, and context within U.S. society (Mills, 1959, p. 4). This dissertation will be a process of recognizing both "the personal troubles of milieu and the public issues of social structure" (Mills, 1959, p. 4).

According to Mills (1959), people live

out a biography within some historical sequence [and contribute] to the shaping of society and to the course of its history, even as [they are] made by society and by its historical push and shove (p. 5).

History is important in understanding one's own story. People inherit the impact of laws and policies organizing the institutions that govern their lives. They inherit the supposed "absolute truths" in which institutions such as media and education reinforce the norm (Bonilla, 2006, p. 119). This normalization of constructed "absolute truths" is not questioned and therefore remains invisible (p. 119). This dissertation is in part about uncovering what has remained invisible and thus long denied.

As an educator, I believe people typically understand themselves in relation to others, but in individualistic ways. It is difficult to see how history, structure, and

institutions shape people's experiences, relationships, and understanding of how society operates. Therefore, I am particularly interested in understanding resistance and denial in relation to the socioeconomic status of being poor, white and female. My interest in this topic is personal. I spent most my youth living in poverty. During this time, I was extremely resistant to any discussions on institutional racism and white privilege. The idea of privilege of any kind seemed absurd to me, like a personal attack. People typically focus on the self and rarely see the link between the self and society (Collins, 2000, pp. 105-112). People are also inundated with ideologies that teach the importance of individuality, opportunity, and hard work (pp.105-112). These notions come from the "American Dream," which is seen as an absolute truth whose legitimacy is rarely questioned (pp.105-112).

The conversations I have had in the classroom over the years, in addition to the statistics showing who attends community college, have led me to believe that some students may share my former perspective regarding the absurdity of white privilege. However, I do not assume that resistance to and denial of racism is a phenomenon attributable purely to lower-class status and lack of education. This a dangerous and potentially harmful assumption, especially for groups who are already vulnerable (Gorski, 2013, pp. 52-70). In addition, I have seen this assumption used to "scapegoat" the poor, which distracts attention from the problem while creating hostility between already vulnerable groups. Resistance to and denial of racism affects all social classes, although the effects are different depending on social class, context, and power (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2002, pp. 624-631). Based on my personal experience and on conversations I

have had in the classroom with white students, I have found a correlation between resistance to and denial of racism and socioeconomic status. I believe this correlation relates to students' feelings of fear and helplessness, as well as to their tendency to buy into a "stock story," an ideology produced by the "American Dream," in which students are subjected to a "bootstrap narrative" that is seen as an absolute truth (Thangaraj, 2016 p.77).

At the community college, I serve a vulnerable population. In my Introduction to Sociology courses, there are several first-generation, low-income students who work full-time or part-time. In 2010, "44% of low-income students (those with family incomes of less than \$25,000 per year) attend[ed] community college" (Lauff, & Ingels, 2015, p. 3). In 2014, fall enrollment at U.S. community colleges consisted of 50% Hispanic students, 44% Black students, and 39% white students (Ma & Baum, 2016, p. 1).

Many of these students are not academically prepared and must take remedial classes. For example, in 2009, 68% of students attending community college took one or more remedial classes (Ma & Baum, 2016, p. 1). I too was a low-income student, required to take remedial classes. I worked part-time to help my mother pay for food and rent. Later, I moved from one friend's house to another because I did not have a place to live. I understand the fear and helplessness that comes from living in poverty and the inability to process various social issues intellectually. Students' difficulty arises not because of lack of concern or intellectual capability, but because what matters at the time is daily survival. In addition, having a poor educational foundation contributed to my inability to process and understand terminology and ideas that did not seem to relate to

my life during that time. If anything, education seemed an elitist barrier to procuring a job that paid a fair wage. In my mind, education was a means to an end; any other meaning or possibility it could provide was only available to the privileged, and that was not me.

Individuals with higher levels of education intimidated me, especially my professors who seemed distant and uninterested in my existential struggles. I thought they were elitists who were educating me about my own plight in life. This created resentment, especially when they told me I was privileged. I thought to myself, “How could they possibly relate to my circumstances?” For example, consider for a moment what it would be like to sit in a classroom, trying to focus on the lecture while contending with thoughts such as “Where am I going to sleep tonight? My best friend is mad at me, and I don’t like my boyfriend, who would have sexual expectations if I stayed the night—I would rather sleep in my car.” Other similar thoughts could include the following: “I don’t have enough gas to make it to work,” “I have a buck in my pocket, maybe I can at least afford a taco or find enough spare change under my car seat to get two,” or “I have a cavity in my back molar that’s killing me; I wonder if it is cheaper to have it pulled?”

Students find it difficult to focus in school when they are simply trying to survive. Professors may occasionally wonder, “Why aren’t my students reading, why are they not engaged in the material, why don’t they care, don’t they want to be successful, why are they so lazy?” I know this because I am professor and because my colleagues make statements like these with genuine concern. In spite of my experiences, I too have made the same comments. It is easy to forget when the struggle is no longer one’s own.

As an educator, I think, “education is so important; this is a great opportunity, so why don’t they care?” However, students do care; they would not be sitting in class if they did not. It is ironic that I am now the elitist. Armed with this knowledge, I recognize the importance of reflexivity and engagement. Positionality matters and specifically race, gender, class and additional characteristics of our identities that are indicators of “relational positions rather than essential qualities” (Maher & Tetreault, 1993, p. 118). People’s narratives change according to their contexts. For instance, I now have power in a position in which I once felt powerless because my positionality changed from a life of relative poverty to a life of middle-class comfort. This change has shifted my perspective. Further, I have obtained a position of power in relation to my students, which means I have a responsibility to them and to myself to pay attention to the dynamics present in our relationships. This includes considering race and the privilege that comes with being white. I have a responsibility to write not “about” or “for” People of Color or “the poor” or “community college students” but rather “with,” as I reflect on my own experiences and participation in a system that is racist, classist, ableist, homophobic, ageist, xenophobic, and sexist (Sultana, 2007, p. 375).

Resistance to and denial of racism and inequity is prevalent among white students in my classes. I believe that this resistance stems from a sense of powerlessness coming from a lack of opportunity and privilege attributable to low socioeconomic status. For these students, under these circumstances, it is difficult for them to accept any assertion of having privilege, especially white privilege. As I stated earlier, when I attended

community college, the idea of accepting privilege for myself seemed absurd because I feared my circumstances and felt powerless to change them.

With this knowledge, the question now is how do I as an educator approach the topic of white privilege, resistance, and denial of racism and inequities with my white students without generating more resistance and denial? I seek to avoid creating a situation in which students might become disengaged and leave class feeling attacked and resentful. I desire to show them, I am not an elitist who could never understand nor relate to their situations. In addition, how do I approach this topic without marginalizing or misrepresenting Students of Color? Further, how do I approach this topic without placating white fragility and thus perpetuating a racist system? According to D'Angelo (2011):

White Fragility is 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. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium (p. 54).

I have several fears and concerns about addressing such a topic given the current U.S. political and social climate. However, to avoid addressing the topic would be self-indulgent in the sense that I would be seeking to avoid discomfort. Ironically, my methodology includes reflexivity, which has been criticized for being self-indulgent “navel gazing” (Cunliffe, 2003, pp. 983-1003).

I understand this criticism, but without reflexivity, educators could “ignore power relations” and issues of positionality and difference, including their own contributions to

systems that harms people (Nagar, 2003, pp. 2-5). There can be great discomfort in reflexivity, especially when educators must consider inequity and the possibility that they contribute to them. However, it may be more self-indulgent to ignore the pain and suffering of others simply because it causes the educator discomfort.

Educators can become distracted by binary ways of thinking (Bhattacharya, K., Gillen & Richardson, 2016, p. 46). Truth is more complex than “either/or.” Indeed, reflexivity can be self-indulgent, but ignoring pain to avoid discomfort is also self-indulgent. I desire to be authentic, and I believe my intentions are good, but I also recognize that I must consider the impact my words may have on others. Such consideration requires reflection and accountability. In this dissertation, I will write “with,” not “about,” as I reflect on my own participation in the perpetuation of a racist system. I will reflect not so much on my intentions but rather on the impacts of my behavior on others, whether through my words, actions, or silence. Regardless of my good intentions, my behavior has resulted in the further marginalization and oppression of Brown and Black individuals. In my mind, the idea of intent relates to the ideology of hyper-individuality. It is personal and requires defending with phrases such as “That’s not what I meant,” “I am good person,” “I am not a racist,” “I am not privileged,” and “I am not responsible.” However, the impact relates to structure. The effects of my behaviors have been supported by structure and recreated by structure, in what I consider to be oppressive cycles (Sisneros, Stakeman, Joyner & Schmitz, 2008, pp. 20-25).

The challenge is for educators to see themselves as both individuals and products of structure. In fact, educators should not claim individuality without acknowledging the

impact of structure on their lives, including the role structure has played in personal development. Currently, given U.S. history, society consists of hyper-individualists, which makes it difficult to understand and acknowledge the existence and impact of structure. Thus, the challenge lies in understanding how “isms” operate systemically. My central purpose as it relates to white privilege and racial inequities is about bridging the gap between the individual and structure in order to alter oppressive cycles. Opposing inequity requires accountability and the acknowledgment that structure shapes people’s lives. It requires the ability to see how society affects people’s own stories—as much as people may claim individuality, everyone is ultimately connected and never alone.

Statement of Purpose

In this dissertation, I will discuss my quest to break down white resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities in the classroom. I seek to find ways to motivate students to consider “alternative perspectives” to challenge white supremacy (Goodman, 2011, p. 51). I want my students to recognize the systems of oppression. Society needs an automatic reaction that is repulsed by such injustice because “injustice anywhere is threat to justice everywhere” (King, 2012, p. x).

Society reinforces the political, social, and economic systems that create stories that “undermine an openness to true democracy and equity” (Goodman, 2011, p. 53). People are blind and resistant, accepting capitalist ideologies while denying the pain and suffering of People of Color (Johnson, 2006, pp. 109-123). My intention for this dissertation is to be vulnerable and authentic by sharing with students my stories and

personal struggles with resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities. Bell (2010) said,

Stories operate on both individual and collective levels, they can bridge the sociological, abstract with the psychology, personal contours of daily experiences. They help us connect individual experiences with systemic analysis, allowing us to unpack in ways that are perhaps more accessible than abstract alone (p.16).

I aim to use my personal narratives and stories to disrupt white resistance and denial, which I hope will give my white students the space to connect and understand “both the individual and collective levels” in which racism operates (Bell, 2010, p. 16). I also hope that by sharing these stories, I will alleviate in some way the pain students experience from hearing they are privileged when they feel anything but, by connecting the self to the social systems and institutions. I will offer further analysis of my experiences as I examine history, policy, law, power, and “social practices in institutional context” (Taber, 2010, p. 9).

Rationale and Significance

I seek to raise awareness and create a space for open dialogue on racism to promote a more socially just society. I am interested in studying the resistance and denial of my white students who challenge the existence of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities. As I stated earlier, white students’ resistance and denial are consistently an issue in my classroom. I relate to this issue: I am a white woman; my understanding of race and racism has evolved over the years as I have worked continuously to counter my own resistance and denial.

If I can be vulnerable about my own personal struggles and share my own evolution, then maybe my students will be less resistant, more vulnerable, and less fearful. Thus, this dissertation is for my white students. I hope they come to understand there is no single version of reality, no absolute truth, but instead, social forces construct multiple worldviews that affect individual experiences (Kukla, 2000, pp. 7-19). I desire for them to practice “sociological mindfulness,” which involves the ability to be “mindful,” to be able to “pay attention to [the] social world” (Schwalbe, 2008, pp. 33-42), to be “torpified,” and to be awakened (Diller, 1998, p. 9). Korten (2006) described it similarly:

This awakening commonly leads to a deep disconnect between the realities of family, work, and community life grounded in the previously unexamined values and the examined, authentic values of maturing consciousness. This disconnect confronts the individuals undergoing this transition, many at times feel like creatures from outer space in the midst of a family gathering or class reunion. With time, however, they find others, together they help one another discover that the craziness is not in themselves, but in what many institutions decree as normal (p. 84).

Over the years, I have learned that “lives are intertwined” and that the decisions people make affect others (Schwalbe, 2008, p. 6). People’s experiences vary according to positionality, but inequalities exist and depend on the locations people occupy and the ideologies that support these locations. I believe inequities can be challenged if people are willing to see the connections, understanding themselves in relation to society despite the discomfort it may cause them. Mills (1959) stated that understanding “individual lives [and] biography [in relation to history] in many ways is a terrible lesson [and] in

many ways a magnificent one [because] human nature is frighteningly broad” (p. 2). I would rather live my life awake in reflection despite the discomfort and disconnectedness it may cause me, because I know my discomfort pales in comparison to the economic, political, historical, and social inequities People of Color experience daily. In reflection, as a white woman with two white sons, I will never have to teach them to be fearful of a system that should protect them rather than incarcerate, or worse, murder them because they appear suspicious or dangerous because of the color of their skin.

Statistically, police are seven times more likely to kill unarmed Black men than they are to kill unarmed white men (Somashekhar, Lowery, Alexander, Kindy, & Tate, 2015). In 2015, 46 unarmed Black men were killed by police, accounting for “40 percent of the 60 unarmed deaths, even though they make up just 6 percent of the U.S. population” (Somashekhar et al., 2015, para. 8). No parents should ever have to teach their children such a lesson. If my discomfort or feelings of disconnectedness can help in any way to change a social system that contributes the murder of young boys, that is a small price to pay (Swaine, Laughland, Lartey, Davis, Harris, Popovich, Team, 2006, p. 1).

As I stated earlier, I believe that most resistance and denial comes from fear. When my white students feel threatened or fearful, they either become defensive or shut down. Typically, educators and social scientists miss the emotional element when studying the maintenance of systemic racism (Liu, 2016, pp. 186-204). As an educator, I hoped providing data or “racial facts” would be enough to awaken my students to the undeniable reality of systemic racism. However, as Leonardo (2005) stated,

countering with scientific evidence an ideological mindset that criminalizes People of Color becomes an exercise in futility because it does not even touch the crux of the problem, one based upon fear and loathing (p. 402).

I have seen fear paralyze my white students as they try to separate themselves from whiteness; they reject a negative identity by proclaiming to be the “good” white person. I have had students refuse to complete assignments, stating that the material goes against their beliefs. I have had students refuse to complete discussion forums on racism, stating that talking about racism is racist. I have had students comment in my evaluations that I am racist against white people or that I do not like white people because I talk about racism. Whenever an advantaged group is challenged, resistance and denial surface. If I discuss classism, according to my students’ evaluations, I am a socialist. If I discuss sexism, I am referred to as a man-hating feminist, and if I talk about heterosexism, I am again challenging religious beliefs in a way that causes some straight students to feel discriminated against.

In this dissertation, my plan is to disrupt white resistance to and denial of racism, White privilege, and racial inequities. I believe it is my responsibility to confront oppression when a group is oppressed. Oppression is both a loss and an injustice. Oppression causes the loss of individuals’ gifts and potential achievements that could have contributed to the greater good of society. Without those potential achievements, society loses. No group wins over another; the loss is everyone’s. Coworkers, friends, and family members have been hurt by these systems. As an educator and as a human being, I believe it is my responsibility to educate my students about systems of

oppression, especially regarding how belonging to certain social groups can shape experiences and provide advantages and disadvantages depending upon positionality (Reason & Evans, 2007).

Research Questions

The central purpose of this research is to make whiteness visible, to help white students' overcome resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities in the classroom, utilizing autoethnography, with an emphasis on an analysis of the interactions between individuals and institutions. I seek to contribute to the body of work that addresses white resistance to institutional racism and white privilege by addressing the following questions:

1. How have dominant cultural ideologies, power relations, and institutional processes shaped and formed my understanding of race and racism?
 - a. How have institutional processes, power relations, and dominate cultural ideologies of race contributed to my white resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities?
 - b. How has positionality as it relates to gender, social class, and religion informed my understanding of race and racism?
2. What struggles and concerns have I encountered during the process of writing this dissertation?

Theoretical Framework

I will use a theoretical framework that combines social constructivism theory, standpoint theory, critical theory, critical race theory, and critical whiteness theory to

analyze my stories. I will include my positionality regarding race, gender, religion, and social class. These elements exist within a system organized by dominant cultural ideologies, power relations, and institutional processes that advantage some while simultaneously disadvantaging others (Karlberg, 2005, pp.1-23). First, I will apply social constructivism theory as it relates to race, and white supremacy. Second, I will consider some of the key concepts of standpoint theory, including positionality and situated knowledge through which experiences may be shared among marginalized groups based on their social locations (Karlberg, 2005, pp.1-23). Further, I will incorporate the concept of *outsider within*, in which a marginalized member of a group gains access to a more privileged position, providing a unique perspective that is both enlightening and alienating (Orbe, & Warren, 2000, pp. 51-57). Third, I will use critical race theory to examine power structures and cultural ideologies that reinforce white privilege and white supremacy. My critical theory framework includes Marx's theoretical perspective of capital economic forces, also known as "historical materialism," Weber's theoretical perspective on culture and the "iron cage" (Marx & McLellan, 1980, pp. 83-111). In addition, I will include Foucault's theory and analysis of power as it relates to the construction of ideology. I will include other key elements of critical race theory, including colorblind ideology, intersectionality, and interest-convergence (Minda, 1995, 167-186).

Finally, my framework will include the theory of critical Whiteness and the notions of white complicity with further discussion of the use of critical whiteness theory in naming whiteness. I will apply the idea of counter-storytelling, drawn from critical

race theory (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, Kendall, 1995, pp.315-336). This method involves “naming one’s own reality” using narratives to explore and illuminate experiences contributing to racial oppression (pp. 315-320). However, instead of using narratives to explore others’ experiences of racial oppression, I will use narratives to confront my own participation in a racial ideological system that has historically dominated and exploited groups of People of Color through the legitimization of white supremacy.

Overview of Methodology

For this dissertation, I will provide a series of composite stories in letters addressed to a fictitious person named C. Hope, the recipient who symbolizes all my students over the years, particularly my White students. “Critical hope is a pedagogical tool that addresses unjust systems through meaningful dialogue and empathic responses” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 192). These composites will derive from my classroom and life experiences, emerging as reflections of the past. I will also include personal narratives that will show my direct participation in the reproduction of racist ideologies, as well as my indirect participation, displayed as silence when racial prejudice and discrimination took place. According to Czarniawska (2004) a “narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/action chronologically connected” (p.17). My personal narratives are about my experiences and the relationship that exists between my narrative and the broader narratives that influence my life. Personal narratives capture a broader narrative of society, such as the narrative

of individualism. According to Jennings (2017) stories surround the narrative bringing it to life, making it “human and accessible” (p.1). Jennings stated

a story that’s not connected to a broader narrative is mere entertainment. And a narrative without a story is mere information. Narratives need stories to inject them with context, emotion and meaning (p.1).

In addition, I will include a critical reflection piece titled “Letter to Self,” which will be a reflection on this writing process. This “Letter to Self” will provide an opportunity for me to think through the process and address comments and concerns from those who have read and edited my material.

My plan is to be vulnerable and authentic by sharing stories of my past and present regarding the interactions and moments in which I have struggled with white resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities. I believe that narratives and stories can build community—operating on “both individual and collective levels, they bridge the sociological, abstract, with psychological, personal contours of daily experience” (Bell, 2010, p. 10). They are an “accessible vehicle” and an analytical tool that gives readers the ability to connect with writers as readers share in the telling of writers’ stories, providing an opportunity to assess and challenge the status quo (Bell, 2010, p. 10). In addition, sharing my personal narratives and stories is a democratic process that makes material from the body of academic research more accessible to the public (Bell, 2010, p. 10).

Autoethnography

My desire in this dissertation is to shift away from the traditional “objective” social science approach to a praxis that encompasses subjective truths and the complex realities of navigating a world enforced and maintained by structural hegemonic ideologies, which are present in culture, economy, and society (Warren, 2001, p. 130). According to a constructivist paradigm, knowledge is “socially situated” as follows:

There exist multiple, socially constructed realities ungoverned by any natural laws, causal or otherwise. Truth is understood in the constructivist paradigm in terms of the best informed and most sophisticated construction around which consensus can be established. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 84)

I hold the perspective that no scientific research is unbiased and value-free. Subjective truth has value. Thus, for this dissertation, I plan to use an autoethnographic approach as a way to situate myself as an educator, student, and middle-class white woman. I am cognizant of the privilege and power conveyed upon me because of my race, which has placed me in a social structure of white supremacy. This particular approach creates space for critical reflection using an “aesthetic presentation” as a way to challenge and dismantle what I have internalized because of hegemonic ideologies.

In “Heartfelt Autoethnography,” Ellis (1999) stated that autoethnographers

seek to develop an ethnography that includes researchers’ vulnerable selves, emotions, bodies, and spirits; produces evocative stories that create the effect of reality; celebrates concrete experience and intimate detail; examines how human experience is endowed with meaning; is concerned with moral, ethical, and political consequences; encourages compassion and empathy; helps us know how to live and cope; features multiple voices and repositions readers and—subjects as co-participants in dialogue; and seeks a fusion between social science and literature. (p. 669)

In similar fashion, I seek to share with my white students the stories of my experiences and struggles with resistance. These are not just simple stories but stories of a struggle that has had ethical, moral, and political consequences for me and for others (Ellis, 1999, p. 669).

Institutional Ethnography

In this dissertation I will draw upon the emphasis on institutions from “institutional ethnography” in my autoethnographic work (Taber, 2010, p. 9). Autoethnography focuses on the interrelationships between the self and the social environment; narratives and stories focus on interactions with others and the relationships between the self and others. However, rarely do we see the interrelationships and “interactions between narratives, organizational policies, and practices” (Taber, 2010, p. 9). Institutional ethnographers aim to analyze interrelationships between policies, practices, and narratives in the context of institutions (Taber, 2010, p. 9). Smith (2005) wrote,

As a method of inquiry, institutional ethnography is designed to create an alternative to the objectified subject of knowledge of established social scientific discourse. The latter conforms to and is integrated with that I have come to call the “ruling relations”—that extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations that are textually mediated, that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives—the corporations, government bureaucracies, academic and professional discourses, mass media, and the complex of relations that interconnect them. (p. 11)

Thus, it is important to analyze the context of institutions and the interactions that take place between systems and individuals. People have agency, but power plays an

important role in who is able to implement or even resist policy, which is important to understand when examining inequities (Taber, 2010, p. 10).

Limitations

Some limits apply when using autoethnography as a methodology. Critics of this approach have referred to it as a form of “navel gazing” and “vain self-indulgence” (Sitton, 2003, p. xii). However, I suggest that autoethnography is a “communicative action [that offers a] subjective rationality, evoking dialogue” among readers (Sitton, 2003, p. xii). According to Habermas’s (as cited in Sitton, 2003) theory of communicative action, society is constructed through discourse; however, power and oppression have distorted the discourse, motivating people to value positivism as the dominant form of rationality (Berbrier, 1997, pp. 35-50). Positivism was coined by Auguste Comte in the 19th century and is described as a method of analysis which depends explicitly on scientific evidence, such as statistics, and experiments to uncover the true characteristics of how society operates (Comte, 1908, pp. 8-64). Positivism is valued for being neutral and objective, free from irrational subjectivity (Berbrier, 1997, pp. 35-50).

According to Anderson (2000), “Science and technical expert knowledge have been given the highest authority, leaving public debate as a forum for the collective formation of will to become impoverished and fragmented” (p. 329). Habermas (2003) suggested several forms of rationality: (a) instrumental rationality, or what people know as the positivism paradigm; (b) moral-practical rationality, which focuses on moral and legal arguments; and (c) aesthetic-expressive rationality, which stipulates that subjective

reality has value (p. xii). Personal experiences are political and represent a “means of unpacking the larger cultural context wherein personal experience lies” (Potter, 2015, p. 1435). According to Bocher (1997), autoethnographic research is not what other researchers refer to as “narcissist” or “lacking in accuracy.” Instead, Bocher stated,

The sad truth is that the academic self frequently is cut off from the ordinary, experience self. A life of theory can remove one from experiences, make one feel unconnected. All of us inhabit multiple worlds. When we live in the world of theory, we usually assume that we are inhabiting an objective world. There, in the objective world, we are expected to play the role of spectator. It is a hard world for a human being to feel comfortable in, so we try to get rid of the distinctively human characteristics that distort the mythological beauty of objectivity. We are taught to master methods that exclude the capriciousness of immediate experience. When we do, we find ourselves in a world devoid of spirituality, emotion, and poetry—a scientific, world in which, a[s] Galileo insisted, there is no place for human feelings, motives, or consciousness. (p. 434)

I want my students to feel connected to the world around them and to their feelings.

Justice requires consciousness, human emotion, and motives (Bocher, 2007, p. 434).

People are not spectators in an objective world. Autoethnography allows readers to connect to the world through the stories of writers (Bocher, 2007, p. 434).

As an educator and student in academia, I have discovered a need to legitimize sociology as a real, objective, hard science. Sociology is often criticized for being “soft” (Storer, 1967, pp.75-84), which is a subjective pejorative. According to Wilson (2012),

There has long been snobbery in the sciences, with the "hard" ones (physics, chemistry, biology) considering themselves to be more legitimate than the "soft" ones (psychology, sociology). It is thus no surprise that many members of the general public feel the same way. But of late, skepticism about the rigors of social science has reached absurd heights. (p. 1)

Typically, my students relate sociology to socialism, which makes discussions difficult from the first day of class. Students immediately push back because of their preconceived notions about sociology, which they value less in comparison to other disciplines such as engineering or biology.

Sociology is a science. However, it is possible the push for hard, objective science has contributed to the perpetuation of a sexist system in which people dichotomize disciplines much as they dichotomize gender. For example, being male, masculine, hard, and tough is more valuable than being female, feminine, weak, and soft (Skolnick, & Bascom, Wilson, 2013, pp.72-88). People value masculine traits when men dominate these disciplines (Verniers & Martinot, 2015, pp. 719-733). According to Verniers & Martinot (2015) in “characteristics expected in fields of higher education and gender stereotypical traits related to academic success: a mirror effect,”

Female-dominated fields of study, including literature, psychology and education, [are] considered as relatively poor in prestige. Contrary to women’s underrepresentation in the STEM, their overrepresentation in the low-prestige fields of study has received little attention (p. 720).

This valuation indicates a racist system in which people value white men’s expertise over the expertise of men and women of color and women in general (Ford, 2011, pp. 444-478). In addition, in higher education, at the intersection of gender and race, woman faculty “are often viewed as more caring and available to students [and] are asked to teach and serve more than male faculty [while also] experience[ing] threats to credibility and authority” (Kelly & Mccann, 2014, pp. 682-683). In a study conducted by

Pittman (2010) on gender and race oppression in the classroom, she found that women faculty of color were acutely aware of their gender and racial identity. Pittman (2010) stated,

White male students are viewed as the main classroom challengers to their authority, competence, expertise, and safety. Most faculty would normally expect to be harassed by students. However, the women faculty of color interviewed for my study described interactions in which they felt devalued, challenged, and threatened by white males (p.10).

My perspective is similar to that of sociologist Dorothy Smith (2005), who stated her frustration with “sociology’s focus on objective knowledge from an unproblematized, nominalized, positionless, male-centered standpoint” (p. 11). Sociologists have seen a shift from what was predominantly a white male discipline to a discipline that includes more women and People of Color. We are also seeing white flight in higher education to more prestigious institutions (Carnevale, Anthony, & Strohl, 2013, pp. 1-4). This shift is reminiscent of white male flight—men are leaving this discipline and many other disciplines in which women are graduating at higher rates (Oldenziel, 1999, pp. 19-46). In general, women are graduating at higher rates than men (Oldenziel, 1999, pp. 19-46). Politically and economically, men hold more positions of power, compared to women, which makes me fear continued financial disinvestment in public education. Similar to the phenomenon of white flight from communities that are now predominantly Brown and Black, disinvestment has crippled these communities (Jego & Roehner, 2006, pp. 75-87).

Some critics have viewed autoethnography as similar to sociology: too subjective and too soft (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2009, pp. 27-45). However, there may be a pattern here. This criticism could occur because research techniques, disciplines, education, and communities are including more women and people color. Do people view these things as less valuable because they are not white male-centered? If they were acknowledged as being white male-centered, would people's perceptions of them change? Would these elements be more valuable, and if so, would this perception be objective? True objectivity does not exist, but that does not mean I do not value the positivist paradigm. As a social scientist, it is important for me to check my intentions. It is important to "know myself" to understand what role I may play because of history and social structure. This is what I define as authentic. There should be no absolute way to study society. There is value in both paradigms. I recognize that using stories as a methodical approach raises questions of authenticity. Readers must determine whether the stories convey truth. People distort the facts when telling their stories, making them into subjective truths (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2009, pp. 27-45). However, the purpose of stories is not to generate some form of historical truth but rather to share a unique point of view, representing a valid interpretation that makes connections to general patterns of behavior (Huang, 2015, pp. 89-103). According to Huang (2015) reflecting on one's own story is "knowing one's becoming" (p. 103). Huang (2015) stated,

Through reflecting on [one's] own stories, [we] can construct, uncover, negotiate, and further establish [our] identities. An established research identity is vital for social scientists to situate themselves between real and research worlds. Only in doing so can we bring theories to life as well as bring life back to the theories. (p. 103)

Concerns and Fears

I have several concerns and fears regarding this topic. Personally, I fear the pain I may cause myself by writing down my truth. This fear is small, but it exists. I also fear the loss of privacy because of self-revelation and the potential for any emotional reprisal that I may experience from colleagues, educators, friends, and family who may read what I have written (Barrington, 1997, p. 146). For example, Shannon Gibney, a professor at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, had complaints filed against her by white students when she did a lesson on structural racism (McDonough, 2013). The vice president of academic affairs reprimanded her and stated that she was creating a “hostile learning environment” (McDonough, 2013, p. 2). Many situations like this have happened to professors; these stories validate my fear of pursuing this project.

I also recognize the expectations and unspoken rules that accompany group membership. All people belong to groups, and I belong to whiteness. Within these groups, there is an expectation of loyalty, which means members who step out of line may face “social ostracism” and be labeled traitors to the group (Barrington, 2002, p. 146). There is also a fear that my writing will be perceived as self-indulgent or interpreted as an attempt to shed my white guilt for some type of redemption. However, I take full responsibility for my actions that have contributed to racist ideology. Race does

matter, and I will not deny my own “racial situatedness” and the power and privilege that have been ascribed to me because of whiteness (Nakayama, & Martin, 1999, p. 194). I am not a victim, and I do not believe guilt helps anyone. Guilt can be self-absorbed and focused only on individual experiences. Guilt derails conversations, and in many cases, dismisses the existence of whiteness. I also fear that no one will care about this topic. I fear that being a woman will somehow make this dissertation less credible, thereby making the topic less credible.

However, sharing my truth may inspire others to be brave enough to do the same. I need to tell the truth as I understand it, “bring theories to life as well as bring life back to theories” (Huang, 2015, p. 103). Society has influenced my stories—my personal experiences do not “exist within a vacuum” but rather they have taken place within a context that is political, economic, social, and historical (Barrington, 2002, p. 146). I hope by showing this connection to greater society, I may help others see the connections for themselves and no longer “invalidate charges of racism” (Brook & Witherspoon-Arnold, 2013, p. 171).

Finally, my deepest fear is causing further distress and pain to people of color. I recognize that my stories will show racist thoughts and actions in various scenarios to which I have contributed, which could produce feelings of sadness, anger, and rage in readers. My stories may display what has been referred to as “microaggressions,” which are the “brief commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative

racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults” to marginalized groups (Sue, 2010, p. 6).

These “microaggressions,” however, are not micro by any means. These aggressions

assail the self-esteem of individuals, produce anger and frustration, deplete psychic energy, lower feelings of subjective well-being and worthiness, produce physical health problems, shorten life expectancy and deny minority populations equal access and opportunity in education, employment and health care. (Sue, 2010, p. 6)

I do not want to cause further harm. That is why I have addressed my concerns in Chapter I so that readers who choose to read this material are prepared.

Overview

In summary, in this dissertation, I will address the problem of white students’ resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities in the classroom. My work will be organized into seven chapters. The first three chapters provide an introduction, a review of the literature, and a discussion of the methodological approach. Chapters IV through VI will include my letters with a focus on various institutions and “stock stories.” Within each letter, I will begin with my conversations and observations from the classroom, followed by my personal narratives, and reflections of the past. Each letter will conclude with an analysis of my personal narratives. I will begin each analysis with a discussion related to the historical, political, economic, and social context. Applying theoretical analysis to my intellectual work and my lived experiences will produce an authentic and rich explanation of white resistance and the struggle to fight

against racism—for myself, and I hope, for my students. Similar to what Annan (2013) stated, as an educator, I too believe it is my and “our mission to confront ignorance with knowledge, bigotry with tolerance, and isolation with the outstretched hand of generosity. Racism can, will, and must be defeated” (p. xi).

CHAPTER II

EPISTEMOLOGY, ONTOLOGY, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I discuss my research paradigm, including an overview of my theoretical perspectives. My research paradigm is supported by social constructivism theory, standpoint theory, critical theory, critical race theory, and critical Whiteness theory. I include both epistemological and ontological perspectives regarding the nature of reality and the ways people come to know it. Critical theories imply an ontological assumption—critical theorists accept that an objective reality exists, shaped by social forces (Zou & Trueba, 2002, p. 94). However, objective reality is subjective—people construct reality through language between individuals and their social relations, which are real (Zoonen, 2006, p.39).

Critical theorists study power relations and “oppressive acts of power” but they also examine how oppressive acts of power empower marginalized individuals to rethink their own positionality and address the reproduction of hegemonic ideology that constructs what people accept as reality (Zou & Trueba, 2002, p. 94). In addition, critical theory emphasizes a historical method that “holds to a stratified emergent ontology with a materialist view of history as its foundation” (Edwards, O’Mahoney & Vincent, 2014 p. 147). I plan to apply these theories in my methodological approach in support of research that encompasses both relativistic and realistic perspectives.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism theory implies an epistemological assumption; social constructionists are interested in learning how knowledge is constructed and how reality is “socially designed” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p.61). This theory holds that reality is both subjective and objective, implying ontological assumptions as well (Blaikie, 2007, pp. 12-28). The theory of social constructionism is concerned with how knowledge is socially formed (p. 203). Social constructionists perceive that truth and knowledge are created within social relations, which are the interactions that take place between individuals (pp. 18-28). Social constructionism theory supports the notion that society exists as an objective and subjective reality in which social relations create subjective truth and knowledge (p. 49).

In terms of power, this knowledge is institutionalized through routinization and habitualization, which embed and normalize knowledge in institutions to the extent that individuals experience this knowledge as an objective reality (Schwandt, 2003, p. 293). According to Baumer and Tomlinson (2006) habitualization is the “process by which actions that are frequently repeated with the same temporal relationships to one another are cast into a pattern” (p. 129). According to Spiegel (2005) routinization is monotonous “habits” that people do repetitively (p. 257).

This process shows that social constructionism is both subjective and objective. This theory supports my perception of race as a social construct that is a subjective and objective reality. Race is a socially constructed category, a “taken for granted reality” cultivated through social relation and adopted by society (Fairhurst, Gail, Grant, & David,

2010, pp. 171-172). The racial categories people have constructed are not predictable products of biology but the result of social and historical processes (Hacking, 1999, p. 10).

The Social Construction of Race

As stated previously, my conceptualization of race originated from the theoretical perspective known as social constructionism. Social constructionists examine how members of society create and understand realities. Again, from this perspective, reality is a construct created, deconstructed, and recreated as the result of shared meaning (Andrews, 2012, p. 22). Thus, meaning is a “taken for granted reality. . . a common sense understanding and consensual notion as to what constitutes” reality (Andrews, 2012, p. 22). According to Gramsci (as cited in Hoare & Nowell Smith, 2010), common sense is “an incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any society” (p. 322). Andrews (2012) stated, “Social constructionism is essentially an anti-realist, relativist stance” (p. 39). However, I argue that the consequences of the construction of race are real. Therefore, this theory includes both a relativist and realist stance. This theory is crucial in understanding the social construction of race.

Social constructionists examine race as a social reality invented by humans (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 6). To understand its creation, people must also understand their own personal circumstances in relation to the broader social, economic, and historical forces that structure and guide behavior. Race is a “symbolic category,” part of white America’s “common sense.” People’s understanding of race has been constructed and defined by genetic differences (Yudell, Roberts, DeSalle, & Tishkoff,

2016, pp.564-565). However, this evolving biological conception of race is inaccurate as well as damaging; this conception has been used to rationalize and approve destructive practices and policies, defining people of color as “others” who historically have been seen as “less than” and unworthy of opportunity (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 6).

Although socially constructed, racial categories have real-life consequences when it comes to opportunity. Winant’s (2000) explanation of race most aligns with my perspective of race:

At its most basic level, can be defined as a concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies. Although the concept of race appeals to biologically based human characteristics (phenotypes), selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. There is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along the lines of race, and the sociohistorical categories employed to differentiate among these groups reveal themselves, upon serious examination, to be imprecise if not completely arbitrary. (p. 172)

In fact, race is a “social and historical process” created by white capitalists as a means to dominate and enslave people of color and force them to generate more wealth and power (Winant, 2000, p. 172). The creation of race was a tactic used to coerce people into believing there were distinct biological differences, insinuating that whites were superior and everyone else was inferior (Yudell, Roberts, DeSalle, & Tishkoff, 2016, pp.564-565). This tactic gave way to the rationalization that whites’ “manifest destiny” was to dominate and enslave people of color (Horsman, 1981, pp. 257-258). The creation of race was also used to create a “culture of fear” (Skoll, 2010, pp. 5-12). White capitalists established this fear to control and govern poor whites, setting them apart from enslaved

people of color (Glenn, 2002, p. 29). The fear was based on economic instability; therefore, poor whites were willing to set themselves apart to create stability (Glenn, 2002, p. 29). Historically, elites have used the “culture of fear” to promote anxiety and uncertainty and thereby establish greater wealth and control (Skoll, 2010, pp. 23-25).

White Supremacy: A Philosophical and Systemic Umbrella

White supremacy is a socially constructed “spontaneous philosophy” and a system that is political, economic, educational, scientific, religious, and moral (Adams & Bell, 2016, pp.138-139). According to Martinez (2004), White supremacy is

A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by White peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege. (p. 1)

The idea of white supremacy is a myth that white capitalists have exploited but the myth has had real-life consequences. White supremacy is a system that dominates and profits from people of color (Conrad, Whitehead, Mason & Stewart, 2005, p. 95). White supremacist ideology is systemic, and racism is institutionalized (Adams & Bell, 2016, pp.138-139). Racism is embedded and operating in U.S. institutions, including family, education, government, economy, media, healthcare, environment, and religion (2016). Institutional racism is a type of power and a product of white supremacy, socially ingrained and normalized in institutions, that denies people of color full participation in society (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 22).

Standpoint Theory

Standpoint theory is a postmodern approach concerned with the construction of knowledge as it relates to individuals' perspectives (Leavy, 2014, p. 143). Standpoint theory emphasizes the importance of social categories and the knowledge gained by individuals as they participate in society among those categories; participation provides individuals with unique perspectives (2014). This viewpoint, a social location, affects marginalized groups in society by providing a perspective that does not align with the perspectives of the current dominant culture (Allen, 1996, pp. 257-260). This theory does not assume true objectivity but holds that the standpoints of marginalized groups provide a unique knowledge neglected and excluded from scientific research (Wylie, 2003, pp. 39-42). Standpoint theorists have proposed a new perspective in which people move beyond the dichotomy that has dominated and structured scientific research toward a "post-positivist philosophy of science" in which scientific research takes place "in socially and politically structured fields of engagement" (Wylie, 2003, pp. 38-41). Thus, standpoint theorists accept that society shapes and influences scientific research.

Knowledge and Awareness

Standpoint theorists assume that knowledge and awareness are the result of a "systemically defined social location" (Wylie, 2003, p. 44). Social location shapes what people know but also limits what people know. Power relations structurally define what people experience and understand (Tew, 2002, pp. 65-68). Knowledge is structured by a hierarchical system of power relations (2002). Standpoint theorists have argued that marginalized groups provide a type of knowledge or insight that privileged groups do not

know or understand (2002). This knowledge is an awareness emerging from the locations people occupy (2002). For example, women have a unique viewpoint of the world as a marginalized group. Women have learned to navigate and understand the power relations that exist between men and women. However, it is important to note that not all women have the same experiences; thus, researchers must consider how social location intersects with other elements such as race, ethnicity, ability, and class—the intersection can produce notable differences among women.

Social Locations and Privilege

Social locations are socially constructed, assigned categories that include gender, race, class, nationality, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, age, and language (Collins, 2000, p. 300). In each category, individuals are positioned and measured in reference to dominant groups that society defines as legitimate, superior, powerful, and privileged, while other groups are defined as inferior, illegitimate, and lacking in status and power (Howard, 2013, p. 26). An example of being measured in reference to dominant group, includes Collins (2000) analysis of oppressed groups in which she said

Oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group (p. vii).

These dominant categories are based on what Lorde (1992) called the “mythical norm,” which is a “white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, who is financially

secure” (p. 362). This norm also includes able-bodied, English speaking, U.S. citizens (p. 496).

“The Wheel of Oppression”

The social locations people occupy determine the privileges they will receive. That is, the closer people are to the norm the more likely they are to gain access to privilege. McIntosh (2006) provided an example in a model known as the “Wheel of Oppression,” which represents social location (see Figure 1). These categories signify the “mythical norm.” Those who fall within these categories are closer to privilege *P*. Privilege is defined as “an invisible package of unearned assets . . . an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks” (McIntosh, 2006, p. 26). McIntosh (2006) further stated,

Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they’ve done or failed to do. Access to privilege doesn’t determine one’s outcomes, but it is definitely an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability, and aspirations a person with privilege has will result in something positive for them. (p. 26)

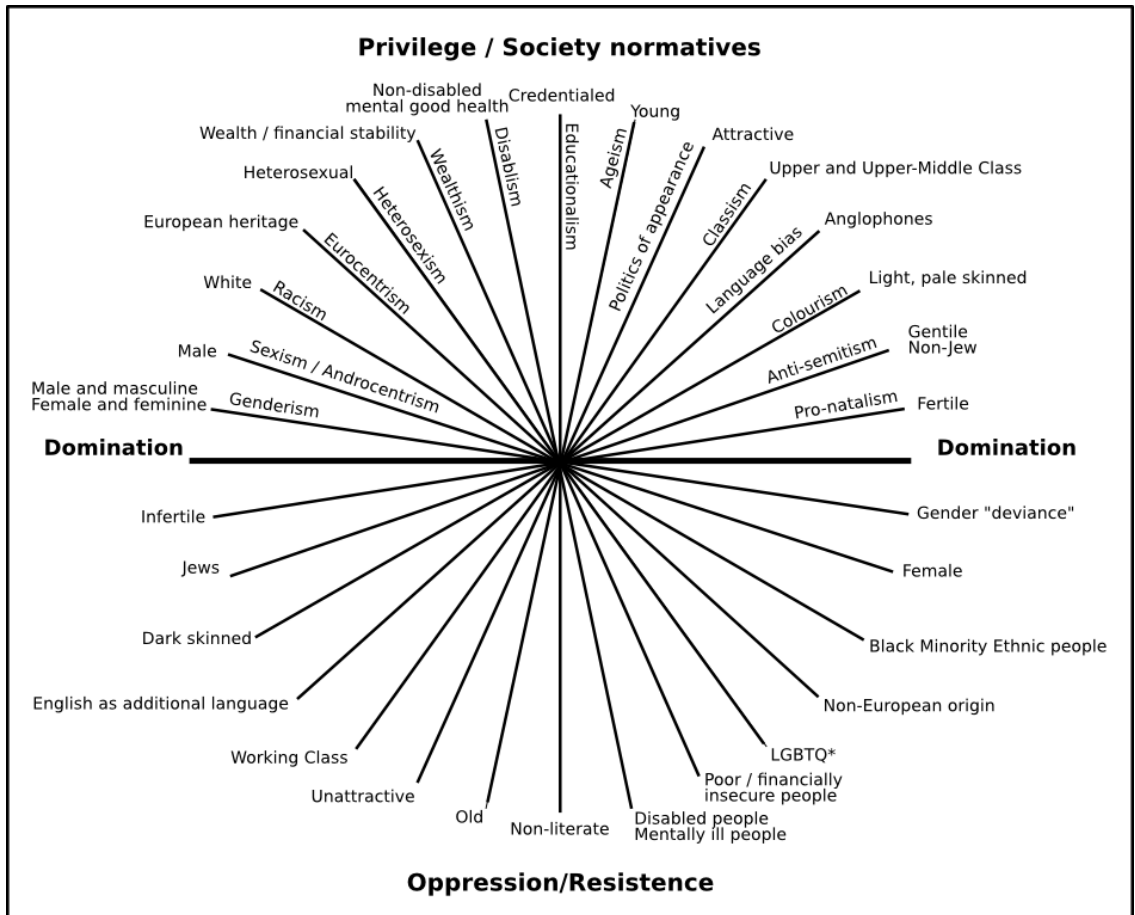


Figure 1. The Wheel of Oppression.

Note. Adapted Kathryn Pauly Morgan (1996) "Describing the Emperor's New Clothes: Three Myths of Education (In)Equality." in *The Gender Question in Education: Theory, Pedagogy & Politics*, Ann Diller et al., Boulder, CO: Westview

People may obtain privileges from these categories, including class privilege, able-body privilege, Christian privilege, heterosexual privilege, and white privilege, discussed further in the following paragraphs.

Class Privilege

I can manage to know only people of similar class background by exclusively frequenting places where such people gather—neighborhoods, schools, clubs, workplaces, etc. I can avoid people of other classes and races if I choose. I evaluate others and recognize those of similar background because I was taught to do that kind of evaluation. I assume I will be able to meet my basic needs. I take having necessities for granted. I buy what I need/want without worry. I do not fear being hungry or homeless (Women’s Theological Center, 1997, p. 1).

Able-Body Privilege

I can easily arrange to be in the company of people of my physical ability. If I need to move, I can easily be assured of purchasing housing I can get access to easily—accessibility is one thing I need to make a special point of looking for. I cannot be assured that my entire neighborhood will be accessible to me. I cannot assume that I can go shopping alone, and they will always have appropriate accommodations to make this experience hassle-free (Another McIntosh style list of privileges, 2000, p. 3).

Christian Privilege

It is likely that state and federal holidays coincide with my religious practices, thereby having little to no impact on my job and/or education. I can talk openly about my religious practices without concern for how it will be received by others. I can be sure to hear music on the radio and watch specials on television that celebrate the holidays of my religion. When told about the history of civilization, I can be sure that I am shown people of my religion made it what it is. I can worry about religious privilege without being perceived as “self-interested” or “self-seeking.” (40 Examples of Christian Privilege, 2011, p. 3).

Heterosexual Privilege

If I pick up a magazine, watch TV, or play music, I can be certain my sexual orientation will be represented. When I talk about my heterosexuality (such as in a joke or talking about my relationships), I will not be accused of pushing my sexual orientation onto others. I do not have to fear that if my family or friends find out about my sexual orientation there will be economic, emotional, physical or psychological consequences. I did not grow up with games that attack my sexual orientation (e.g., fag tag or smear the queer). I am not accused of being abused, warped, or psychologically confused because of my sexual orientation (Queers United, 2008, p. 1).

White Privilege

I assume that most of the people you or your children study in history classes and textbooks will be of the same race, gender, or sexual orientation as you are. Assume that your failures will not be attributed to your race, or your gender. Assume that if you work hard and follow the rules, you will get what you deserve success without other people being surprised; and without being held to a higher standard. Go out in public without fear of being harassed or constantly worried about physical safety. Not have to think about your race, or your gender, or your sexual orientation, or disabilities, on a daily basis (Understanding, Respecting and Connecting, 2016).

In sum, social location provides a unique perspective, especially when people are excluded from the dominant group. There are real consequences in terms of access and opportunity, and those perspective need to be shared.

Insider-Outsider

The “insider-outsider” theory holds the perspective that a person sometimes referred to as the “stranger,” who is an affiliate of a group, experiences social detachment from those within the group (Simmel, 1950, 402-408). The stranger is one who can see patterns in situations because of his or her marginality—others may not be able to see the

patterns because they are occupied by the situation (Collins, 2004, pp. 103-126). A consciousness arises when people experience oppression, which produces a distinct standpoint. Collins (1986) has written about the insider-outsider concept as it relates to Black women's struggles in higher education. Black women must occupy the position of insider in higher education (pp. S14-S32). Collins (1986) stated, "To become sociological insiders, Black women must assimilate a standpoint that is quite different from their own" (p. 49). Black women are expected to suppress their own personal standpoints, because acceptance in higher education is contingent upon assimilation and recognition of the mythical norm, which "rob[s] sociology of diversity and ultimately weaken[s] the discipline" (Collins, 1986, p. 53). Collins (1986) concluded the

outsider within status is bound to generate tension, for people who become outsiders within are forever changed by their new status. Learning the subject matter of sociology stimulates a reexamination of one's own personal and cultural experiences; and, yet, these same experiences paradoxically help to illuminate sociology's anomalies. Outsiders within occupy a special place—they become different people, and their difference sensitizes them to patterns that may be more difficult for established sociological insiders to see. (p. 53)

Standpoint theory aligns with my research because of my social location, which specifically involves being a woman whose social class has changed from working class to middle class. I do not claim that all women or individuals occupying the same social class or gender experience the world in the same way. However, individuals who occupy similar locations of oppression have a shared consciousness, which may vary, yet they still recognize oppression that exists (Bell, Orbe, Drummond, & Camara, 2000, p. 50). For example, as a woman occupying a career in higher education, like many of my

female colleagues, I have experienced institutionalized sexism. Women's experiences may vary because of the many social locations they occupy, but they share the common challenge of dealing with the oppression stemming from institutionalized sexism. Despite women's differences, they still share "a multiple consciousness of oppression" (Bell et al., 2000, p. 50). Collins (1986) noted that insider-outsider status provides perspectives that should be examined. These perspectives may not represent the whole, but show patterns containing valuable information, and these patterns should be studied.

Critical Theory

Critical theorists assume an unequal distribution of resources exists in which certain groups benefit over others. They also have asserted the existence of an "ideal social system" that people should work toward, in which humans' natural social and altruistic behaviors are no longer oppressed by social structure (Allen, 2004, p. 9).

Critical theorists ask questions such as "How is social change possible? Who holds the power? What are the patterns of deprivation?" (Allan, 2004, p. 9). The theories I have chosen are "valued based," resting on the assumption that deep-seated problems in U.S. society require social change (Allan, 2004, p. 26). Critical theory is

an important intellectual and social tool for deconstructing, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency of equitable and socially just relations of power (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 19).

Critical theory focuses on the deconstruction of "conditions of domination and constraint" (Allan, 2004, p. 29). Society has oppressive systems in place; my desire is to

deconstruct the dominant, “taken-for-granted knowledge” that dominates and constrains certain groups of people (Allan, 2004, p. 29).

Marx’s “Historical Materialism”

Critical theory and the deconstruction of oppressive systems began with Karl Marx and his critique of industrial capitalism (Marx & McLellan, 1980, pp. 83-111). Marx (1939) coined the terms *dialectic* and *historical materialism* to argue for the idea that a structure keeps people oppressed (pp. 109-111). Two of Marx’s theoretical concepts involved the *base* and the *superstructure*—the base shapes the superstructure that in return maintains the base (pp. 83-111). The base consists of the “means of production” and the “relations of production” (pp. 83-111). The superstructure consists of institutions such as family, education, law, politics, culture, and ideology (Berberoglu, 2013, pp. 31-40). Marx (as cited in Allan, 2004) argued that capitalism as the U.S. mode of production versus feudalism changed the U.S. superstructure (p. 61). The historical context, also known as “historical materialism,” determines the superstructure, which legitimizes the means of production and the relations of production (p. 61). The relationship between the base and the superstructure is dialectic, meaning they influence one another (Berberoglu, 2013, pp. 36-49).

Marx was mainly concerned with the history of class struggle but also mentioned gender inequalities, which he believed were heightened by industrialized capitalists who placed work in factories rather than in families (Allan, 2004, p. 71). According to Engels (1884), the “world historic defeat of the female sex” was attributable to the transition from matrilineal households to patriarchal households because of accumulated wealth,

which meant people had to control their lineage in order to control their inheritance (p. 736). To control inheritance meant controlling women's sexuality (Allan, 2004, p. 71). Essentially, women became property so that men could control women's wealth. According to Engels (1884), "The modern family contains in embryo not only slavery. . . . It contains within itself in miniature all the antagonism which later develops on a wide scale within society and its state" (p. 737). Within the modern family, controlling women's sexuality meant having "control of [her] entire life" (Allan, 2004, p. 71). A woman's body was a commodity that equated to wealth, making her a slave to her husband and to a system that historically commodified not just women's bodies but brown and Black bodies to further White capitalists' wealth (Allan, 2004, p. 71).

Historically, capitalism as an economic system has divided people by wealth, gender, and race. Racism is an ideology whose roots and evolution are tied to capitalist ideology (Allan, 2004, p. 71). Key aspects of capitalism include competition, private property, and free market ideology. Allan (2004) noted that consistent with Marx's theory of business cycles, the labor pool increases when demand for labor rises, but increases in wages drive down profits, which results in managers cutting back production, thus causing layoffs and small business closings (p. 72). The capitalists buy out the small struggling businesses, resulting in an increase in the working class and a decrease in the number of capitalists, placing power and wealth in the pockets of very few (Marx, 1939, pp. 109-111).).

Marx's theory is essential in understanding capitalism and inequality in U.S. society today. According to the Federal Reserve, as cited in (Bricker, Henriques,

Krimmel, & Sabelhaus, 2015), the top 1% have 42% of the wealth; their share of the wealth grew from 30% in 1992 to 36% in 2001 (1). Capitalism as an economic system has contributed to a legacy of inequality, which has resulted in the exploitation of poor Whites and people of color (Stewart, 2005, pp. 20-31). However, capitalism includes elements of the American Dream, such as freedom and equality. Freedom within this economic system is about free trade, protected by laws that govern both the rich and poor, providing equal opportunity (Milton, 1962, pp. 6-21). Equal opportunity is about equality, but with the huge gap between the poor and rich, it is apparent that the U.S. idea of equality in the marketplace has actually perpetuated inequality.

According to Reed (2013), racism is a "historically specific ideology that emerged, took shape, and has evolved as a constituent element within capitalism" (p. 9). Racism and capitalism promote one another—as Malcolm X (1964) stated, "You can't have capitalism without racism" (p.23-44). Understanding capitalism is essential to understanding how and why racism persists. Again, from a Marxian perspective, the creation of race and racism was the result of the exploitation of slave labor used to generate more capital for the bourgeois (Stewart, 2005, pp. 20-31). In order to generate more capital, the philosophies of white supremacy were needed to rationalize and legitimize domination and exploitation (Bonds, A. & Inwood, J. 2015, pp. 715-733). Thus, racism and other systems of oppression intersect with capitalism and the economy—oppression requires prejudice and discrimination to maintain competition and the mode of production. Marx's theory supports my theoretical framework in my

conceptualization of white supremacy, race, and racism because it connects to a historically oppressive system in which wealth and inequalities are inherited.

C. Wright Mill's "Historical Context"

C. Wright Mills (1956) was a critical theorist who wrote about the "power elites" and the demise of the middle class in the 1950s (pp. 3-11). Mills (1956) was concerned with the increasing power and control of the "power elites" over society (p. 100). Mills (1956) is also known for writing about the intersection of history, social structure, and biography (p. 13). Mills argued that in order for people to understand their biographies, they must understand the historical and social structures in which they interact and are socialized (Mills, 1956, p. 162). Mill's theory supports my theoretical framework in my conceptualization that humans can only be understood in the context of history and the society that structures their lives (Mills, 1956, p. 162). Mills (1956) asserted that major institutions the "power elite" occupy unconsciously control and manipulate the public (p. 9). However, I believe this assertion depends on the context—some people in power are very conscious of their tactics and the influence they have on the public (Piff, 2012, pp. 1-9).

Max Weber's "Iron Cage"

Max Weber (as cited in Allan, 2004) argued that structure and culture are used as a means to oppress people (p. 75). The cultural component includes legitimation in which people tell themselves stories as a way to rationalize power and the social structures that maintain such power (Mills, 1956, pp. 158-162). According to Fave (2013)

Culture, far from being democratically created by the countless interactions of the population as a whole (sort of like Adam Smith's mythical marketplace composed of innumerable buyers and sellers), is overwhelmingly shaped and manipulated by the ruling class in ways favorable to its continued rule and people seeing that rule as legitimate, natural, and inevitable. The very existence of such an exploitative social structure, rooted in its political and economic institutions, leads to a culture that distorts reality and thereby thwarts people's ability to develop their full human potential. That distortion appears normal and makes it extremely difficult for people to see their situation as it really is. This is what Ratner calls the "psychology of oppression" (pp. 60-61).

In a system, legitimacy is only given because people believe the system is true (Fave, 2013, pp. 60-61). Weber (as cited in Allan, 2004) coined the term *the iron cage* to describe how capitalism has organized social life. People exist in a socially and economically hierarchical system. Weber (as cited in Allan, 2004) called this being trapped in the "iron cage" (p. 72). People are born into the system, and they replicate the system because they know no other way to exist.

Capitalism is legitimized by the stories people tell themselves. One of those stories is the so-called American Dream, the "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" mentality through which any individual in America has the freedom to pursue economic stability through hard work. If someone is unable to do so, he or she is to blame. Historically, race has been used to disqualify People of Color from employment (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 58). Race has been used to legitimize the firing and lack of hiring of People of Color based on the assumption of inferiority, thus excluding people of color from opportunity and giving white people years of affirmative action. This practice accounts in part for the great wealth disparities between white and Black families (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 58). However, white Americans tend to ignore

history, viewing these disparities as the result of a lack of hard work, or worse, as the result of some cultural or biological deficiency (p. 58). Most whites believe in meritocracy—for them, the system has worked, and therefore, the system must work for everyone. Weber’s theories contribute to my theoretical framework in the conceptualization of White supremacy, race, and racism and the legitimization of the American Dream, representing the trapping of people in the metaphorical iron cage. The theories support my perspective that stories are powerful, some so powerful that they can legitimize inequities.

Michel Foucault’s “Power and Knowledge”

Michel Foucault (1991) argued that “power is everywhere,” residing in discourse and knowledge, creating “regimes of truth” (p. 194). Foucault (as cited in Gaventa, 2003) stated that power is not concentrated, rather it is “diffused” by elites who act as agents—however, power can be diffused by anyone (p. 1). What people consider truth or “absolute truth” is socialized and embedded in society to the point where the truth is normalized and therefore not visible (Foucault, 1991, p. 194). However, Foucault (1991) claimed power cannot be concentrated. I believe concentration of power depends on the context and the structures that organize people’s lives. Nevertheless, Foucault contributes to my theoretical framework because his theory leaves room for the possibility of change and resistance. If people are able to recognize the power that contains these truths, these norms, then they can separate the power from the forces that have formed their ideologies through discourse (Gaventa, 2003, p. 3). Discourse allows

people to “evade, subvert, or contest strategies of power” (Gaventa, 2003, p .3).

Discourse creates power but discourse can also resist power (p. 3).

Gramsci’s “Hegemony: Consent and Coercion”

Antoni Gramsci (1971) coined the term *cultural hegemony* and defined it as the domination imposed on society by the ruling class (p. 337). The members of the ruling class manipulate culture, normalizing their own beliefs, values, and norms, maintained through consent rather than coercion because it is seen as the norm and therefore not contested (Lears, 2000, p. 568). Gramsci (1971) extended Marx’s ideological viewpoints beyond a system of beliefs to incorporate a “spontaneous philosophy” to which people connect (p. 337). This spontaneous philosophy includes commonly agreed-upon terms—for example, *common sense*, *conventional wisdom*, and *good sense*, which all refer to empirical knowledge and systems of beliefs regarding what is popular, such as religion, superstitions, opinions, and folklore (Lears, 2000, p. 567). According to Gramsci (as cited in Hoare & Nowell Smith, 2010), common sense is “an incoherent set of generally held assumptions and beliefs common to any society” (p. 322). Gramsci (as cited in Lears, 2000) believed that people hold two types of consciousness: One consciousness is based on people’s “work and lived experiences” and the other consciousness is “inherited and grounded in common sense” (p. 52). Both types of consciousness contradict one, what Gramsci (as cited in Lears, 2000) called “contradictory consciousness” (p. 52). For example, my lived experiences may tell me that women experience sexism and therefore face inequity in the job market; however, I have also accepted the idea of meritocracy and believe through hard work, I can achieve any position I desire. If I fail, then it is not a

result of a sexist system; instead, it is my fault alone. Ironically, people will attribute my failure to my gender, which then may motivate me to become more passive and apathetic. According to Gramsci (as cited in Lears, 2000), this scenario is an example of me giving consent, which is a “tacit support for the dominate group” (p. 52). Together, consent and coercion—“the threat or use of forms of force”—legitimize hegemony (Lears, 2000, p. 52).

Criticism of Neoliberalism, Capitalism, and Meritocracy

Neoliberalism is a “spontaneous” political philosophy intended to maximize the means of production for the capitalists (Parker, 2013, pp. 193-213). Neoliberalists believe society benefits from capitalists’ gains (pp. 193-213). Some may argue that neoliberalism is now “common sense.” Neoliberal ideologies have been successful because they align with American values (pp. 193-213). Neoliberal ideologies promise “freedom,” but this supposed freedom is limited in the context of privatization, deregulation, militarization, and commodification (Giroux, 2012, p. 69). Neoliberalists value accountability, standardization, efficiency, and consumer choice (Ambrosio, 2013, pp. 316-333). Further, neoliberal influences are hegemonic, achieved through coercion and consent (Parker, 2013, pp. 193-213). Consent has been democratically coerced; in fact, the powerful ideologies of neoliberalism have

circulated through corporations, the media, and the numerous institutions that constitute civil society such as universities, schools, churches, and professional associations. The long march of neoliberal ideas through these institutions with corporate backing and funding, [and] the capture of certain segments of the media, and the conversion of many intellectuals to neoliberal way of thinking, created a climate of opinion in support of neoliberalism as the exclusive guarantor of freedom. (Harvey, 2005, p. 65)

Capitalism and neoliberal ideology are supported by the American Dream, which has been legitimized by the American people, resulting in consent for institutionalized racism (De Lissovoy, 2016, pp. 52-69). Resistance is a part of that consent. Resistance occurs when people “refuse to consider alternative perspectives that challenge the dominant ideology that maintains the status quo” (Goodman, 2011, p. 51). In order to understand resistance, people must understand the social, political, and economic systems that reinforce the stories of meritocracy, individualism, and competition—these stories maintain the superiority and normalcy of dominant groups who are viewed as deserving of the benefits they receive (Goodman, 2011, p. 53). Resistance comes from fear produced by asking people to question their belief systems—such questioning creates anxiety and discomfort (Goodman, 2011, p. 51). This fear helps create and maintain oppressive and dominant racial ideologies (Leonardo, 2005, p. 401). Gramsci’s ideas regarding hegemony, consent, and coercion contribute to my theoretical framework in my conceptualization of white supremacy, race, racism, and White resistance. In addition, I include Gramsci’s conception of “spontaneous philosophies,” in which I include neoliberalism, capitalism, and the American Dream.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory originated from a group of legal scholars consisting of Richard Delgado, Derrick Bell, Charles Lawrence, Kimberly Crenshaw, Patricia Williams, and Mari Matsuda (Levinson et al., 2015, p. 206). Critical race theory is a philosophical and historical movement whose proponents examine society through the intersection of law, race, and power; in particular, the social construction of race constrains societal outcomes for people of color (Levinson et al., 2015, p. 206). Critical race theory includes the concepts of “double consciousness” (DuBois, 1903, p 82), “interest convergence” (Bell, 2001, p. 9), intersectionality, colorblind ideology, and the significance of racial identity (Levinson et al., 2011, p. 206). Critical race theorists seek to address racial inequality through storytelling and counter-narratives (Levinson et al., 2011).

Criticism of Colorblind Ideology and Racism

Colorblindness is the refusal to acknowledge physical differences based on skin color (Gullett & West, 2016, pp. 69-81). Common statements regarding colorblindness include “I don’t see color” or “I’m colorblind.” The intention behind the statements typically relates to what many are taught during childhood, which is that color does not matter (Gullett & West, 2016, pp. 69-81). White people claim colorblindness to avoid talking about race for fear of appearing biased, or worse, racist (Gullett & West, 2016, pp. 69-81). However, claiming colorblindness excludes acknowledging the importance of racial identity, which is a fundamental part of identity. Naming race is a discomfort to White Americans; however, ignoring the significance of race shelters white people from

feeling fragile and overwhelmed (Gullett & West, 2016, pp. 69-81). Thus, colorblindness caters to whiteness and invalidates the experiences of people of color regarding racism (Gullett & West, 2016, pp. 69-81). In addition, colorblindness ideology is disingenuous. That is, no one would claim not to notice hair color, eye color, height, or weight, and yet people deny noticing skin color. In addition, claiming colorblindness hurts relations, according to Gullett & West (2016)

race is encoded automatically and without conscious effort, and this incongruity between trying to appear as if one has not noticed race while still automatically noticing race can lead to a host of negative downstream consequences during interpersonal interactions (p. 72).

If people ignore skin color, what does that mean for People of Color? Are they invisible? Do their experiences not matter? Gotanda (1991) pointed out that the idea of colorblindness

is self-contradictory, because it is impossible not to think about a subject without having first thought about it at least a little. . . . To be racially color-blind . . . is to ignore what one had already noticed. The medically color-blind individual never perceives color in the first place; the racially color-blind individual perceives race and then ignores it. (p. 81)

I chose the title for this section because I see this ideology as another means of disregarding disparities among racial groups. If people do not talk about race, then for white Americans, there is no problem that needs to be fixed. Thus, race only matters when it benefits whites. Bell's (as cited in Levinson et al., 2011) thesis of "interest

convergence” holds that racial justice and tolerance are accepted only when it suits white people’s interests (p. 209).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality focuses on how identities operate under the structures of power. Critical race theorists seek to understand how racism, sexism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, and other systems of inequities operate in discussions of power, privilege, and oppression (Crenshaw, 1995 pp. 357-383). “Racial oppression exists in multiple layers based on gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality” (Levinson et al., 2011, p. 209). The experiences of oppression cannot be separated into one specific identity because these experiences intersect. For example, I cannot separate my experiences with sexism from the classist oppression I felt in my youth. It is important to note that the experiences of oppression are different based on people’s various identities, and further, that these experiences are structural and tied to capitalism.

Interest-Convergence

Bell’s (1980) thesis relates well to Americans’ colorblind ideology and need to disregard color. Colorblindness only benefits whites, in particular, white capitalists. However, if people do not acknowledge race, then disparities will be rationalized—blaming individuals does not take into account social structure and history. It is disconcerting that the argument for colorblindness could affect the way researchers collect data to address disparities. If people really cared about social justice, then acknowledging race would never be a problem for whites. According to Bell (1980),

only when Whites perceive that it will be profitable or at least cost-free to serve, hire, admit, or otherwise deal with Blacks on nondiscriminatory basis, they do so. When they fear—accurately or not—that there may be a loss, inconvenience, or upset to themselves or other Whites, discriminatory conduct usually follows. (p. 53)

Historically, in terms of addressing racial equality, resistance from whites occurs politically, economically, and socially. For example, if whites desired racial equity, controversy over affirmative action programs designed to address educational inequality would not exist. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the right for colleges to consider race and ethnicity in their admissions process; however, a poll by *Insider Higher Ed* in 2016 found that 66% of white respondents disagreed with the Supreme Court's decision (Jaschik, 2016, para. 2). When asked what criteria schools should use to evaluate students for college admission, 76% of white respondents agreed to merit-only criteria, and 22% of white respondents supported race and ethnicity being considered for admissions (Gallup, 2016). Merit is crucial for white individuals—whites tend to accept an ideology in which hard work is all people need to succeed (Feagin, Vera & Batur, 2001, p. 205). Further, many white Americans have invested as individuals in a system that does not take into account the collective history or consider how history and white supremacy have affected their institutions Feagin, Vera & Batur, 2001, p. 205). In addition, white resistance stems from privilege; asking whites to acknowledge White privilege requires a disinvestment in the American Dream. It also means acknowledging that American society is not a meritocracy—that means a person's success is not gained through hard work alone.

Critical Whiteness Theory

Critical whiteness theory was developed to examine the nature of whiteness and to explore how it operates in U.S. society. This theory is concerned with whiteness as an identity as well as a historical development and ideology in opposition to people of color (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 286). Critical whiteness theorists examine whiteness as a position of power constructed as a means for material gain (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 286). Theorists are interested in whiteness not so much as it pertains to the individual but rather to

take the emphasis off White bodies as they negotiate the day-to-day double binds of Whiteness. . . . Its shifts to the discourse, the culture, the structures, the mechanisms, the processes, the social relations of Whiteness that produce racialized subjects including Whites. (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 285)

This approach shifts the focus from the individual to whiteness as a system. Analyzing how whiteness has been historically and socially constructed is necessary for understanding systematic inequities that exist today. Instead of focusing on the individual or “who,” an analysis of whiteness as a system shifts the focus to “how” (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 285).

The Invisibility of Whiteness

When engaging in the concept of “whiteness” with my students, I find many of our conversations redirect back to the individual as white students take on a victim mentality. According to DiAngelo (2006), White individuals interpret the production of Whiteness in society in self-absorbed ways, focusing only on their individual

experiences, feeling a sense of victimhood and guilt (pp. 1960-1982). These responses dismiss the existence of whiteness, making the category completely invisible and blameless (Hyttén, 2003, p. 530). For example, Moon (2000) found through the process of socialization that white girls “learn whiteness is dignity and respectability,” and in the process of “whitespeak,” racism becomes disembodied, placing the responsibility on the “anonymous” (p. 191). Thus, anonymity removes any blame or responsibility for power and privilege ascribed to whiteness (Moon, 2000, p. 194). This allows white individuals “to deny [their] own racial situatedness” which gives them permission to be “colorblind,” thus making color and whiteness invisible so that no one is to blame, and so no one can be regarded as racist (Moon, 2000, p. 194).

For many white individuals, race is invisible (Applebaum, 2006, pp. 345-347). For them, there is no such thing as Whiteness, and those who speak against whiteness are seen as racist, because they are acknowledging that race matters (Chubbuck, 2004, pp. 301-333). Chubbuck (2004) wrote, “One of the signs of the times is that we don’t know what ‘White’ is” because it is so invisible and protected by power and privilege gained from that invisibility (pp. 301-333). According to Leonardo (2007), “Whiteness is nowhere since it is unmarked, and everywhere since it is the standard by which other groups are judged” (p. 25).

White Victimization, Resistance, Denial, and Complicity

Narratives from white individuals have focused on interpretations of personal experiences, revealing “guilt or embarrassment when confronting the fact that whiteness is a meaningful and consequential social positionality” (Hyttén & Warren, 2003, p. 72).

Many white individuals have expressed guilt for whiteness and have incorporated narratives that “attempted to invalidate charges of racism by proving that the speaker has always been connected to people of color and has had any number of near color experiences” (Thompson, 2003, p. 9).

Many of the narratives have included personal stories of victimhood based upon Whites’ own encounters. For example, in higher education, according to Applebaum (2008), many white students have expressed feeling victimized by their professors because they felt their own personal narratives and experiences did not count (p. 10). However, white students’ self-absorption and expressions of victimhood diminish the experiences of those who are marginalized. There is no power and privilege in being marginalized, but there is power and privilege in being white. Thus, white victimhood turns the attention away from those who are truly victimized. This process only reinforces the invisibility of race, making the problem an individual issue rather than an institutional or structural issue. Whites may claim, “It’s not my problem, I am not racist,” or “In comparison with other whites I know, I’m really open-minded” (Thompson, 2003, p. 9). The white identity, or whiteness, is replaced by the individual and thus is considered a personal attack on self.

Summary

As an educator, it is my responsibility to ask students to question the norm, including “the normalized nature of whiteness,” which means asking them to think about “how” rather than “who” (Blair, 2008, p. 15). Whiteness must be critically examined and debunked, and the “power of institutional racism” must be questioned (Blair, 2008,

p. 15). To resist racism, “whiteness [must] be made visible to white people” (Applebaum, 2004, p. 10). People can no longer blame those who are victimized by systems of oppression, condemning them for bad choices, flawed culture, and social pathologies that people believe contribute to the existence of welfare mothers, low educational achievement, out-of-wedlock childbirths, and abuse of taxpayers’ monies (Wise, 2012, p. 1516). People can no longer tell stories of whiteness, comparing people of color to those who have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps like other white ethnic groups such as the Jews, Italians, Scottish, and Irish (Wise, 2012, p. 1516). People can no longer make excuses for not talking about racism, claim “colorblindness,” or suggest that talking about racism will only encourage people of color to adopt “victim mentality” (Wise, 2012, p. 1516).

The central purpose of this research was to make whiteness visible, to help white students’ overcome resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities in the classroom, utilizing autoethnography, with an emphasis on an analysis of the interactions between individuals and institutions. The theoretical framework incorporates various theories, including critical theory, critical race theory, and critical whiteness theory. My methodology works to deconstruct my whiteness by sharing my personal stories. This research examines my lived experiences and reflections, in the context of institutional social relations with the application of theoretical analysis to produce an authentic and rich explanation of white resistance and the struggle to fight against racism—for myself, and I hope, for my students. I seek to contribute to the body

of work that addresses White resistance to institutional racism and white privilege by addressing the following questions:

1. How have dominant cultural ideologies, power relations, and institutional processes shaped and formed my understanding of race and racism?
 - a. How have institutional processes, power relations, and dominate cultural ideologies of race contributed to my White resistance to and denial of racism, White privilege, and racial inequities?
 - b. How has positionality as it relates to gender, social class, and religion informed my understanding of race and racism?
2. What struggles and concerns have I encountered during the process of writing this dissertation?

In applying theoretical analysis to my intellectual work and my lived experiences I seek to produce an authentic and rich explanation of white resistance and the struggle to fight against racism—for myself, and I hope, for my students. Theoretical reflexivity is an important part of my intellectual work, and institutional ethnography and autoethnography are means to represent my research along with my voice within the text as it relates to institutions and the systems of oppression and privilege (Butryn, 2009, pp. 323-341). According to Ellis & Bochner (2006) it is a method which

shows struggle, passion, embodied life, and the collaborative creation of sense-making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel, to empathize, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate. (p. 433).

It is my responsibility to “deconstruct whiteness” and to encourage my students to become more “racially cognizant of whiteness” so that they are more engaged in fighting for racial justice (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67). All people would benefit from a more racially just society (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75). If I can deconstruct my whiteness by sharing my personal stories, thereby making whiteness visible, then maybe my students will have the courage to do the same. From a moral aspect, the incentive for whites is our morality, because racism is dehumanizing and this is about human dignity and respect. From a societal standpoint, disregarding morality, racism wrecks havoc on our institutions and has historically damaged education, the government, the criminal justice system and our economy in regards to protecting civic and human rights (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75).

Racism is also illogical, contributing to poor education, in which we do not advance as a society (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75). Think of all the benefits we would have received from the contributions of People of Color for the betterment of our society in areas such as science, technology, medicine, and philosophy. We all benefit, whether we choose reasons of morality or just personal selfish interests in the fight against racism (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75). You do not have to be a moral person to see that racism benefits no one.

CHAPTER III

“VULNERABLE SELVES” AND “EVOCATIVE STORIES”: WHY WRITE AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY?

For this dissertation, I will provide a series of composite stories and narratives in letters addressed to C. Hope. C. Hope represents “critical hope” which is defined as “an act of ethical and political responsibility that has the potential to recover a lost sense of connectedness, relationality, and solidarity with others” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 14).

Zembylas (2014) stated:

To say that someone is critically hopeful means that the person is involved in a critical analysis of power relations and how they constitute one’s emotional ways of being in the world, while attempting to construct, imaginatively and materially, a different lifeworld. (p. 13)

Critical hope is not “blind faith that things will get better” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 13) or “hokey hope” that is individualistic and based on meritocratic notions or “mythical hope” that aligns with stories of equal opportunity, nor is it “hope deferred” based on research of “inequitable structures” and systems without “active engagement” (Grain & Lund, 2016, 45-59).

I will frame my autoethnographic approach using letter writing as a means to foster connections between writer and reader, showing vulnerability, authenticity and most importantly, accessibility. These methods were also framed within elements of the

“storytelling project model.” I believe that stories have a way of building community and are an “accessible vehicle” and analytical tool that provides readers the capability to connect with the writer, providing an opportunity to assess and challenge the “status quo” (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

I will draw from a series of composite stories from the classroom and personal narratives from my life, as reflections of the past, forming an evolutionary memoir that will reveal in reflection and analysis my understanding of race. I will discuss my direct participation in reproducing racist ideologies, as well as my indirect participation, often displayed in silence when racial prejudice and discrimination took place. In addition, I will include a critical reflection piece titled “Letter to Self,” which will be a reflection on the writing process for this dissertation. This Letter to Self will provide an opportunity for me to think through the process and address comments and concerns from those who have read and edited my material.

Autoethnography a Methodological Approach

My desire for this dissertation is to shift away from the more traditional “objective” social science approach toward a praxis that values subjective truths and the complex realities of navigating a world enforced and maintained by structural hegemonic ideologies. These hegemonic ideologies are maintained in the U.S. culture, economy, and social environment (Warren, 2001, p. 130). According to the constructivist paradigm, knowledge is “socially situated” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 84). According to this paradigm,

there exist multiple, socially constructed realities ungoverned by any natural laws, causal or otherwise. Truth is understood in the constructivist paradigm in terms of the best informed and most sophisticated construction around which consensus can be established. (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 84)

No scientific research is unbiased and value-free. Value exists in subjective truths. Therefore, for this dissertation, I plan to use an autoethnographic approach as a way to situate myself as an educator, student, and white middle-class woman. I am cognizant of the privilege and the power conveyed upon me because of whiteness. The construct of whiteness connects to a social structure of white supremacy (Arai & Kivel, 2009, pp. 459-470). This particular approach creates space for critical reflection using an aesthetic presentation to challenge and dismantle what has been internalized from hegemonic ideologies.

Ellis (1999) stated that the autoethnographer

seeks to develop an ethnography that includes researchers' vulnerable selves, emotions, bodies, and spirits; produces evocative stories that create the effect of reality; celebrates concrete experience and intimate detail; examines how human experience is endowed with meaning; is concerned with moral, ethical, and political consequences; encourages compassion and empathy; helps us know how to live and cope; features multiple voices and repositions readers and—subjects as coparticipants in dialogue; and seeks a fusion between social science and literature. (p. 669)

In addition, I seek to share with my white students the stories of my experiences and struggles with resistance. My struggle has ethical, moral, and political consequences, for me and for others (Ellis, 1999, p. 669).

Criticism of Autoethnography as a Methodological Approach

Critics of the autoethnographic approach have referred to autoethnography as a form of navel gazing and vain self-indulgence (Sitton, 2003). However, I suggest that autoethnography is a “communicative action” that offers a “subjective rationality, evoking dialogue” among readers (Sitton, 2003, p. xii). According to Habermas’s (as cited in Sitton, 2003) theory of communicative action, U.S. society is constructed through discourse; however, power and oppression have distorted the discourse, motivating people to value positivism as the dominant form of rationality (p. xii). Positivism is valued for being perceived as neutral and objective, free from irrational subjectivity.

According to Anderson (2000), “science and technical expert knowledge have been given the highest authority, leaving public debate as a forum for the collective formation of will to become impoverished and fragmented” (p. 329). Habermas (2003) suggested several forms of rationality: (a) instrumental rationality, or what people know as the positivism paradigm; (b) moral-practical rationality, which focuses on moral and legal arguments; and (c) aesthetic-expressive rationality, which stipulates that subjective reality has value (p. xii). Personal experiences are political and represent a “means of unpacking the larger cultural context wherein personal experience lies” (Potter, 2015, p. 1435). According to Bocher (2007), autoethnographic research is not what other researchers refer to as “narcissist” or “lacking in accuracy.” Instead, Bocher stated,

The sad truth is that the academic self frequently is cut off from the ordinary, experience self. A life of theory can remove one from experiences, make one feel unconnected. All of us inhabit multiple worlds. When we live in the world of theory, we usually assume that we are inhabiting an objective world. There, in the objective world, we are expected to play the role of spectator. It is a hard world for a human being to feel comfortable in, so we try to get rid of the distinctively human characteristics that distort the mythological beauty of objectivity. We are taught to master methods that exclude the capriciousness of immediate experience. When we do, we find ourselves in a world devoid of spirituality, emotion, and poetry—a scientific, world in which, a[s] Galileo insisted, there is no place for human feelings, motives, or consciousness. (p. 434)

I want my students to feel connected to the world around them and to their feelings.

Justice requires consciousness, human emotion, and motives (Bocher, 2007, p. 434).

People are not spectators in an objective world. Autoethnography allows readers to connect to the world through the stories of writers (Bocher, 2007, p. 434).

As an educator and student in academia, I have discovered a need to legitimize sociology as a real, objective, hard science. Sociology is often criticized for being “soft” (Bocher, 2007, p. 434), which is a subjective pejorative. Typically, my students relate sociology to socialism, which makes discussions difficult from the first day of class. Students immediately push back because of their preconceived notions about sociology, which they value less in comparison to other disciplines such as engineering or biology.

Sociology is a science. However, it is possible the push for hard, objective science has contributed to the perpetuation of a sexist system, in which people dichotomize disciplines much as they dichotomize gender. Being male, masculine, hard, and tough is more valuable than being female, feminine, weak, and soft (Storer, 1967, pp.75-84). People value masculine traits when men dominate these disciplines (Storer,

1967, pp.75-84). This valuation indicates a racist system in which people value White men's expertise over the expertise of men and women of color and women in general (Storer, 1967, pp.75-84). My perspective is similar to that of sociologist Dorothy Smith, who stated her frustration with "sociology's focus on objective knowledge from an unproblematized, nominalized, positionless, male-centered standpoint" (Smith, 2005, p. 11).

Some critics have viewed autoethnography as similar to sociology: too subjective and too soft. However, there may be a pattern here. This criticism could occur because research techniques, disciplines, education, and communities are including more women and people color. Do people view these things as less valuable because they are not white male-centered? If they were acknowledged as being white male-centered, would people's perceptions of them change? Would these elements be more valuable, and if so, would this perception be objective? True objectivity does not exist, but that does not mean I do not value the positivist paradigm. As a social scientist, it is important for me to check my intentions. It is important to "know myself" to understand what role I may play because of history and social structure. There should be no absolute way to study society. There is value in both paradigms.

I recognize that autoethnographies are not simply stories. As an autoethnographer, I must

look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you're] telling [your] story—and that's nice—but people do that on Oprah [a U.S.-based television program] every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? What makes your story more valid is that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and a research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it around these tools and literature and just frame it as “my story,” then why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25 times a day on TV? (Allen, personal interview, May 4, 2006)

Ellis and Bochner (2000) referred to autoethnographies as “evocative stories” of the researcher’s identity and positionality that

long to be used rather than analyzed; to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled; to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions; and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts. (p. 292)

This approach will allow me to explore my own ignorance and put more focus and responsibility on myself regarding how I have perpetuated racism rather than focusing on people of color with the expectation that they will teach me about their own oppression, as if somehow I am separate from their struggle. This ignorance is my own struggle, part of my identity and positionality that has required a lot of personal work. Recognizing one’s participation in a system requires “ongoing personal work” (Goodman, 2011, p. 187). This personal work means recognizing personal assumptions and prejudices. This personal work is never done and requires that people “remain self-aware, without being self-conscious” (Goodman, 2011, p. 188). It means taking on a “traitorous identity” as a White individual by writing about my own racial assumptions

and the role I have played in maintaining a racist system (Harding, 1991, p. 292).

According to Harding (1991), adopting a traitorous identity means

I must undertake difficult tasks in order to generate effective antiracist insights. I cannot just repeat what people of color have said. I have to educate myself about people of color, their struggles and their cultures. I have to study my own ignorance as well—the culturally rewarded White ignorance discussed by philosopher Marilyn Frye. I have to study White exploitation, domination, oppression, and privilege. . . . If I cannot learn to think critically out of traitorous identities, my ways of seeing race and class will tend to focus on the oppression of others rather than on my own situation and the perspective available from within it. It is persons of my kind of race and class, after all, who perpetuate racism and class exploitation. (pp. 292-293)

As an educator, I am entirely committed to equity and justice. I desire to live my life in an awakened state of mindfulness. Mindfulness is the “art of conscious living” by “paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4). I predict that even in writing this dissertation, my privilege and whiteness will show through in unexpected ways. Thus, even in this process, I have an opportunity to develop myself by refining my own perceptions, my views, and my consciousness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 264). I hope sharing these reflections of my own ignorance of racism and participation in a system that oppresses people of color will help my white students relate and be less resistant to discussions of white privilege. If I am willing to be vulnerable and share with my students the process of unlearning my own privilege and oppression, then maybe they will have the courage to do so as well. I want to engage white students “to offer lessons for further conversation.” Autoethnography is a technique that will allow me to

show struggle, passion, embodied life, and other collaborative creations of sense making in situations in which people have to cope with dire circumstances and loss of meaning. Autoethnography wants the reader to care, to feel to empathize, and to do something, to act. It needs the researcher to be vulnerable and intimate. (Bell, 2010, p. 433)

Additional Works Using Autoethnographic Narratives

Several autoethnographers have focused on racial identity, including Gatson (2003), who described “confronting her Blackness, confronting her multiracialness, and confronting her whiteness” (p. 20); and Vidal-Ortiz (2004), who researched racial categories and the autoethnographic description of “Puerto Rican-ness” (p. 179). Other narratives have included Warren (2001), whose autoethnographic work explored “the role of absence for the white subject” (p. 36); and McIntosh’s (1990) narrative of becoming aware of white privilege and its unearned advantages. In addition, Wise (2005) wrote *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, in which he interrogated White supremacy and racism using autoethnographic narratives. Kendall (2006) explored institutional racism and white privilege. Kendall found “importance [in] doing our own personal work [so we may] build authentic relationships across race” (p. vii). Further, Julie Landsman (2001) stated, “Self-scrutiny is exactly what white teachers must engage in if we are to make changes in our classrooms and in our institutions” (p. 15).

Much of the existing research has addressed white privilege and white supremacy. For example, Wise (2012) focused mainly on historical issues in an interrogation—history is important but does not incorporate theory. In fact, a majority of existing researchers have included the narrative element without applying theory to interrogate the

narratives further. In my work, I want to combine my narratives with a theoretical framework to explore resistance, paying particular attention to my own resistance. Combining narrative with theory is a way to bridge lived experiences and academic material that may be challenging to understand and not always accessible to the public. As an academic, according to Mills (1995) one,

must learn to use your life experience in your intellectual work: continually to examine and interpret it. In this sense craftsmanship is the center of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product upon which you may work. (p. 10)

Combining my intellectual work with my lived experiences may bring together an authentic, rich explanation of white resistance and the struggle to rise above it, for me, and I hope, for others.

For years, I have tried to find ways to address white resistance and denial in my classroom. I hope as I write this dissertation I will find some resolution. I am now and likely to remain a critical optimist. However, I do not expect to eliminate all my white students' resistance and denial when I address racial inequality in class. I also do not expect racism will be abolished in my lifetime, if ever. However, I do believe in people and their ability to better themselves, for I do not believe in the dichotomy that people are either good or evil. People are not born sexist, racist, heterosexist, ablest, or classist. People are socialized to exhibit such behaviors, but they can make a conscious effort to change.

As a sociologist, I see the world in groups, and I look at patterns of behavior. I see the impacts of institutions, structures, and ideologies. People exist somewhere between, being both individuals and members of society. In my teaching, I have always focused on society. In fact, that is the simple definition of sociology, the study of human society. However, during my displays of statistics and terminology, maybe I have missed the human aspect of understanding. People are social beings, with the dialogical need to interpret, relate, and understand themselves in relation to the world. This is why I have chosen to share my own stories and narratives as a means to connect with students.

Letter Writing: Dear Critical Hope

In my dissertation, I will frame my narrative and composite stories in the form of letters to my white students. In academia, writing is a specific strategy for teaching sociology, and I have often used this strategy in my own teaching. Although letter writing is not a common strategy, I believe the approach has value. In general, letter writing fosters connections between writer and reader. Great writers such as Emily Dickinson used letter writing to create a partnership with her readers (Lebow, 1999, p. 10). Considering the historical context in which she lived, letter writing was one way she could construct an identity outside of “women’s work” to obtain social interaction and connection with the outside world (Lebow, 1999, p. 10). For Dickinson, the letter represented a tangible extension of herself that she could share with the world (Lebow, 1999, p. 10). Dickinson’s letters show her as a vulnerable human being who desired to make connections with others. According to Lebow (1999), “When people engage in intimate self-disclosure, the process of sharing is valued as much as what is shared” and

this creates trust between the writer and the reader, making the writer “an intimate confidante” (p. 32).

Letter writing has also been used to examine culture in other disciplines, such as anthropology. Margaret Mead (as cited in Scheld, 2009) used letter writing as a means to investigate and record her research in letters to her friends and family. Mead (as cited in Scheld, 2009) used “letter writing as a part of her methodology” to reflect on her writing and “theorize her observations” (p. 60). Letter writing has also been used by the Public Anthropology Community Action website as a way to analyze writing among students (Scheld, 2009, p. 60).

Students have said that letter writing between educators and students fosters a more personal and authentic sharing of information that is appreciated by both groups (Scheld, 2009). One example of this is an anthropologist’s response to a student’s question on fieldwork and methodology. Students were asked to exchange letters with an anthropologist asking questions related to the fieldwork experience; one question was “If you could do fieldwork over again, what would you change?”

In the letter, the anthropologist showed a “level of honest emotion” that students “could fully empathize with,” which created “a rich teachable moment”—the letter gave a more humanized and realistic perception of the anthropologist (Scheld, 2009, p. 59). In addition, the anthropologist’s honesty and humility gave the student a greater appreciation for the discipline (Scheld, 2009, p. 59).

Kozol (2007) used letter writing in his book *Letters to A Young Teacher*. As an educator, I have appreciated Kozol’s book, especially because it is a personal reflection

of his challenges in teaching as well as a guide to handling such challenges. The book is a different and refreshing approach not composed of academic “jargon,” making it accessible to the public. Darling-Hammond (2010) stated that the book is “a tutorial in humanity,” and Zinn (2009) stated that Kozol’s writing is told “with a refreshing honesty [that] conveys the excitement and joy of preparing a new generation to remake the world” (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 16). My intent in using letter writing is to establish a relationship with readers as I describe my experiences and observations of my students to provide a style of writing that is personal, authentic, and most importantly, accessible.

The Storytelling Project Model

In addition, I plan to use three segments of the storytelling project model (Bell, 2010) as an additional way to frame my stories and narratives (p. 30). I will introduce a new segment titled “cultural conformity narratives & stories” to the paradigm. These stories portray systematic training of dominant culture norms within systems of oppression and privilege (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17). Cultural conformity stories are my narratives. I will not use the segment from the “storytelling project model” titled “resistance stories” which are

the warehouse of stories that demonstrate how people have resisted racism, challenged the stock stories that support it and fought for more equal and inclusive social arrangements through our history but seldom taught in our schools” (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

Resistance stories are not included in my research. However, I consider this dissertation, in its totality, a story of resistance. Resistance stories challenge systemic

racism (Bell, 2010) and cultural conformity narratives & stories reveal “internalized dominance” as the result of racial ideologies (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17).

Internalized dominance is the process of

Internalizing and acting out (often unintentionally) the constant message circulating in the culture that you and your group are superior to whichever group in minoritized in relation to yours and that you are entitled to your higher position (p. 185).

I will share narratives and stories of conformity as it relates to institutionalized racism, which feature the systematic training of dominant cultural norms within systems of oppression and privilege (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17). I will include from the concealed stories, “emerging & transforming stories” from the storytelling project model. Concealed stories are stories that are hidden and remain in the shadows (Bell, 2010, p. 30). The concealed stories I plan to reveal, include history and heritage, media misrepresentation, wealth and income disparities, discriminatory practices, policies and laws, and disparities in education and medicine. These are stories of history, victimization, exclusion and inequality (p. 30). Emerging & transforming stories are resistances to stories of cultural conformity established by stock stories (Bell, 2010, p. 30). Emerging & transforming stories are represented in my “Letters to Self” and in the “Analysis of My Narratives and Stories.”

Again, my intention is to show my vulnerability as I share detailed narratives of my past and present, as well as the interactions and moments that have allowed me to progress to the point at which I am now able to address my resistance. Narratives and

stories have a way of building community. Stories “operate on both individual and collective levels, they bridge the sociological, abstract, with psychological, personal contours of daily experience” (Bell, 2010, p. 30). Stories are an “accessible vehicle” and analytical tool that gives readers the ability to connect with the writer as they share in the telling of those stories, providing an opportunity to assess and challenge the “status quo” (Bell, 2010, p. 30). In my letter writing to C. Hope, I will use Bell’s storytelling project model including a new segment titled cultural conformity narratives & stories, as a way to format my writing and address “stock stories.” Stock stories are stories that

are introduced as the first type [of story] because they are the most public and ubiquitous in the mainstream institutions of society—schools, business, government and the media. Stock stories are the tales told by the dominant group, passed on through historical and literary documents, and celebrated through public rituals, law, the arts, education and media (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

Examples of stock stories include the superiority of whiteness, and the superiority of men. In my letters I will focus on the stock stories of the American Dream, hyperindividualism, meritocracy, freedom, whiteness, post-racial ideologies and colorblind ideology. The stock stories in this dissertation will be revealed in my personal narratives and composite stories from the classroom. Using social constructivism theory, standpoint theory, critical theory, critical race theory and critical whiteness, I will interrogate and analysis these stock stories within my narrative and composite stories which portray systematic training of dominant culture norms within systems of oppression and privilege. Figure 2 is Bell’s storytelling project model and Figure 3 includes elements form the module, which has been modified, creating a new model titled

“Reflexive storytelling paradigm: Connecting stories and narratives of internalized dominance with systems of oppression and power” (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

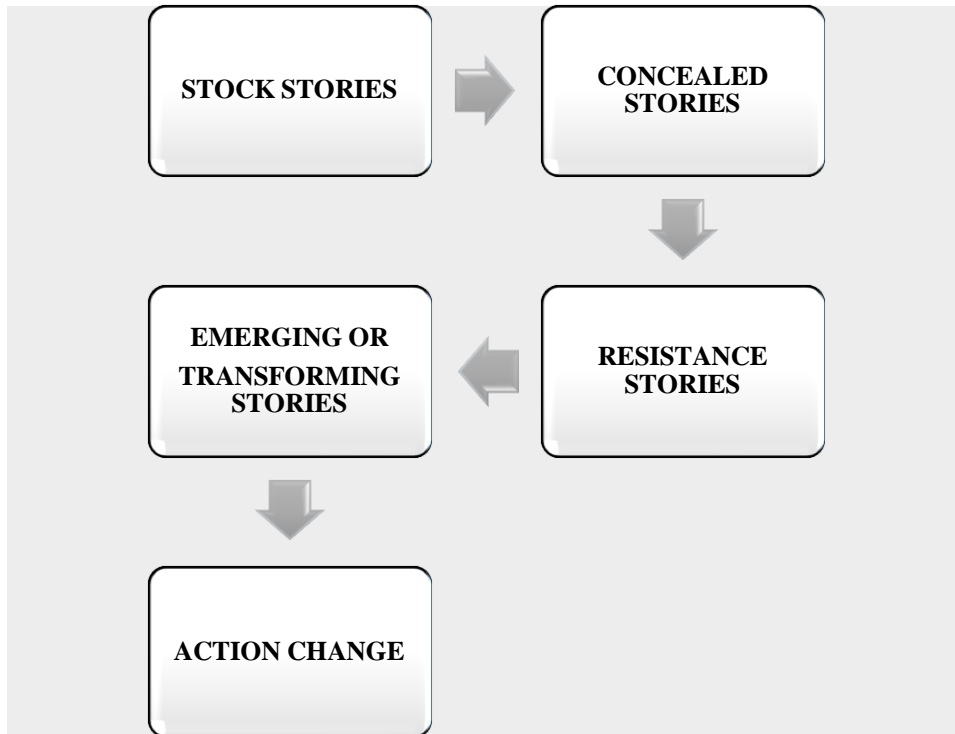


Figure 2. The Storytelling Project Module

Note: Adapted from *Storytelling for social justice: Connecting narrative and the arts in antiracist teaching*, by L. A. Bell, 2010, New York, NY: Routledge, p. 30.

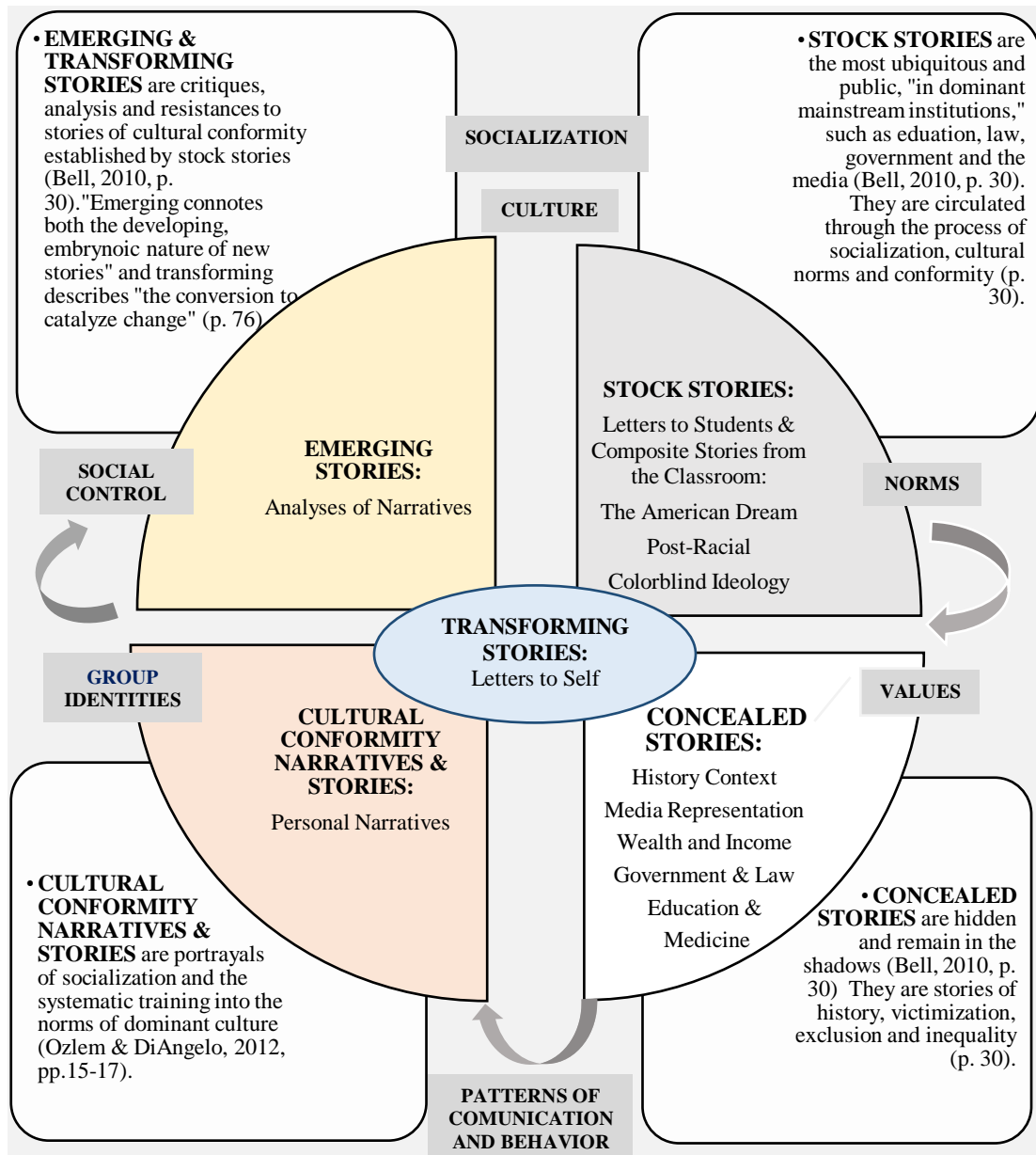


Figure 3. Reflexive Storytelling Paradigm: Connecting Stories and Narratives of Internalized Dominance with Systems of Oppression and Power

Note: Adapted from *Storytelling for Social Justice: Connecting Narrative and the Arts in Antiracist Teaching*, by L. A. Bell, 2010, New York, NY: Routledge, p. 30.

Composite Stories from the Classroom

My letters will begin with composite stories from the classroom, including several elements: (a) descriptions of events that occurred in response to conversations I have had with students, (b) descriptions of responses to my observations made during group discussions, and (c) conversations students have had with each other. These composite stories of the events that took place in the classroom will come from my journals. I have documented my experiences with student resistance and denial when I have addressed race, racism, and inequality in class. For the past seven years, I have been recording many of my teaching experiences, noting my attempts to engage students, reflecting on my own teaching style, and describing my successes and failures. In addition, journaling has also given me a way to release my frustrations when I could find no resolution. Journaling has provided me the space to question and reflect on my own biases—I recognize how easy it is to allow resistance and denial to seep back into my consciousness, especially when I am afraid. Journaling has been a way to hold myself accountable and honest.

Personal Narratives

I will also include personal narratives from my past. In the process of sharing these stories, I will analyze my experiences in the context of the social, political, economic, and historical events that have shaped my understanding of how the world operates.

I propose this approach as a means of establishing authenticity with my students through transparency and vulnerability. If I am to earn my students' trust, to be "worthy

of belief,” then they need to see that I am genuine. The only way I know how to do this is by sharing my own personal struggles, failures, and fears, which have created resistance and denial within me. The stories I will share will not be flattering, but they are my truth, reminders of how human and imperfect I am.

By using my narratives and my reflections of the past and applying a theoretical analysis in the social, political, economic, and historical context that has shaped my life, I hope the connection of self to society will emerge, showing students that people do not exist in a vacuum. If my students can relate to my stories, maybe they will have a better understanding of how society shapes people. Context matters, in particular, people’s history, for “neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both” (Mills, 1995, p. 1).

I realize my white students may read my stories and narratives and think, “Wow, this person is really racist, and I can’t believe that she admitted it.” This response would reflect whites’ fear of being labeled a bad person. However, the fear of being labeled a bad person has contributed to systems of oppression and privilege (Johnson, 2006, pp. 1-20). People create distance between themselves and the system, accepting the illusion that they have nothing to do with these systems. Americans exist in a racist society. White supremacy has institutionalized racist ideologies. This is what I have inherited. I did not choose to be white and have privilege as a result of this created racial category. I am an “anti-racist racist,” and it would be disingenuous of me to state otherwise. How could I not be considered racist? I exist under a system in which I have been socialized to believe that being white means being superior. I believe the personal work of

unlearning privilege and oppression can “create meaning in a system that does not make sense” (Goodman, 2011, p. 104).

Letters to Self: Critical Reflection on the Writing Process

In addition, I will include a section titled “Letter to Self: Critical Reflections on the Writing Process.” This section will contain my reflections on writing the chapters, as well as my response to questions and criticisms I have received from those who have read my material. This section will provide a space to investigate in more depth what I have written and explore why I have written it. In addition, this section will give me an opportunity to write about some of the struggles I encounter during the writing process. This section of the dissertation will emerge after my letters, stories, and analyses have been written, reviewed, and revised.

I have decided on three letters, each beginning with a story from the classroom on a topic discussed in class which address a stock story. This information comes from my journals, written from January 2009 until the present. In addition, I will include narratives from my own personal experiences, reflecting on my own direct and indirect contributions to racial inequality. These narratives are situated in experiences that took place between 1980 and 2016. I will use my personal stories as the basis for discussing key concepts as I apply a theoretical analysis of what took place during that period and how events relate to my present situation.

How to Read My Letters

The letters, stories, narratives, reflections, and analyses are separated by headings. For example, Letter One will begin with composite stories formatted as a letter to C. Hope, which address a stock story. This letter stands alone and is based upon elements of the “storytelling project model.” My personal narratives are in their own sections that are based upon elements of the “storytelling project model.” My personal narratives come first and my analyses come next. My critical reflection piece on the writing process is in its own section and based upon elements of the “storytelling project model.” In addition, I will include questions that are linked to additional research, provided as bullet items that are placed in each section as it relates to the topic being addressed. It is a means to further connect personal experiences within context, systems and institutions. It also gives the reader an opportunity to participate in the reflexive process as the reader considers the questions being asked. This dissertation creates space for the reader to share in the process of reflexivity along side my analysis of my narratives, stories and reflections. The goal is to promote the practice of critical thinking, and foster personal and intellectual growth for both the reader and the writer (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, p.12). The bulleted questions also provide additional support of my theoretical analysis with the inclusion of statistical data.

Summary

My intention for this doctoral dissertation is to contribute to the body of work that addresses white resistance, in particular, white students’ resistance to and denial of institutional racism and white privilege. My autoethnographic approach is unique. I will

be using elements of the storytelling project model included in the paradigm I have created (Bell, 210, p. 30) in my personal narratives and stories, as well as composite stories drawn from my experiences in the classroom. The format will consist of letters addressed to white students. In addition, I will include a reflection piece on the process of writing this dissertation. Essentially, I plan to write a reflection on the reflection, which I believe is a unique approach. In combining my intellectual work with my lived experiences and reflections, supported by theoretical analysis, I hope to bring together an authentic, rich explanation of white resistance to and denial of racial inequalities, for myself and for others. These are stories about the struggle to rise above racism. For me, this process is about no longer being complicit in perpetuating people's pain.

CHAPTER IV

LETTER ONE: RESPONSE TO AMERICAN IDEOLOGY: THE STORIES OF THE AMERICAN DREAM AND RACIAL IDEOLOGIES

This chapter focuses on broader narratives of society, which I refer to as “stock stories.” These broader narratives are the American Dream and white supremacy. These broader narratives construct whiteness, which is a social and historical process (Winant, 2000, p. 172). This chapter calls attention to notions of ideology, power, knowledge and social control. In this chapter, I begin with composite stories from the classroom. These composite stories are based on “stock stories,” which are portrayals of socialization and systematic training of dominant culture norms (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17).

Within the composite story I attempt to address a question proposed to me by students who ask, “What was wrong with President Trump wanting to ‘Make America Great Again?’” In the process of addressing the question proposed I incorporate statistical data and questions within textboxes to promote critical thinking. The information within the textboxes are what I refer to as “concealed stories.” These stories are stories of history, victimization, exclusion and inequality as it relates to employment, the government, the criminal justice system and law.

This chapter also encompasses my personal narrative and analysis. My personal narrative is connected with the broader narratives of society as it relates to “stock stories” of the American Dream, white supremacy and whiteness. My personal narrative is a

“cultural conformity story.” It portrays my systematic training of dominant culture norms connecting my personal narrative with the broader narratives of society that reinforce whiteness (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17). This chapter concludes with an analysis of my personal narrative and a reflection on the writing process. The analysis and reflection piece are “emerging [and] transforming stories” which are critiques, analysis and resistances to stories of cultural conformity created by the broader narratives of society which are “stock stories” (Bell, 2010, p. 30)

Composite Stories from the Classroom: Dear C. Hope “What Was Wrong with President Trump Wanting to Make America Great Again?”

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.
—Martin Luther King

Dear C. Hope,

“Things have changed,” I thought to myself as I began walking down the hallway to meet with my 9:00 a.m. class. There has been a shift; you can see it in people faces, in their demeanor and interactions with one another. Trump is now President of the United States of America. “How did this happen?” I ask myself. “What did I miss?” I thought he was a joke. I ignored his bantering, when he would make comments like “Build the Wall,” “Can’t Stump Trump,” “Lock Her Up!” and “Make America Great Again!” What was it that got the American people to vote for him? I had reviewed the data based upon the exit polls, and Trump was most popular among voters who were white, middle income, male, and ages 39 and older (see Appendix A). He won the white vote among college graduates and among non-college graduates (see Appendix B). By

family income, he led the election among voters who earned more than \$50,000 annually. In terms of religious affiliation, he won the vote among white evangelicals (see Appendix C). There has been a narrative lately that the working-class, blue-collar individuals with lower levels of education were Trump's biggest supporters. This narrative is a scapegoat. I guess this narrative fits more with our perception that those with higher levels of education will, in fact, have higher levels of income, but this is contrary to the truth. Trump won 67% of white voters without a college degree, and he won 49% of white voters with a college degree (see Appendix B). Why do we blame the poor? I have heard people say, "Those poor, uneducated Trump supporters were the ones who brought Trump victory." I even considered this narrative until I reviewed the data.

I have a number of thoughts running through my mind this morning, and I feel a combination of fear and anger. Today in class, you asked me what was wrong with President Trump wanting to "Make America Great Again"! You stated that he is only upholding the values of our Founding Fathers who made America so great. I asked you, "What does this slogan mean?" and "What does it mean to make America great, again?" You said,

You know, back when we had jobs, when we could get a job fairly and not be discriminated against. Back when we didn't have to be politically correct. Today, I am not free to say what I want! My freedom has been taken away from me. I am discriminated against as a white male, and it is easier being a woman or a minority today.

I want to go back to the ‘good old days’ as a Christian nation that follows God that is fairer. I am discriminated against because I am a Christian. I ask, “Specifically, what time period would you want to return to, if you could?” and you say, “I don’t know, probably the 1950s, it sounds like things were better then.”

I ask, “What do you mean when you say ‘we,’ who are you referring to, because it sounds like you are referring to people like yourself who are white and male? Am I understanding that correctly?” You respond,

Well yea, I guess, I just feel like I am discriminated against because I am white and male. White men are always being attacked. It is always the white man’s fault, and I have to work harder than minorities because they get a free ride when it comes to school and jobs.

I have heard this sentiment often in the last 3 years. In fact, I recall reading about a retired police officer who stated that “it’s easier being a woman today than it is a man. The white man is a low person on the totem pole. Everybody else is above the white man” (Miller, 2017, p. 2).

However, let’s look at some statistics by the Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan research center that is not involved in policy recommendations. This means that the research center is not aligned with any political party, and, therefore, we can assume there is no agenda being pushed. The research center does not make policy recommendations that favor one group over another, and, from my perspective, they represent some form of neutral ground.

Let's begin by looking at statistics regarding gender. According to Brown (2017), "21 women serve in the U.S. Senate and 83 serve in the House of Representatives, comprising 19.4% of Congress" (p. 2). According to Brown (2017), This share is "nearly nine times higher than it was in 1965, [but] it remains well below the 51.4% of women in the overall U.S. adult population" (see Appendix D). Reviewing the data on female CEOs in Fortune 500 companies, only 5% of women in 2017 are chief executive (Brown, 2017, p. 4). Take a look at the chart provided by the Pew Research titled, "Center Women CEOs in Fortune 500 companies, 1995-2017" (see Appendix E).

Examining gender as it relates to work and wages, we see that the gap is narrowing in median hourly wage between men and women ages 25 to 34. Since the 1980s, women ages 16 and older have seen their median hourly wage increase from \$11.94 to \$14.90 in 2012 (see Appendix F). Men ages 16 and older have seen a decrease from \$18.57 in 1980 to \$17.79 in 2012 (see Appendix G). Women ages 18–32 have outpaced men in educational attainment with 38% of women earning a bachelor's degree, compared to 31% of men earning a bachelor's degree (see Appendix H).

According Pew Research Center (2014), women are entering the workforce with higher levels of education today, but "women's hourly wages" are only 84% of what men make hourly (p. 1). When I think about the sentiment that the retired police officer expressed, it is clear statistically that women do not have it better today than men. Women have improved in education, finances, and positions of leadership, but men still occupy most leadership positions and fare better economically, even when their educational attainment has decreased.

Women are also more likely to face challenges in their careers when it comes to balancing work and family dynamics. Women with children reported more career interruptions; 42% of women stated that they had to reduce their hours of work to care for family members, compared to 28% of men who have done the same (see Appendix I). In addition, 35% of women, compared to 17% of men, have reported that taking time off has hurt their careers (see Appendix J).

You stated that you feel discriminated against for being male, but research shows that this is not case in many avenues of life. I know you were more concerned with employment, and, as I have shown above, this too is not an issue. I am not arguing that discrimination and prejudice do not affect men on an individual level, but, from a societal standpoint, as a group, statistically speaking, and men fair better than women. Is it possible that what you are feeling relates to a shift in demographics, in which more women have entered the workforce since the 1950s, requiring both economic and political opportunities to be shared between men and women? When you stated your desire to go back to the 1950s, when America was great, I am interpreting from your statement that you want to go back to a time when men had more power both economically and politically.

However, men still have more power than women; it is just that some of that power is now being shared with women. The playing field is becoming more equitable, and that shift is making some feel discriminated against because it is requiring that we share wealth and power, which was originally off limits to marginalized groups. More people are being welcomed at the table, and isn't that what we want if we believe in

democracy and justice? Or do we believe that democracy and justice only apply to certain groups who need “to take America back” to “Make America Great Again?”

You also spoke of feeling discriminated against because you are white, so let’s take another look at statistics in areas such as education, work and wages, access to housing, and political representation. When we review racial difference in educational attainment, Whites represent 69% of those who have earned bachelor’s degrees while Hispanics account for 9% of bachelor’s degrees earned, and Blacks account for 9% of bachelor’s degrees earned (see Appendix K).

According to Pew Research Center (2016) when we review wages, white men earn more than all racial and ethnicity groups combined, except for Asian men (p. 1). Blacks earned “73% as much as whites in median hourly earnings,” and Hispanics earned 69% as much as Whites “in median hourly earnings” (see Appendix L).

According to a review of 2014 U.S. Census data, whites’ adjusted median household income was \$71,300 while Blacks’ median household income was \$43,300 (see Appendix M). Taking wealth into account, “the median net worth of white households was roughly 13 times that of black households in 2013 (\$144,200 for white households, \$11,200 for black households)” (see Appendix N). Also take a look at “[So Far, the Black Unemployment Rate Has Only Recovered in States Where It Was Highest Before the Great Recession](#)” by Valerie Wilson (2015) of the Economic Policy Institute (see Appendix O). Looking at trends in poverty, Blacks are 3 times more likely than whites to live in poverty. According to historical trends in 1974, the percentage of Blacks living in poverty was 30%, and, in 2012, the percentage for Blacks living in

poverty was 31.1% (Desilver, 2014, p. 1). In 1975, 8% of whites lived in poverty and, in 2012, 12.7% of Whites lived in poverty (see Appendix S). Poverty rates have increased for whites, but the poverty rate for Blacks is more than double the rate for whites (Desilver, 2014, p. 1). Take a look at this chart by the Pew Research Center (2013): [Who's Poor in America? 50 years into the 'War on Poverty,' a Data Portrait \(see Appendix P & Q\).](#) Also, look at the article "[Demographic & Economic Data, by Race](#)" by the Pew Research Center on Social & Demographic Trends (2013). This article provides historical trends on median adjusted income, poverty rates, median net worth of households, homeownership, high school completion, college completion rates, life expectancy at birth, and incarceration rates (see Appendix S & T).

Reviewing statistics on homeownership (see Appendix V) and opportunity, 41.3% of Blacks are homeowners, and 47% of Hispanics are homeowners; meanwhile, 71.9% of whites are homeowners (DeSilver & Bialik, 2017, p. 2). In 2015, 19.2% of Hispanic and 27.4% of Black applicants who applied for mortgages were denied, compared to 11% of white applicants (DeSilver & Bialik, 2017, p. 2). Take a look at this chart (see Appendix W) by the Pew Research Center (2016): [Fall in Homeownership Continues amid 'Housing Recovery.'](#)

In addition, Blacks and Hispanics are more likely to pay higher mortgage rates when purchasing a home. According to the Pew Research Center (2017), less than "two-thirds of black and Hispanic householders had mortgage rates below 5%, compared with 73% of white householders and 83% of Asian householders" (see Appendix W). Homeownership has declined since the "Great Recession," but those who have been

affected the most are Black households and younger households (DeSilver & Bialik, 2017, p. 2). Take a look at this chart (see Appendix X) by the Pew Research Center (2016): [Share of conventional loan applications that are approved has grown since 2004.](#)

When we review the rates of homeownership for Blacks compared to Whites from 1870 to 2016, the racial gap is significant at 46.5% in 1870 compared to 30.6% in 2016 (William & Margo, 2011, p. 18). In 1870 Blacks rate of homeownership was 7.7% compared to Whites at 54.2% (William & Margo, 2011, p. 18). In 2016, whites rate of homeownership was 71.9% compared to Blacks at 41.3% (see Appendix, Y).

The racial gap has improved in rates of homeownership for Blacks and whites, but the improvement is not significant when comparing homeownership between Blacks and Whites in 2016 with a racial gap of 30.6%, which has decreased only by 1.8% from the racial gap of 32.4% in 1890 (Fry & Brown, 2016, p. 4; William & Margo, 2011, p. 18). In the course of 126 years, it is apparent that our society has not changed much. In fact, the racial gap in homeownership in 2016 suggests we are actually going backward.

In the data on racial and ethnic diversity in Congress in 2015, Whites represent 83% of congress, Blacks represent 36%, Hispanics represent 22%, Asians represent 12%, and Native Americans represent 8% (Krogstad, 2015, p. 2). Take a look at this chart by the Pew Research Center (2015): [Whites Make Up Larger Share of Congress than of U.S. Population](#) (see Appendix Z).

There is a huge discrepancy in political representation in Congress, especially compared to the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population. According to the 2016 U.S. Census, whites represent 61.3% of the U.S. population, yet they represent 83% of

Congress. Further, women only make up 19.4% of Congress, although they are 50.8% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census, 2017, p. 1). Of all the members in Congress, only 6.4% are represented by women of color (Geiger & Gramlich, 2017, p. 5).

In our conversation, you mentioned concerns of religious belief and discrimination, but it is important to note that even Congress remains vastly Christian. In 2014, 71% of U.S. adults identified as being Christian, and 90.7% of Congress identified as being Christian (Mitchell, 2017, p. 1). Take a look at this chart by the Pew Research Center (2017): [Changes in the Religious Makeup of Congress 1961-2017](#). (see Appendix AA). These statistics show that the U.S. is still predominantly Christian; in fact, Congress actually over represent this. When you compare the percentage of self-identified Christians in Congress at 91% in 2017 to 95% in 1961, any shift in religious belief has clearly been minimal within Congress (Mitchell, 2017, p. 1).

I have shared all this information with you in an attempt to address some of your personal concerns. You asked me, “What’s wrong with wanting to make America great again?” The problem is not in the idea of making America great. What’s problematic is the “making American great ‘again,’” with the assumption that it was somehow better “back in the good old days.” This is not true, particularly for those who are part of an oppressed group, but it is also not true for white males. When you make this type of comment, I cannot even fathom the fear that arises, especially for People of Color, who have expressed terror associated with the word “again,” which represents a past full of hate, discrimination, prejudice, pain, and death. You express concerns of being

discriminated against, but what you are suggesting would inflict further discrimination on others. The “good old days” are lies; the 1950s were not better.

On an individual level, I do not know your story or what you have experienced, and, again, I am not saying that you haven’t felt prejudice and discrimination in your life. As a fellow human, I recognize and feel saddened that you are angry and in pain. As individuals, when we feel defeated, fearful, or powerless, we sometimes use anger as a means to gain back control. Sometimes, anger can be empowering, especially when we feel our own power has diminished in some way. This leaves us feeling vulnerable, so we use anger to mask our fears. I have shown you that Whites as a group have historically had more power and opportunity than any other racial group. Whites experience higher levels of education, wealth, income, employment, and homeownership compared to most other racial groups.

You also still live in a society that is predominantly Christian. Demographics are changing as more individuals identify with being spiritual rather than religious, but your anxiety about being discriminated against because you are a Christian is the very reason why the state and church are separated. I would not want to exist in a society in which the government dictates or condemns religious belief. That would be an example of discrimination based upon religious belief. Remember: The Supreme Court has formed a clear separation of church and state to protect equally your religious beliefs and others’ (Green, 2014, pp. 1-18). During the courts holding of *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), Justice Hugo Black wrote

The “establishment of religion” clause of the First Amendment means at least this: Neither a state nor the Federal Government can set up a church. Neither can pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over another [...] No tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions, whatever they may be called, or whatever form they may adopt to teach or practice religion [...] In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect “a wall of separation between Church and State” (pp. 15-16).

This separation is not an attack on Christianity; rather, it is to protect your right to practice what you believe without fearing government involvement. The primary job of the government is to serve and protect all individuals, not just those who align with the majority’s belief system.

I hope that some of the fear and anger you feel has lessened with the information I have given. I have provided data that support a very different reality than your perceptions, a reality with no statistical evidence that white men are vilified and discriminated against for their race. This is fact-based information I am sharing with you in hopes that we may have a rational and honest conversation that addresses your fears. Have you ever considered that your fears may be the result of “socialized racist ideologies” and not, in fact, of people of color or women (Spanierman, Todd, & Anderson, 2009, p. 2)?

Have you ever considered the costs of racism and its effects on you and whites in general? There are consequences in occupying a dominant position in a racist society, such as feelings of shame and guilt and a loss of integrity when witnessing acts of discrimination inflicted by others and even by ourselves (Kivel, 2011, pp. 55–57). Other consequences include fear of and loss of potential relationships with people of color or

even the loss of relationships with friends and family members, if white people choose to confront racist behavior (Kivel, 2011, pp. 55–57). According to Paul Kivel (2011), the structural design of a racist society and the process of socialization within that society has a number of costs to whites, including but not limited to the following:

- Living in a white neighborhood;
- Growing up with people of color in service roles;
- Having no socialization with people of color until you are a teenager or young adult;
- Growing up constantly exposed to racial slurs, jokes, and other derogatory terms;
- Being socialized to view people of color as violent, lazy, and to blame for many of the social ills facing society;
- Being exposed to media that play off racial stereotypes;
- Being told to play with kids of your own race;
- Being told interracial romantic relationships are not allowed;
- Feeling fear or discomfort when encountering people of color in public situations;
- Having no close relationships with people of color or having potential relationships with people of color complicated or damaged as the result of varying perspectives on racism;
- Witnessing people of color being attacked and mistreated but never intervening;
- Hearing racist jokes or comments but never intervening;
- Accepting the infringement on your civil liberties because of social fears of people of color(pp. 55-57).

Paul Kivel (2011), the structural design of a racist society may not sound entirely negative to racist whites who embrace racism. Regardless, all whites are impacted negatively by racism. The negative costs are social, moral, spiritual, intellectual, psychological, physical and material (Goodman, 2011, pp. 84-101; Kivel, 2011, pp. 55-59; Spanierman, Todd and Anderson 2009, pp. 239-252). Whites may experience

psychological stress from internalized dominance which create a false sense of self and superiority (Goodman, 2011, pp. 84-101). This distorted view creates fear, denial and the inability to empathize with People of Color (Goodman, 2011). Our self-knowledge is limited and unhealthy.

From an ideological standpoint, whether you are “consistently conservative” or “consistently liberal” the two most important categories include being responsible and hard working (see Appendix AA). Our sense of self relates to these ideological standpoints. The sense of self for whites is fractured because we believe we deserve the position of superiority due to hard work and responsibility (Goodman, 2011, pp. 84-101). It does not occur to many Whites that our advantages are the result of systemic racism (Goodman, 2011, pp. 84-101). For racist whites who embrace racism, the costs include a fractured sense of self and the realization that the perceived position of superiority was never earned, which conflicts with the ideological standpoints of hard work and responsibility (Kivel, 2011, pp. 55-59). These ideological standpoints are core to many people’s identity (Goodman, 2011, pp. 84-101). Whites’ sense of self would benefit if we invest in a system of equal opportunity and meritocracy for all individuals regardless of race (Kivel, 2011, pp. 55-59). If one wishes to claim a sense of self superiority (which I do not support), then it would behoove you to participate and invest in a system that is truly merocratic from a dignity standpoint. At least then your self worth won’t be based upon a lie. From a moral, spiritual and ethical standpoint, feelings of guilt and shame will continue until we attempt to rectify this system of racial injustice. The psychological costs of guilt and shame contribute to an unhealthy sense self (Kivel, 2011, pp. 55-59).

In addition, relationships are harmed because whites are socially disconnected from People of Color which make it difficult to establish authentic relationships based on trust (Spanierman, Todd, & Anderson, 2009, pp. 239-252). Whites may also find themselves disconnected from family and friends if they choose to challenge racist ideology by acting outside the norm (Spanierman, Todd, & Anderson, 2009, pp. 239-252).

For whites who embrace racism the psychological costs relate to dignity, and potential feelings of guilt and shame towards oneself because the system is rigged (Kivel, 2011, pp. 55-59). Feelings of guilt and shame may result from knowing you have not fairly earned your supposed position of “superiority” in life. Finally, racial injustice contributes to physical and material cost because it incites violence, defunds social programs and wastes resources, including human potential which could contribute to the greater good of society (Wellman, 1993, pp. 206-223). Whether you are openly racist or antiracist, we all benefit from advances in medicine and technology. We all benefit from nonviolence and properly funded social programs such as public education. We all benefit from a racially just society socially, morally, spiritually, intellectually, psychologically, physically and materially (Goodman, 2011, pp. 84-101; Kivel, 2011, pp. 55-59; Spanierman, Todd and Anderson 2009, pp. 239-252).

Socialized racist ideologies form a system of beliefs that help shape institutions. These racist ideologies have prompted the belief that whites are superior, which is called white supremacy. Because Whites are the socially dominant group, American society has been fashioned after these beliefs and values. Racist ideologies have historically shaped U.S. institutions through legislation and public policy, resulting in institutional

discrimination. This has determined the economic, political, and social standing for people of color in the United States.

Ideology is powerful. Racist ideology has been completely detrimental to communities of color, and all this pain began with a story of race and biological inferiority. Ideologies are formed by “stock stories” told by a society’s “dominant group” to represent a dominant belief system (Bell, 2010, p. 30). Stock stories are ubiquitous and the most public of all stories because they are mainstream and exist within institutions that perpetuate the “stock stories” until they are the norm (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

These stories are passed down in literary and historical documents and are celebrated through education, the media, the arts, laws, policies, and even holidays (Bell, 2010, p. 30). These stories are accepted by the majority, and, as they become a part of our institutions, we are socialized to believe that these stories are absolute truths. They become our common sense. These stories are so powerful that they can form dominant ideologies—the major belief systems that govern society. Examples of stock stories include the American dream, race, and immigration; the superiority of whiteness; hyper-individualism; democracy; freedom; and liberty and meritocracy.

Many of us buy into these stories because it is what we are taught. You talk about “making American great, again,” which means you have preconceived notions of what makes American great. For many, what makes America great is the elements of the American dream that represents our national identity. However, U.S. national identity, the American dream, and the establishment of American democracy is rooted in

racist ideology (Drew, 2014, pp. 556-569). According to Drew (2014) in “The Great Amnesia,”

The white history of unbridled power without moral boundary is a foundation of the national identity whether it is articulated or not. Today in the culture itself, it endures in the need to cling to the gun as a God-given right. In the government it manifests itself as a surveillance state ready to criminalize whistleblowers. The dark hard central core of America politics and business is still based on power. The chicanery against the Indians, the reign and fall of the racist South, and a malevolent moral heritage are true American exceptionalisms, peculiar to this country and no other, and overcoming the denial of its past violence is America's peculiar, necessary, and undeniable burden (p. 569).

They are by products of the rationalization and justification of the enslavement of Blacks based on inherent inferiority and White superiority. We all buy into “stock stories,” but we are usually not even aware they exist. I, too, have bought into notions of equal opportunity, democracy, patriotism, and serving God and country. I have bought into notion of national superiority and have questioned the plausibility of racial differences based on my education, which included biological racism. I have witnessed people of color being attacked and mistreated but have never intervened.

I have heard racist jokes and derogatory comments and have never intervened. Ideology is powerful, insidious, colorless, and largely uncontested because it is considered normal. It is part of our common sense. As I bring this letter to a close I ask that you reconsider the desire to “Make America Great Again!” I hope that in reading this letter, your notions of being discriminated against for being a white, Christian male are challenged.

Now let me share with you my own story. It is a story on the power of the elements of the American dream. It is a story reflecting racial ideology, a type of common-sense understanding that results in the failure to act, reinforced by feelings of apathy.

Again, please consider what I say, for there is much at stake. We can make a better, more socially just America, but we have to recognize the stories being told and ask ourselves if they are truth. I write this letter because I value you and see how much better we can be when we value and respect one another. We all benefit from a racially just society socially, morally, spiritually, intellectually, psychologically, physically and materially (Goodman, 2011, pp. 84-101; Kivel, 2011, pp. 55-59; Spanierman, Todd and Anderson 2009, pp. 239-252).

Sincerely,

Mrs. V

P.S. In direct response to what is wrong with the statement “Make America Great Again,” I say “everything”; but I do believe we can “Make America Better” for everyone

Questions Linked to Additional Research

- **Concealed Stories and Gender: How Do You Think We Rank in Leadership for Women Globally?**

The U.S. ranks an unimpressive 33rd when it comes to women in the national legislature, among 49 “high-income” countries (defined as those with per-capita incomes above \$12,615). Among a larger group of 137 countries with data available, the U.S. ranked just 83rd (DeSilver, 2015, p.1).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Economic Inequality: How, and to What Extent, Is Race an Aspect in Poverty?**

Poverty data for Hispanics, who can be of any race, wasn’t collected until 1972. That year, 22.8% lived below the poverty threshold. In 2012, the share of Hispanics in poverty had risen to 25.6%. But the U.S. Hispanic population has quintupled over that time. As a result, more than half of the 22 million-person increase in official poverty between 1972 and 2012 was among Hispanics (DeSilver, 2014, p.1).

- **Concealed Stories and Representation: Do You Think the Supreme Court Should More Sufficiently Represent Various Social Categories Such as Gender, Race, Ethnicity, Religious Belief and Sexual Identity to Make Certain Justice Is Achieved?**

Thurgood Marshall, [was] the first African American justice, [to be named] in 1967. Since then, just two nonwhite members have been appointed to the high court: Clarence Thomas in 1991 (the country’s second black justice) and Sonia Sotomayor in 2009 (the country’s first Hispanic justice). Of the sitting members, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor are three of just four female justices in the court’s history, following Sandra Day O’Connor in 1981 (Bialik, 2017, p.1).

- **Concealed Stories and Equal Opportunity: Why Do Unemployment Rates Differ Across Ethnic and Racial Lines?**

The unemployment rate for whites was 4.5% in 2015 and among blacks that share was 10.3%. As unemployment rose in the early 1980s due to an economic downturn, the jobless rate for all blacks rose to 21.1% in 1983 – its highest point in more than 50 years – while the white rate peaked at 9.3% (Research Pew Center, “Demographic & Economic Data, by Race,” 2013, p. 2).

- **Concealed Stories and American Ideology: What Does Liberty Mean?**

According to the Supreme Court, liberty meant in 1875 *Dred Scott v. Sanford* “the right of whites to own blacks”. In 1905, liberty meant in *Lochner v. New York* “the prerogative of an employer to enforce a contract with workers over any government provision made for those workers”. In 1919 *Schenk v. U.S.*, liberty meant “the ability for the national government to prosecute those whose speech it decides represent a clear and present danger” (p. 1).

Cultural Conformity Narrative: Year 1996, “It’s People like Her that Don’t Deserve to Live in America. She’s a Traitor!”

Patriot: the person who can holler the loudest without knowing what he is hollering about. —Mark Twain

The bell rang precisely at 3:00 p.m., signaling the end of the school day. I picked up my books off the top of my broken desk. The top was wobbly, and it took a bit of a balancing act to keep my pencils from sliding off the edge. I noticed the desk was broken during the first week of classes when I felt it shift, exposing a rusty screw that had been broken in half, along with wads of pink and white bubble gum.

Many of the desks were broken, either missing a screw or a small, silver, circular piece of metal connected to the bottom of each leg, keeping it balanced. If you were unlucky and got a desk missing these silver metal pieces, you would spend the rest of the semester balancing the entire desk, trying to keep it rocking from one side to the other, in fear that it would make a loud clanking sound or, worse, pushing you off balance, causing you to spill out onto the hard, cold floor.

I have witnessed people with a larger build get caught between the top of desk and the frame of the chair while falling onto the floor with the desk still attached to their hips. This was a more common occurrence after the lunch period when people would doze off as the result of a full belly and a boring lecture. Then, not only would you find yourself face down on the floor, but you would also receive a firm lecture from the teacher, who found it rude that you fell asleep in class.

With my books in hand, I grabbed my red jacket and hurried out the door. I was in a hurry because I had promised a guy I was talking to that I would meet him in the parking lot to catch a ride home in his blue and silver Chevy truck. I didn't want to miss him, and I was excited because I had had a crush on him for a while and thought maybe our relationship was something more than friendship.

He was tall, heavy set with beautiful blue eyes and blond hair and a deep Southern accent. He wore too much cologne, but I loved the way it smelled and how it lingered on my jacket after he hugged me goodbye. He regularly wore Wrangler jeans, with a big gold and silver belt buckle that had a stallion or a bull on it, depending on the day. He wore Justin cowboy boots or construction boots with steel toes.

He also wore his volunteer fireman jacket almost every day. It was uncommon to see him without it because he wore it like a badge of honor. He wanted to be a fireman and was currently volunteering at a local fire department. We would spend hours on the phone taking about all the things he did to help save lives. He would comment on how much he loved helping people and how good it felt to make a difference. He would say—in a long, drawn-out Southern accent—things like, “I wanted to join the service, maybe the Army but I like working for the fire department. It's a different way to serve my country, and I get to avoid getting my head shot off.”

He was a sweet, enduring, extremely patriotic boy who believed in God and serving his nation. He was a little full of himself, but I was attracted to his confidence, or the appearance that was in control, because I felt so out of control.

As I walked out of the hallway to the gravel parking lot, I saw his truck up ahead and noticed an addition to the back of his truck, which was now carrying a large Confederate flag. I didn't think much on it; in fact, the red color in the flag popped out beautifully against the blue and silver truck. I didn't know much about the Confederate flag other than that it represented Southern culture or Southern pride. I had seen a number of Confederate flags, usually in the form of t-shirts, blankets, towels, book bags, posters, and jackets. I recall taking trips to the beach and seeing bikini tops and bottoms with the Confederate flag. I even had a friend whose first tattoo included an emblem of the Confederate flag.

I do remember discussions on what the flag represented. One girl had commented to my friend in the parking lot that his flag was racist. He looked down at her with disdain and said, "I am not a racist; it's about Southern pride. Don't you have any Southern pride? I am honoring my ancestors and their sacrifice." I thought to myself, "What's her problem, it's just flag."

Looking back, the irony of the situation astounds me now. I got into my friend's truck and he began saying, "Stupid bitch, what a cunt, she needs to mind her own goddamn business, race traitor! Who the hell does she think she is? It's people like her that don't deserve to live in America. She's a traitor!"

I was shocked, of course, but, if you had asked me back then if he was racist or even sexist, I would have said no. I saw his remarks and behavior as a response to anger, and he was extremely angry and hostile. He kept banging the steering wheel with his

fists, and, for a moment, I thought he was going to hurt someone. But I still justified his actions. He was a nice guy, after all, or so I thought.

During the time I knew him, he continued to make remarks similar to those he made in the truck that day. He was notorious for making racist jokes about Mexicans and sexist jokes about blonds. I would just roll my eyes and say something like, “Oh, be nice,” but I never considered him racist at the time. That sounds ludicrous now, but “racists” back then, in my mind, wore white sheets and carried flaming torches. They rode on horseback and burned crosses. They existed in some bad movie or film from social studies class. The KKK was racist; my friend wasn’t. He wanted to be a firefighter and save lives. How could someone like that be racist? In the end, nothing came of my relationship with him, but we remained friends until after graduation.

Emerging Stories: An Analysis of “It’s People like Her that Don’t Deserve to Live in America. She’s a Traitor!”

Your life begins to end the moment you start being silent about the things that matter. —Martin Luther King

In my personal story, my lack of action perpetuated the stock stories of white supremacy and patriotism. My lack of action was a silent acquiescence to the way things were because that is the way things have always been. It was common sense. I didn’t speak up or call out racist behavior. I was complacent, maybe out of fear, or maybe I was indifferent because I did not consider my friend to be racist. White supremacy is a dominant ideology, a stock story that is established by the socially dominant group who have the power to influence what we perceive as common sense. Patriotism is an element

of the American dream as it relates to self-determination, which is another dominant ideology and powerful influence. According to Murray (2011),

Patriotism and national pride were transfigured within national consciousnesses, and then were re-embodied by exaggerated cultural symbols that permeated literature and film. The symbols were used to represent and to promote emergent synthetic cultures that encouraged rigid systems of discrimination and prejudice. As these symbols evolved within culture and became common and acceptable, so did the patterns of discrimination and prejudice they embodied. Patriotism begins with an expression of pride in one's relation to a larger national consciousness. This sense of pride is filtered down to the community and it is at this level that patriotism has the potential to be corrupted by nativist prejudices, which are then projected back into the national consciousness. I These notions are so powerful that they are considered common and left unquestioned (p. 29).

The Perpetuation of Stock Stories Through Common Sense

You say to me that “some things in life are just common sense,” that what is right is commonly known. But what is common sense exactly? Is it not the assumption that everyone believes the same reasonable ideas commonly and that these ideas are somehow universal and normal and therefore true? But how does common sense become truth if it is based on assumptions?

Do we all assume, for example, that “money is the measure of success,” or that “you can be anything you want to be,” or “if you work hard, you will be rewarded,” or “having more money will bring you happiness?” Take a look at these charts by the Pew Research Center (2013): [Home Ownership Rates, 1995-2013](#) (see Appendix CC), and (see Appendix DD) [Employment Rate, 2003-2013](#). These statements seem common enough to some people, but they are not universally accepted, and they are not truth for most people globally. Common sense is not common unless it is shared by people in

similar social categories. What is common depends on context, culture, history, and the status of the people interacting—primarily, which person has power (Watts, 2011).

The common-sense statements listed above reflect an ideology and a culture central to the values of Americans. Again, Americans value individual freedom and the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness. We value hard work, individualism, competition, practicality, innovation, and efficiency. These values are considered characteristics of U.S. democracy, which continues to be an ever-evolving philosophy around which we organize our political, social, and economic lives (Hudson, 2004, p. 22).

American Ideology as it relates to hard work, individualism, competition, practicality, innovation, and efficiency is supported by common sense and was designed prior to my birth and my students'. In "My Stories, Year 1996," I allowed for a common notion of race to continue. I had agreed with the group I belong to, White individuals, and, therefore, accepted certain racial prejudices as common sense. Ideology is highly powerful, especially when it infiltrates our institutions, and it is so convincing that we don't even know it exists. It has become invisible until it is just plain common sense.

Ideology, History, and Context

Let's talk more about ideology or what I have been referring to as stories. Again, an ideology is a philosophy, a system of beliefs that is used to explain how the world operates. Ideology varies according to context, which is circumstantial, so, when we are trying to understand ideology or explain ideology, we must first understand the context in which it was created and the history that influenced the creation. My personal story takes place in the context of the 1990s, an era that was fraught with racial tension, including

events such as the beating of Rodney King and the ensuing Los Angeles riots. This was a time of deindustrialization, the “war against poverty,” and the “war against drugs.” Prior to the 1990s, the history of race relations became my inheritance. History affects biography, and we cannot disassociate who we are from the past, which means we also cannot dissociate who we are from the dominant ideologies in our institutions that disseminate the policies and laws that regulate our lives.

Ideologies can become systemic, meaning they become standardized and operate routinely within our institutions. Because they are so regular, it is difficult to see the ways in which these beliefs shape our own lives. They are what we consider normal, so they go unquestioned and become truth, sometimes even absolute truth.

Power and Influence of Absolute Truths

Defining what is true establishes power and the ability to coerce. Understand that when I am talking about the effects of power, what I perceive depends upon the context. The effects of power can be coercive, repressive, and devastating in individual’s lives, but power also resides in various forms, including in discourse. Discourse can reinforce power, but it is also a means to question and, in some cases, to undermine what is being defined as absolute truth (Foucault, 1998, p. 100–101).

It is also important to me to convey to you that I have no desire to contribute to further feelings of fatalism and nihilism. This is why I emphasize the importance of power and context. I believe that we must everyday learn to live within and navigate institutions, rules, regulations, and traditions that guide our behaviors (Macionis, 2009, p.

12). As individuals, we are born into these social structures, and, within these structures, social categories matter.

As individuals, we do not determine the social class of our birth. We do not decide what color our skin will be or what ethnicity we will be, and we do not individually define what gender we will be perceived and categorized as. These categories existed long before we did, and they carry an ideology, a stock story that has been normalized as an absolute truth, which has power to influence lives. We are born into a world where these categories constrain our possibilities. For most of us, it is hard to fathom how structure intersects with our own biography, our story, and many of us refuse to believe that opportunities are influenced by the way society is structured.

Our refusal to acknowledge the influence of social categories reinforces the very power that sustains these absolute truths and the ideology that has created them (Stoddart, 2007, pp. 208-219). However, as I stated earlier, power exists in various forms, and it does exist in our ability to act, but action and change are only possible if we question and recognize how we are socialized to accept values and beliefs that reinforce ideology as truth (Glaese, 2003, pp. 10-26). Instead of refusing to acknowledge the impact structure has on our lives, we need to question the constraints that have been socially produced, and we need to question the norms and ideology that sustain them. The most impactful way to challenge power is to disrupt what we think is truth, but, again, this requires the ability to recognize and question our own beliefs that constrain any possibility of action. We can challenge power only by detaching the power we have given these so-called truths (Gaventa, 2003. p. 3).

In my story, I gave in to the stock story of race and difference. I did not challenge it, and I chose not to question it. My choice reiterated that I again had agreed with the group I belong to, White individuals, and, therefore, accepted certain racial prejudices as common sense. It reiterated the idea that race matters to us although we claim it does not. I did not challenge the power behind the story but, instead, gave it more power by accepting it as truth.

Questions Linked to Additional Research

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Racist Ideology: Some People Claim the Civil War and Symbols of That War, Such As the Confederate Flag Are about “Heritage.” What is The Distinct Heritage Of The South?**

When I see the Confederate flag, I see the attempt to raise an empire in slavery. It really, really is that simple. I don't understand how anybody with any sort of education on the Civil War can see anything else. -
Ta-Nehisi Coates

- **Concealed Stories of the American Dream: What Does the American Dream Mean to You? According to John Morton Blue (1965) The America Dream is:**

Social mobility, the prudential virtues, and universal education; land, free government, free thought, and human dignity; economic plenty and industrial power-all these sometimes overarching elements were reconciled within one overarching edifice, that of the American nation, the United States. The various parts merged to form the promise of American life. It was a promise that offered the change of fulfillment to men of diverse ambitions and diverse ideals

- **Concealed Stories and the Criminal Justice System: How are People of Color Disproportionally Affected by Drug Policies Put in Place to Fight the “Drug Wars?”**

The percentage of arrests that involved black men and women increased from 27% in 1980 to a high ranging from 40% to 42% between 1989 and 1993 [and] between 1988 and 1993, blacks were arrested at rates (more than five times the rate of whites. (Race, Drugs, and Law Enforcement in the United States, 2010, p. 3).

- **Concealed Stories and Socialization: How do we define equality? What Does “Equality of Opportunity Mean”?**

Unemployment rates in 1975 for whites was 7.8%, for Blacks 14.8% and for Hispanic or Latino ethnicity was 12.2%. Unemployment rates in 1990 for whites was 4.8%, for Blacks 11.4% and for Hispanic or Latino ethnicity was 8.2%. Unemployment rates in 2010 for whites was 8.7% for Blacks 16.0% and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity was 12.5% (Unemployment rates by race and ethnicity, 2010, p. 1).

Transforming Stories: Letter to Self: Year 2017, Critical Reflections on the Writing Process

Ignorance is the parent of fear.—Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

Dear Self,

I began writing this chapter prior to the violent protests in Charlottesville, Virginia. Since that event, I have been surrounded by friends and colleagues with varying opinions on how the events played out. The majority believe that both groups, protestors for “Unite the Right” and counter protester were somehow at fault for the violence that took place, and all agree that the KKK and Nazi groups are hate groups, but some argue that the “alt- right” group supports White rights and that the “White Lives Matter” movement is not a hate group but is interested in preserving history and culture.

President Trump stated that there was violence on “many sides.” He said, “I think there is blame on both sides,” and “You had a group on one side that was bad and you had a group on the other side that was also very violent, nobody wants to say it, but I will say it right now” (Merica, 2017, p. 1). The President’s message was not well received in the media, but many of my friends and colleagues questioned why his message was wrong.

It is difficult to filter the media’s information; typically, their message is either for one side or the other. The media does a great job establishing fear and generating more hate and conflict by creating distractions and igniting greater divides (*Psychology of Fear, Crime and the Media*, 2017, pp. 1–8). I, too, have been left questioning the events

in Charlottesville and the arguments of those who surround me. What I do believe is groups like the KKK, neo-Nazis, and the alt-right are White supremacist hate groups. It doesn't matter how you dress it up, even with a nice suit, tie, and hipster haircut. It is also apparent to me that these groups do not understand American history, or they refuse to recognize the legacy we carry as a result of slavery, or, worse, they fully buy into the story of White supremacy and their own superiority

Ironically, it appears that these groups see history as sacred, framed as a “glorious time” when America was the greatest superpower. A common dominator for these groups seems to be the image of the glorious past and the belief that it is their duty to bring the United States back to greatness. Matthew Heimbach (2017) founder of the Nationalist Front, commented on their participation as Charlottesville, stating

We showed that our movement is not just online, but growing physically. We asserted ourselves as the voice of white America. We had zero vehicles damaged, all our people accounted for, and moved a large amount of men and materials in and out of the area. I think we did an incredibly impressive job (p. 1).

It is a nationalism movement, a patriarchal, racist, capitalist interpretation of perceived injustices (Brown, 2003, p. 35–30). Their mission is one of identity, dignity, and purpose (Swain, 2004, pp. 15–16). These extremist groups and their radicalization stem from pain, a type of “emotional poverty” that results in victim mentality (Walker & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo, 2014, pp. 4–7).

These extremist groups and their radicalization stem from pain, a type of “emotional poverty” that results in victim mentality (Walker & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo,

2014, pp. 4–7). I believe there are different motivational dimensions within these groups including an earnest search for a type of positive societal change for their group.

There are also individuals who seek personal benefits and financial gain by othering outside groups, and there are individuals who wish to inflict suffering because they are living with some form of mental-health condition. Many of these groups have been known to use acts of terror to inflict fear, in order to gain power and control (Psychology of Fear, Crime and the Media, 2017, pp. 1-8).

It seems that fear is the easiest way to gain social control, and, when these groups fear losing power or privilege, they use forms of terror to try to gain it back (Beck, Warnerand Ohmer, 2010, pp. 355-368). An example of using forms of terror during the Charlottesville protest includes when James Field drove his vehicle into a group of counter protester killing a young woman named Heather Heyer and injuring many more. Groups who feel powerless can become corrupted by their own fear (Glassner, 2009, p. 30). We refer to these groups as “hate groups,” but perhaps the correct term is “terrorist groups” as they use fear to gain control because they are fearful themselves.

I also find the argument of preserving Southern history and culture interesting among groups like the KKK and White nationalist, especially the dispute over whether to remove Confederate emblems. Many popular Confederate symbols were established after the Civil War (see Appendix DD). The dedication of monuments actually peaked during the Jim Crow era in the 1900s through the 1920s and during the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s up to the 1960s (Inskeep, 2016, p. 203-217). In addition, many of these monuments were funded by private groups, such as the United Daughters of the

Confederacy, and were positioned in public spaces (Documenting the American South, 2010, p. 3).

Through all the material I have read, I do not buy into the notion that hate groups' main issue is about preserving heritage. If this were the case, then why not preserve Confederate monuments in museums as historical artifacts rather than leaving them in public, civic spaces (Whose Heritage? Public Symbols of the Confederacy, 2017, p. 2)? There is nothing civic about White supremacy, slavery, and racism, and I have heard students of color comment that these monuments are a continual reminder to Black people that they are not welcomed in U.S. society. People of color were forced to build this nation, but the message is clear: Regardless of how paradoxical it is, despite their forced contributions, they are still not welcomed. There have been a number of studies have been conducted which supports this sentiment. According to Devah and Hana (2008), Feagin (1991) and Smith, Allen and Danley (2007):

Black customers in stores are more likely to be monitored and treated with suspicion by store employees who are concerned about shoplifting. This is case for teenagers, and for middle class, well-dressed African-Americans as well (pp. 181-209). White people walking on city streets frequently cross the street when there is a black man behind them or to avoid passing a black man. Middle class blacks report the experience of having to wait longer to be served in restaurants than white customers who arrive after they do (pp. 101-116). Black male college students at elite historically white universities, the participants in the research reported many incidents of surveillance by campus police in which they treated with suspicion and asked for their I.D.s. (pp. 101-116). It takes, on average longer for a black man to get a taxi than for a white man. This is an issue even when the man is well dressed and clearly affluent (p. 551).

While I was writing this chapter, I took part in an interesting conversation on social movements, change, and violence in relation to the events that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia. I have engaged in several discussions on the use of violence to achieve social change, but I admit that I struggle with this conversation. I don't condone violence, and it was a great tragedy when a young white man drove his car into the center of a protest, injuring many and killing a young woman (Fausset & Feuer 2017). I believe that social change is possible using nonviolent measures such as self-reflection, education, discourse, action in the form of peaceful protesting, various acts of reconciliation among individuals, and changes in public policy and law including constitutional litigation. I am personally biased toward educational strategies, but I also recognize that my bias signifies my privilege. In fact, the ability to contemplate such issues peacefully feels not only privileged but also elitist in some regard.

Preaching about ideology and social structure is meaningless unless you connect with people on a level that recognizes their humanity and their own personal plight, socially and economically. I recall a conversation I had at a bar with a colleague after a long day in a conference. We were discussing the events that happened in our classes at the conference we were attending. The discussion related violence which was a topic presented at the conference. I stated, "I don't think violence will change the inequities that exist. Shouldn't we find a better way to resolve institutional racism rather than ignite more hostility and resentment from whites?" I thought my statement was perfectly rational; I wasn't expecting my colleague's response: "Why shouldn't they use violence, how long should one wait for change, for some form of justice? How many times must

they listen to us say ‘Be patient with us, teach us, or change takes time!’ How long must one be expected to wait to be treated with dignity, to be treated like your life actually matters?”

I have thought about this conversation many times. We talked well into the evening, and I walked away questioning my own perspective on violence. Ironically, although I am a sociologist, I still saw the use of violence as an individual act, but violence comes in many forms. Poverty and racism are forms of systemic violence. They cause physical and psychological destruction and result from unjust, exploitive political, social, and economic systems (Christie, Wagner, & Winter, 2001, p. 1). Systemic violence limits access to resources such as adequate health care, education, employment, healthy food, clean water, and a living environment devoid of harmful substances (Hardeman, Medina and. Kozhimannil, 2016, pp. 2113-2115). Here I was arguing against the use of violence, but I failed to recognize that violence is already being used and has been used for a long time.

The counter protestors in Charlottesville were responding to violence with violence, yet I question whether we can even call the counter protestors’ actions violence. If my response to violence is to use violence, then isn’t my response self-defense? I still want to believe that social change is possible using nonviolent methods, but, after writing this chapter and researching inequities from a historical standpoint, I am left questioning the reality of that notion.

Have I been too naïve? I am conflicted even as I write this reflection. I am espousing notions of nonviolence, but, I wonder, how much of my ability to do so is a product of my Whiteness and privilege? Have I come full circle, back to the “White Savior,” preaching notions of transformation, and redemption for those who need to be saved (Hughey, 2010, p. 475)? To my disappointment, I think to myself, maybe I never really left it?

Sincerely,

Me

CHAPTER V

LETTER TWO: RESPONSE TO POST-RACIAL IDEOLOGY: “RACE DOESN’T MATTER ANYMORE!”

This Chapter focuses on a broader narrative of society, which I refer to as a “stock story.” This broader narrative is post-racial ideology. Post-racial ideology furthers the perpetuation of whiteness (Winant, 2000, p. 172). This chapter calls attention to the impact of institutions such as the media, education and the economy. These institutions are associated with the process of racialized socialization, impacting social networks, constructing stereotypes and contributing to microaggressions. In this chapter, I begin with composite stories from the classroom, which are portrayals of socialization and systematic training of dominant culture norms (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17).

Within the composite story I attempt to address questions proposed to me by students who argue that we live in a post-racial society. In the process of addressing questions, I incorporate statistical data and questions within textboxes which are “concealed stories.” These stories are stories of history, victimization, exclusion and inequality as it relates to the economy, media education and law. This chapter also includes my personal narrative and analysis which are connected to broader narratives of society as it relates to being post-racial. My personal narrative is a “cultural conformity story.” It portrays my systematic training of dominant culture norms connecting my personal narrative with the broader narratives of society that reinforce whiteness (Ozlem

& DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17). This chapter concludes with an analysis of my personal narrative and a reflection on the writing process. The analysis and reflection are “emerging transforming stories” which critique and analysis stories of post-racial ideology (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

Composite Stories from the Classroom: Dear C. Hope “Aren’t We Post-Racial, Mrs. V?”

Sometimes I can't tell
whether I'm an aristocrat or a communist
I will always love the people
so long as they don't touch me
I am terrified of race
not any one race in particular
the concept itself wields an axe
in a thick German forest
it is tracking something
eating wolf meat from the bone
maybe it is tracking me
in all my white guilt
as my wife of mixed race lay beside me
to some we are ghosts
haunting the old plantation
no one dares touch
the gnashing human heart
we can only cringe or laugh
taking pills in curiosity
(Schmitt, 2014, p. 126).

Dear C. Hope,

I was thinking about our conversation yesterday in class, and I could see you felt uncomfortable with the topic of racial inequities and the perceived notion that America is post-racial. First, I wish to tell you that I have no desire to make you feel

uncomfortable. You matter; your ideas and beliefs are personal as they come from your own experiences, and they matter, too.

I wish there was an easier way to have these conversations, and I wish I never had to speak of such things. But, in America, racial bigotry, discrimination, and prejudice flourish. I cannot ignore this, for silence is not silent at all. Silence is like a head nod confirming that such behavior is acceptable, normal, and therefore natural. I also cannot ignore racial inequities because I desire a democratic society in which opportunity and resources are available to all racial groups. I believe in our ability to recognize all individuals and their humanity as contributors to the public good. I ask you to embrace the discomfort you may feel and question your fears by asking, “Why does racial inequality persist in a society we claim is post-racial?”

Things are not always as they seem, and uncovering the truth requires deliberate self-reflection and perseverance, for it is never easy to reconstruct the ways we have come to understand the world. In this letter, I challenge you to ask the same questions I have asked myself over the years. I have asked myself, “What are my own perceived notions of racial superiority?” I have asked, “How have I contributed to racial stereotypes?” and I have considered why I have felt the need to exclude myself by stating repeatedly, “It’s not my problem,” or “I am tired of hearing about racism!”

Many of us are tired for various reasons. We all suffer; maybe we are afraid, sad, lonely, sick, working two jobs, living paycheck to paycheck, caring for loved ones, losing loved ones, while trying to keep our heads above water. We all suffer, and, when we suffer personally, it is difficult to recognize and have compassion for others who suffer

alongside us. But, you see, we do not suffer alone, even if we feel alone. Therefore, it is imperative that we recognize each other's suffering and humanity so that we may find ways to ease that suffering.

I believe this begins by asking why. Why do some of us have access to a living wage while others do not? Why do some of us have access to a good education while others do not? Why do some of us have access to housing, quality health care, and child care while others do not? Why do some of us have more opportunities and privileges? These questions matter because the outcomes of these inequalities impact all of us and our ability to care for ourselves and for others.

Racism is my problem, and, if I am tired of hearing about racism, it is time to "get beyond tired" by recognizing my racial privilege attached to such a complaint, for I have the privilege to ignore the realities of racism (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p.417). Next, I must educate myself, searching for the truth by asking why, while also communicating with others the realities of race to promote institutional change, collective action, and antiracist initiatives within public policies and laws (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 417).

What I am addressing in this letter is racial injustice and my desire for social justice. Many of us unintentionally contribute to racism because we are naïve to the actualities of race. We feel confused, angry, and guilty, but we must shed our guilt, for it does nothing but harm ourselves and others. Guilt feeds anger, which makes us complacent and unwilling to act, because guilt makes us feel defensive, uncomfortable, and attacked, which then makes us feel justified in our lack of action (White Guilt, Black

Rage, 2006, pp. 67-68). Lack of action means nothing will change. Our feelings of being uncomfortable, attacked, defensive, confused, angry and guilty will remain. Our lack of action costs our humanity greatly. We remain prisoners to racism and to our history. Worst of all, we ignore the humanity and suffering of others. I understand the struggle and desire to believe that the past no longer clings to us, but the ramifications of our history are our inheritance. We did not choose this, but lack of choice does not change its results. I understand your fear and your quick defense that you are post-racial, supported by the argument that “race doesn’t matter” and that racism is a problem of the past, because I once made the same argument. I understand your argument that living in an “Obama era” as an example of our post-racial society. We had a Black man for President, and that was an amazing time in our history, but having a Black man for President does not absolve our country of the history and legacy of racism. If anything, I fear that “Obama era” argument has distracted us and enabled us in thinking that race no longer matters. Barack Obama’s election was one great accomplishment, but many are still needed. One election does not absolve us from slavery; Jim Crow laws; de facto segregation; housing discrimination; discriminatory promoting and hiring practices; FHA discriminatory policies; the demonization of brown and Black families; and the unapologetic killings by police of Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, a list that goes on and on.

The fear you feel is justified, as well as the anger that follows. However, this fear and anger must be directed at discriminatory practices of law and public policy, at institutionalized racism, and not at victims of the system. I wish it was enough to say that

I am not prejudiced and that, if we treated all people with dignity and respect, race would not matter, but people in society, primarily White people (Ponds, 2013, pp. 22-24), continue to discriminate against other racial and ethnic groups. If we truly believe in truth, justice, dignity, respect, and democracy, then an open and candid conversation on race and racial inequalities is necessary. It is necessary if we value the humanity of all individuals, which I am sure is how we all feel in this classroom.

So let us talk openly with the understanding that this is not an attack on you. I care about you and all those who sit in my classroom. Because I care, let us talk about the injustice not in fear but rather with righteous anger so that we may challenge and change a system that continues to hurt so many, including ourselves. We must recognize that society's investment in Whiteness has resulted in decades of disinvestment in Black and brown communities. Many of you in the class believe that slavery was long ago, but that is a myth, another stock story, a majoritarian story that invests in Whiteness. What is the truth? Slavery in the United States lasted over 240 years and ended a little over 145 years ago, and we are only 63 years from when *Plessy v. Ferguson* was challenged, which was meant to end legal segregation (1896).

Sixty-three years is not very long ago, and legal segregation has had long-lasting implications for Black and brown families. Even in 1958, there were racial restriction for ownership of land through covenants supported by elected officials and sustained by law (Golub, 2005, pp. 563-600). Covenants excluded people of color from the right to own property, which many consider to be a human right upheld by constitutional law (Golub, 2005, pp. 563-600). Segregation in schools is another example of how history follows us.

Although *Brown v. the Board of Education* mandated that segregation in education was unconstitutional, several Southern states argued for state's rights to support separate-but-equal educational facilities for Black and brown children (1954). Several Southern states defied the law and spent years in litigations opposing *Brown*, which meant that brown and Black children continued to attend poorly funded schools that lacked the resources necessary for quality education (Kinshasa, 2006, pp. 16-23). It can take years, sometimes decades, to enforce laws, especially when it requires a change in culture such as a deeply embedded perception of racial superiority.

This institutional history follows us, shaping present-day society, and has had enormous repercussions for Black and brown communities' access to education, healthcare, employment, housing, and wealth. Race matters, and understanding our national biography—who we are and what it means to live in the United States—requires understanding history and construction of race.

If we truly want to understand ourselves, then we must understand race. We must ask ourselves what it means to be White and why it matters. Questioning can be difficult, especially when you have spent most your life socialized to believe that race does not matter. You told me in class that you do not identify with any racial group. You said, “I am just me, just, you know, a normal person like anyone else.” However, labeling yourself “normal” and lacking any racial identity is what makes whiteness so powerful.

Consider the normality of whiteness and how it is treated as the standard in literature, history, media, politics, and culture. We never refer to movies or television shows as white, but we consider shows like *Being Mary Jane*, *The Quad*, and *Empire*

Black television (Deamond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 90). I have never heard people describe churches as being “White,” but I have heard of “Black churches.” I have heard communities labeled as “Chinatown” and the “Black ghettos,” and of cultures as African American, Asian, Hispanic, or Indian. Yet we never say White culture because it is assumed that everything else is White. Can you imagine calling universities White colleges or saying things like White music, White studies, White art, White fashion, or White cuisine?

This is what it means to have privilege: to never be reminded that your race matters because it is normalized and therefore nameless. Let’s consider the other day in class, when you pointed to your friend next to you and said, “See, I have Black friends.” In this interaction, it was apparent that race mattered, not because you referred to your friend as Black but because “See, I have White friends” will rarely, if ever, be uttered. Whiteness is a social construct that has been positioned against nonwhites, but Whiteness itself fades into the background, normalizing itself by drawing attention to the differences of brown and Black people (Deamond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 86). Remember that race has been constructed by the past, but the past continues to shape and influence society today. And honestly, having a “Black friend”—who, by the way, gave you a look of dismay—does not change the inequities and injustices that exist outside of Whiteness.

You asked your Black friend, “Do you feel discriminated against because you’re Black?” He responded most uncomfortably, with down cast eyes and a slight giggle, “Well, I don’t know, maybe,” and you reacted to him in dismay as you rolled your eyes. I understand that you are struggling with this information, but we must have the courage

to listen with respect when others share their experiences because sharing those experiences takes great courage and trust.

You may feel anger at what I say. I have felt the same, too many times, and have sat where you are, saying the same. I have put my supposed Black friends on display to avoid the perception that I am racist or to shield myself from any criticism or feelings of guilt. You tell me our experiences are different as I grew up in the 80s and 90s and you have grown up in the 21st century. Although our experiences may differ, some remain the same. What is it that we fear? Do we fear being perceived as racist? Does this perception result in us being either good or bad?

See, this isn't about being perceived as good or bad. We exist in a society with a legacy of racial oppression, and the implications of that legacy still exist within systems and institutions. We were born into a society that is racist, and to believe that we are somehow not affected by its racism is disingenuous. The truth is that our society is segregated. We are divided by fear, wealth, opportunity, neighborhoods, and school districts. When I look back on my life, I only remember a sea of White faces, in church, in school, in friends and family. I recall that almost every public space I have ever occupied was majority White, and the public spaces I currently occupy are still majority White.

Very few of us have come to understand this "de facto" segregation. It has been constructed by law and public policy that results in fear and lack of understanding for who or what we do not know. How do we come to know each other if we do not see one another? How has my existence in a sea of White faces impacted my understanding and

perception of racism, White privilege, and racial inequities? Looking back, I recognize my own denial of racism. This denial was commonplace in my White world. It was never questioned, and, in my experience, it is still as prevalent today as it was when I was a child. You may be surprised, but, in the years that I have been teaching, denial and complete disregard for the existence of racism, as well as the argument for being post-racial, happens in every class every semester. This means that I have heard the argument for being post-racial and the complete disregard for the stories of people of color more than 84 times in the last 7 years, and this number does not account for summer classes or the number of students who have made this argument in each class, which, I assure you, is more than one. Consider: The same argument you have made is a pattern among White students I have seen in every class I have taught. This shows that you and I are a part of a pattern of behavior that is distinct to our racial group.

Have we ever considered the damage we cause in our disregard? With every 84 occurrences of denial in my classroom, there are surely more than 84 stories from people of color confirming their experiences of living in a racist society. This pattern of behavior saddens me, for it is all too familiar. Through my white students' pattern, I see how my own denial and resistance blinded me from the implications of my actions, which were harmful.

Looking back, I remember a young man named Patrick and my own denial of his story. I wish I could go back to tell him I am sorry. I do not remember Patrick because he was my "Black friend," although I claimed he was. What I remember is Patrick's downcast eyes, similar to your friend's reaction in class, and the dismay that I felt as I

rolled my eyes just like you. I want to share my story of Patrick and the ways I perpetuated the stock story that U.S. society is post-racial.

Please understand that, by sharing my story, I am not trying to validate what you and I have said to our friends. My story is a means to share with you my own struggle with resistance and denial of racism, for we have this in common, in addition to the fact that we both belong to the same racial group. Also, we have both questioned our friends and their experiences. If we do claim friendship with people of color, then why are we so unwilling to listen to their stories? What gives us the authority to disregard what people of color say?

This story is difficult to share because now I understand the harm I caused by being naïve, but I wish to share this with you so we can further explore the implications of such actions. This story, “My Stories, Year 2000,” takes place during my first year in college. I share this with you so that we may strive together never to claim friendship when we are unable or unwilling to hear the pain our history has caused, that we have caused, for our so-called friends. I hope that reading this letter and my story will challenge your notions of being post-racial.

Sincerely,

Mrs. V

P.S. In direct response to your question earlier: No, we are not post-racial. Having said that, what might you do to change this?

Questions Linked to Additional Research

- **Concealed Stories and Socialization: Were You Exposed to More Diversity by Attending Community College? What Were Your Initial Thoughts, If Any, Being Surrounded by a More Racially Diverse Population?**

According to PRRI (2013)

Fully three-quarters (75%) of white Americans report that the network of people with whom they discuss important matters is entirely white, with no minority presence, while 15% report having a more racially mixed social network (p.1).

- **Concealed Stories and the Institution of Criminal Justice: In What Ways Has America's Fear of Crime Become Racialized?**

According to the Bureau of Justice (2015)

Among those who had contact with the police, blacks (3.5%) were 2.5 times more likely than whites (1.4%) and 1.7 times more likely than Hispanics (2.1%) to experience the threat or use of nonfatal force. Blacks (1.6%) were more likely than whites (0.6%) to experience verbal force. Similarly, a higher percentage of blacks (1.6%) experienced physical force than whites (0.7%) or Hispanics (0.9%)” (p.1).

- **Concealed Stories and Socialization of Naturalization: According to the research below Whites are advocates of racial segregation. Have You Ever Thought about the Racial Composition of Your Neighborhood? Have You Ever Thought About the Consequences of Racial Segregation?**

Studies have shown that whites are “unlikely to want to move into neighborhoods with an even balance of black and white residents” Per Desmond and Emirbayer (2016)

Whites are more likely to live in segregated neighborhoods. In U.S cities the typical white lives in a neighborhood that is 75% white, 8% black, 11% Hispanic and 5% Asian (p.184). In addition, studies (2016) have shown that whites are “unlikely to want to move into neighborhoods with an even balance of black and white residents (p. 184).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Law: What Other Policies Can You Think of That Have Prevented Brown and Black Families from Accessing Equal Opportunity? (Consider: Housing, Employment, Healthcare, etc.)**

By 1963, not one black child attended a public school in South Carolina, Alabama, or Mississippi. In Virginia, a full decade after *Brown*, only 1.63 percent of blacks were attending desegregated schools. (Anderson, 2016, p. 81).

Southern states used the legal process to keep *Brown* from being implemented by stating that the Supreme Court was violating state’s rights. One member of Congress was heard stating that, “As long as we can legislate, we can segregate” (Ogletree, 2004, p. 130).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical and Educational Context: Did You Know?**

Public schools have become more integrated since *Brown v. Board of Education*, but according to the graph provided by Pew Research

White students are more likely than blacks or Hispanics to attend school where a vast majority of students are of the same race or ethnicity. In 2006, the most recent year for which data was published, some 62% of white students attended a school where three-quarters or more of all students were white (Krogstad & Fry, 2014).

- **Concealed Stories and Social Context: Who Is Included in Your Social Network (Siblings, Parents, Spouses and Friends)?**

Consider this: according to PRRI (2013) *Race, Religion, and Political Affiliation of Americans' Core Social Networks*

Among white Americans, 91% of people comprising their social networks are white, while five percent are identified as some other race. Among black Americans, 83% of people in their social networks are composed of people who are also black, while eight percent are white and six percent are some other race. Among Hispanic Americans, approximately two-thirds (64%) of the people who comprise their core social networks are also Hispanic, while nearly 1-in-5 (19%) are white and nine percent are some other race (p.1).

- **Concealed Stories and Social Location: Does Age Really Matter?**

According to PRRI (2013)

White seniors (ages 65 and older) are only slightly more likely than white young adults (ages 18-29) to have entirely white social networks (80% vs. 72%, respectively).

- **Concealed Stories and Social Context: American Society and Its Institutions Are Still Overwhelmingly White. What Does It Mean to Occupy These “White Spaces”?**

According to Elijah Anderson’s (2015)

When present in the white space, blacks reflex-ively note the proportion of whites to blacks, or may look around for other blacks with whom to commune if not bond, and then may adjust their comfort level accordingly; when judging a setting as too white, they can feel uneasy and consider it to be informally “off limits.” For whites, however, the same settings are generally regarded as unremark-able, or as normal, taken-for-granted reflections of civil society (p.1)

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Law: How Integrated is Your Neighborhood?**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau,

while blacks comprise just 12% of the U.S. population, about half of all blacks in 2000 lived in majority-black neighborhoods Hispanics also tend to be clustered into segregated enclaves, though not quite to the same degree as are blacks. Latinos made up 12.5% of the U.S. population and 43% lived in majority-Latino neighborhoods as of 2000.

This is the result of legal segregation (p.1).

- **Concealed Stories and Social Context: How Much Discrimination Is There Against Black Americans?**

Things to consider: according to Pew Research

88% [of African Americans] said there was a lot or some discrimination against blacks, with 46% seeing a lot of discrimination. A majority of whites (57%) also saw at least some discrimination against blacks, but just 16% said there was a lot of discrimination (p.1).

**Cultural Conformity Narrative, Year 2000 “Race Isn’t a Problem Anymore,
Patrick!”**

It was my first year in college. I did not go to college directly after high school because I never thought that it was an option for someone like me. I was a poor student with no real aspiration, and I kind of expected that someday I would marry and have children. I believed that was what most women did, and I don’t recall ever thinking that there were other options. My perception of myself was that I was poor and stupid in school but that I could attract a man, the one thing I had going for myself. A guidance counselor had told me that getting married would be my best option, and why would he lie? That was his job, to give me guidance.

Prior to college, I worked as a nursing assistant, but I quickly came to realize how unfortunate it was that our society paid so little to care for others, so I began to entertain other options for employment. This led me to a local community college. It was the most affordable option, and, best of all, they let me in with a 2.6 GPA and no clue. College was daunting; its large white and tan buildings felt so formal and unwelcoming. It was easy to get lost between registration, financial aid, and ever-pressing questions of what’s a GPA, what’s a transcript, why do I need to pay a lab fee, and is this on the test? I remember my shock at being required to take a history course. I thought history was boring, and I did not recognize the value of knowing about the past. Most of my peers felt the same way, grumbling under their breath about how stupid it was to be required to take a class that would never help them get a job!

This class was where I met a young Black man named Patrick. He was the first Black man I ever talked with, and my impression of him came with a mixture of surprise and confusion. He was so well spoken and well dressed in my eyes. Of course, I had seen other Black men, but I had never talked with them, and all the images I had seen in the media stereotyped Black men as violent criminals wearing loose pants and gangster symbols. The community college had exposed me to more diversity than I had ever experienced in my life. The schools that I had previously attended were almost all White. I do not recall in all those years going to school with any Black boys.

I do remember a young Black girl named Crystal who was a cheerleader in my high school and 2 years older than me. I found her both extremely tall and beautiful in an exotic way. I was taught to be racially colorblind, but I did notice color, and I felt an internal combination of curiosity and fear. Everything I ever saw or heard, whether from the media or my friends and family, implied that Black men should be feared because many of them were gangsters or thugs. However, Patrick did not mesh with those images. I found myself drawn to our group's conversations for several reasons, but I was mostly trying to sort out what I had been taught, because Patrick was a mystery to me.

I have always been quiet, spending more of my time listening than talking. Many of my teachers didn't notice me, and I preferred it that way; I feared being called on and appearing stupid when I couldn't give an answer to their questions. The introvert in me has always found it painful to be put on the spot, so I spent most of my time in our group keeping quiet. I shared a table with five other students including Patrick. The other students were White like me, but they were all young men. The men in the group became

close over the weeks. I listened to (or tolerated) their bantering on women and their next sexual conquests.

One day, however, the group dynamics shifted when we began discussing race and race relations. I never thought about race except for when we talked about slavery in school. As I stated earlier, I hated history, I found it boring, and I never understood why it was necessary to learn “old stuff.” To me, this was not my past; I saw myself as the future. Our discussion that day was on slavery prior to the Civil War and the experiences of Black folks. One of the White students in my group commented that we should just move on, that discussing such things was a waste a time.

Patrick was visibly upset and proceeded to explain to the group why history matters and that his experiences as a Black man were very different than those of a White man because of such history. Patrick tried to share some of his experiences. But, rather than listening, one student who he had become particularly close to responded in anger:

What are you talking about Patrick? That’s not the truth, it must be a misunderstanding or, you know, an innocent mistake! Racism is in the past and that guy following you around the store wasn’t really following you. Anyways, I am sure people get followed all the time. I know I have been followed, so you see it wasn’t about race.

What were you doing anyway that would make someone follow you? You are being too sensitive and why are you so upset about this? I mean, I know there are people who are still racist, but come on, that is a personal choice. My parents are racist but I am not! There are always going to be a few assholes out there. That’s just life! You have the choice to ignore their behavior. The way you are talking, I am feeling like you think I am racist, but like I said, I am not. I am a good person and I don’t see color. You know that! I treat you the same as everyone else.

Racism does not exist like it did in the old days and just talking about it creates problems as you can see here. Sure, we have extreme groups like the KKK and the Nazis but come on, that's it, and you know these extreme groups discriminate against all types of people, not just Black people. I have been discriminated against because I am a Christian, and to be honest you sound like you have some type of personal agenda. Why are you trying to cause problems? You need to stop being so angry. I am equally discriminated against, and I am not angry, that's just people.

Afterward, Patrick shut down, and he didn't talk much for the rest of the semester.

I never said anything during that conversation to either Patrick or the other student, but I thought the same things that came out of that student's mouth. I was mad at Patrick and had no interest in talking with him if he was going to make such accusations. In fact, I walked away thinking Patrick was racist. I didn't believe his story, and I judged him for it.

Emerging Stories, Year 2000: An Analysis of “Race Isn’t a Problem Anymore, Patrick!”

Being black in U.S. society means always having to be prepared for anti-Black actions by whites—in most places and at many times of the day, week, month, or year. Being black means living with various types of racial discrimination from cradle to grave (Feagin 2010, p. 187).

Let us consider the social context in which “My Stories, Year 2000” took place. I was navigating the world of higher education for the first time, and you can see some of my own insecurities that shaped my experiences. I mentioned previously the importance of positionality, including race, ethnicity, age, gender, social class, geographic location, sexuality, and their impact on our own understanding of how the world operates, how we perceive others, and how others perceive us. My social class impacted my perception of self and others. It is important to acknowledge that we carry positionalities with us all the time, and they are a part of every experience and interaction or lack of interaction with others. Attending college was frightening and confusing. As I stated earlier, this was my first real experience being exposed to more diversity, despite the college campus and community still being predominately White. Previous lack of exposure made me feel uncomfortable with individuals who were different than me. I was uncomfortable interacting with peers who were not White. Studies show that White students are uncomfortable around students of color, avoid interaction, and are even hostile at times when interacting (Deamond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 275). Statistically, my fears and the fears of White students today are unfounded, yet we are still afraid.

Social Context: Media, Stereotypes, and Socialization

When we consider our social networks and who we are exposed to, it is clear Whites prefer relationships with Whites, and some studies suggest that Whites prefer defacto segregation to integration (Deamond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 275). But consider: If we lack interaction with people who differ from us in race and ethnicity, then how do we ever learn about our differences and, more importantly, our similarities?

Isn't part of the argument of being post-racial supported by the belief that our society is now more integrated and diverse? According to statistics, we are not, nor have we ever been, integrated within our own social networks (Deamond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 275). Without integration and interactions, we only have stereotypes and media to expose us to difference, which fuels prejudice that manifests consciously as well as unconsciously.

You can see my own unconscious bias when I referred to Patrick as well spoken and well dressed, and to Crystal as beautiful in an "exotic" way. I had preconceived notions of how Black men and women acted and dressed. These ideas resulted from my lack of interaction with those who were different from me. All that had been represented to me came from media that portrayed people of color as stereotypes.

I perceived Black males to be more violent, criminal, poor, and athletic, and I perceived Black women as either an "Aunt Jemima" character or as some exotic, hypersexual being (Deamond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 275). I also saw Black women as being poor and angry. I watched media like *The Cosby Show*, but it did not shift my perception of Black men and women.

The Cosby Show represented Blacks being successful and educated; however, the show implied that the starring family, the Huxtables, were more likely to be the exception to typical Black families than the rule. If anything, it “gave me a pass” on being racist, or so I thought, because I really liked the show, and it reiterated the notion that racism was in the past (Jhally & Lewis, 1992, p. 93). The Huxtables were successful and never experienced racism in the show, which somewhat validated viewers’ idea that, when racism did occur, it was due in part to how Blacks behaved and not because Whites were racist (Jhally & Lewis, 1992, p. 93). Viewers perceived that, if the Huxtables could make it, then so could all Black individuals (Jhally & Lewis, 1992, p. 93).

The media shaped my perception of Black and brown individuals, and my perception of Black and brown individuals also intersected with my understanding of the economic system, which was that “anyone can make it.” This message rang true in much of the media I was exposed to especially “rags to riches” shows like “Rocky,” “Forest Gump,” “Annie,” “Cinderella,” “Pretty Woman,” “Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory,” and “The Great Gatsby.” Unfortunately, not much has changed since the 1980s and 90s. Blacks are still disproportionately represented as being athletes, thugs, mummies, rapists, sidekicks, and welfare recipients (Collins, 2004, pp. 119–141). Today, we are exposed to additional forms of media, and adults spend at least 5 hours a day online, which means we are seeing these stereotypical images more often (eMarketer, 2013, p. 1).

Daily consumption of racist media now goes beyond television. Video games also portray Blacks as athletes, thugs, and criminals more often than they do Whites (Burgess, Dill, Stermer, Burgess and Brown, 2011, p. 289-311). Additionally, Arabs in video games are typically targeted and killed, and Asians are overrepresented in fighting games (Burgess, 2011, p. 37–41). On social media, I have been disturbed to see websites like www.martinlutherking.org. This is portrayed as an educational site dedicated to Martin Luther King, Jr., but the site is full of false information and sends viewers to a White supremacist website that further proliferate racial and ethnic stereotypes. It is apparent that old stereotypes prevail, and they have not changed much, even in newer media.

Economic Context: Media and Social Class

In Patrick's story, I did not mention social class often, other than sharing my occupation and stating that I attended community college because it was affordable. I was poor; having few economic resources limited my opportunities. I was labeled "white trash" when I was a kid by other White kids, and I was well aware of the public discourse that referred to poor people as lesser and undeserving. This was part of the rhetoric in the media. Ironically, I never viewed myself as poor or working class when I was younger; I considered myself middle class. I now realize that I defined being poor as someone "mooching off the system," which was another discourse used in media to humiliate the poor. I also struggled in school and had very low expectations and no aspirations to proceed any further than high school. I performed poorly on standardized tests. I was horrible at math, and I struggled with reading and writing. I often wonder how much of

my lack of expectations and aspirations came from the continued messages I received from society. For example, as a female, I am reminded daily what it means to be a woman in U.S. society. A woman's body is often depicted as an object to be used for sexual pleasure, to be cut symbolically into pieces and displayed by the media. Examples in media include a faceless image of a woman's back and butt holding a beer can, or using her legs and breast to advertise cooking, cologne, cars, and any other products that can be sold by a woman's anatomy. I am reminded daily that my gender means I am too emotional, irrational, and confrontational, and that my true value lies in my capability to give pleasure, reproduce, and care for my offspring. As a working woman with a family, I am continually asked, "How do you do it all?" If I am expected to be the caretaker, it is assumed that working somehow causes me to neglect my children and husband. I have yet to hear of any working man asked the same question, yet I know plenty of men in administrative positions who have young children and aging parents and still manage to work and be caretakers. And, most importantly, their ability to do a good job at work is never questioned.

"What were you doing anyway that would make someone follow you? You are being too sensitive and why are you so upset about this?" Looking back, I wonder how much of that conversation affected Patrick and his perception of self. He was told he was "being too sensitive" and asked what he was doing to "make someone follow" him. These were aggressions, or what is called "racial microaggressions," which are commonplace behaviors, and verbal indignities "that communicate hostile, derogatory, or

negative racial slights and insults towards people of color” (Driscoll, Torres, & Burrow, 2007, p. 271).

Although these are called “microaggressions,” these aggressions are not micro because the negative effects are not minimal. I also contributed to these aggressions towards Patrick and Crystal, but mine were nonverbal as I thought to myself that Patrick was “well-spoken and dressed” and Crystal was “beautiful in an exotic way.” These aggressions come from our conscious and unconscious bias and are extremely harmful to people of color (Driscoll, Torres, & Burrow, 2007, p. 271).

It is also important to note that microaggressions can be perceived as positive or negative. For example, remarking that a woman is nurturing is perceived as positive, but it can also validate the thinking that a nurturing character corresponds with gender. This perceived positive stereotype also reinforces negative stereotypes of men by implying that they aggressive and not nurturing, which again relates to gender rather than the unique behavior of the individual (Bergsieker, Constantine, & Fiske, 2012, p. 1216).

Consider my own thoughts of Patrick and Crystal. I thought Patrick was well dressed and well spoken, which means I thought Black men generally don’t dress appropriately nor know how to speak properly. I was thinking, “Isn’t it unusual for Black men to be intelligent?” I had an expectation and believed the generalization that Black men are not able to dress or speak well and are therefore less intelligent than Whites. I was assigning intelligence based on race, which is a message I received in the process of my socialization. Also, I called Crystal beautiful in an exotic way, which meant that I perceived her as hypersexual. According to Irving (2007) “Black women in particular are

clouded by histories that mark them as sexually deviant, lascivious, and easy (pp. 67-92).” These thoughts are not complimentary in any way, and I can’t imagine how Patrick and Crystal might have felt if I had made such comments to their face. Can you imagine being told repeatedly that you were not expected to be well dressed or well spoken? Can you imagine being referred to as exotic, repeatedly, objectifying and sexualizing your body?

How would you internalize such comments? My interpretation would be that people do not see me as an intelligent human being but rather as someone who is not intelligent and is only an object to be desired. If this was the message I received everyday, I would feel worthless. This is surely not what we mean by being post-racial, is it?

Public Context: Media and the Needs of the Poor

In a public context, socioeconomic status and race affect economic opportunity and educational attainment. They structure our interpersonal relationships and shape our understanding of the world and of others. For example, media is an institution that affects public context and our perceptions of others. Because I was poor and poorly educated, I knew little to nothing about history or society other than what was reflected in media. I identified as middle class because I was working hard, hoping to have the American dream, which I assumed anyone could achieve. I wasn’t using government assistance, but my perception of who received assistance came from the media and public discourse, my perception of who received government assistance didn’t include myself. I was living below the poverty line; however, I did not associate myself with “those

people,” the other poor people, whom the media represented as people of color. I believed that I was somehow superior because I wasn’t receiving official government assistance. This was a way for me to distinguish myself.

My behavior reminds me of how poor Whites have historically tried to find ways to distinguish themselves from Blacks. This was especially true after the Reconstruction, when Blacks were seeking equal education. Whites were resistant and opposed education for Blacks. This mentality is common in a capitalist society characterized by rank, domination, intimidation, and inequality that fosters a “dualistic, win-lose mentality and the belief that people need to compete over scarce resources” (Goodman, 2011, p. 53). Social class is a process that structures our lives to the point that, even when two groups of people are suffering, we focus on competing to distinguish ourselves, even only symbolically. For example, race is used to divide poor Whites and Blacks from one another by implying to Whites that, even if they’re poor, at least they’re White, which is better than being Black (Allen, 2012, pp. 71-90). This mentality is part of our history and encompasses the social construction of race that has resulted in the ranking of one race over another. If this symbolic perception of superiority based on race is present, then how is U.S. society post-racial?

Historical Context: Whitewashed History

When Patrick shared his story, my notions of justice and equality were challenged, and I felt victimized for being White. I believed in a just world, so I viewed “victims as meriting their misfortune and/or asking for it” (Rubin & Peplau, 1975, p. 71). This “just world hypothesis” is the belief that we exist in a system that is orderly and fair

(Rubin & Peplau, 1975, p. 71). I believed in a just world and therefore believed that you get what you deserve. The hint that this may not be true made me fearful. My social context was supported by a notion of justice in which “you will reap what you sow,” or “you are free to choose but are not free from the consequences of your choice,” or “everything you do, everything you say, every choice you make, sooner or later comes back around.”

This “just world hypothesis” may be supported from an individual perspective, but, on a systemic level, this hypothesis does not account for what we cannot control or even for good fortune. Patrick shook the foundation of my beliefs, and, instead of listening to what he was trying to share, I blamed him because blaming him made more sense to me. He, the individual, was the problem; I had nothing to do with his problems. For me, it was easier to walk away because it seemed like nonsense. I was in denial, so I framed assertions of racism as isolated incidents or as non-racial issues, and I assumed that people of color were being overly sensitive (Cabrera, 2014, p. 769). I decided Patrick’s story was clearly a “non-racial issue” and that he was being “overly sensitive” over a potential “isolated incident” that was surely not the norm, given our post-racial society.

During that time, I thought “anti-White bias” was a bigger problem “anti-Black bias” (Cabrere, 2014, p. 768). In my mind, Whites were more racially oppressed as victims of reverse discrimination. The stories of White men being denied jobs or access to higher education due to affirmative action filled my mind. It seemed that Whites were the victims, not the other way around. This perspective was shaped by my social class

status and compounded by living in a capitalist society that values competition, encouraging the notion that class doesn't matter or is a small distinction because we are supposedly all equal under the law (Mantsios, 2003, p. 193). However, arguments concerning "reverse discrimination" are easily countered. According to a study conducted in Boston and Chicago between 2001 and 2002, resumes with "white-sounding names, whether male or female," were more likely to get a call back for an interview than "black-sounding names even though the resumes were otherwise identical" (Bertrand, Mariann and Mullainathan, 2004, pp. 991–1013)." According to Pew Research (2016), wage gaps persist when comparing genders, races, and ethnicities (see Appendix FF and GG). For example, "among full- and part-time workers in the U.S., blacks in 2015 earned just 75% as much as whites in median hourly earnings and women earned 83% as much as men" (Patten, 2016, p. 1). These studies decidedly do not demonstrate that we are all equal under the law.

I also believed that many Americans were middle class and continuing to climb the economic ladder and, therefore, that all individuals have an equal chance to succeed. I believed that success only required perseverance, sacrifice, and hard work. Mantsios (2003) explained that most people believe that "in America anyone can become a millionaire; it's just a matter of being in the right place at the right time" (p. 194). However, this is a myth. The notion that economic achievement is post-racial is also a myth; both myths are apparent when you understand history.

Consider the purpose of education. According to Horace Mann, education is "the great equalizer," and, for Alexis de Tocqueville, "the first duty imposed on those who

now direct society is to educate democracy” (Golash-Boza, 2015, p. 208). Pedro Noguera, a Professor of Education at NYU, claimed that to educate democracy means the following:

Education is democratic when it is inclusive because it is acceptable to a wide variety of people. It’s democratic because it recognizes that students are not passive beings but have to be engaged as critical thinkers. It’s democratic because parents need to be treated as active participants in the educational process and not merely as consumers of it. And it’s democratic because it has a sense of public accountability and a commitment to addressing broader public and social goals. (Grave, 2011, p. 2)

We must be educated so that we may participate as informed citizens in public life (Colby, 2007, p. 28).

For many of us, education is a means to improve life circumstances. We associate it with the American dream, and we have seen how education may provide individuals with an opportunity to make more money, leading to longer and healthier lives (Hernandez, M., Margolis R. and Hummer RA., 2016). However, history shows that education, “the great equalizer,” was designed for Whites. Segregation in education continues today by race and income (see Appendix HH and II). In my letter, I mentioned that I hated history, that “I was shocked about being required to take a history course,” and that “I did not recognize the value of learning about the past.” History has been “Whiteness washed,” which means what I learned in history was a “sanitized version” told from the perspective of Whites.

My knowledge of American history included the signing of the Declaration of Independence; the Emancipation Proclamation; tidbits on the Civil War, including a

viewing of the movie *Glory*; stories of immigrants and their successful assimilation; and the great contributions of Martin Luther King, Jr. Thanksgiving was celebrated with a dinner that highlighted the coming together of the Pilgrims and “Indians.” When I was a child, this was celebrated in play format with children dressed as Pilgrims or American Indians; I briefly remember portraying an American Indian. I didn’t know that the Declaration of Independence derived much of its democratic principles from the Iroquois Nation.

I don’t recall learning about Bacon’s Rebellion and the revolts of other indentured servants and slaves. I was never taught about the construction of race or the public policies that prohibited access and opportunities. All the wrongs invoked on people of color were, in my educational experience, touched on lightly or overlooked completely.

Perhaps history seemed so unimportant to me because Whiteness has been treated as normal and therefore uninteresting. I saw myself as separate from history, but people cannot be separated from their historical context. Patrick knew this, but I walked around dazed in a Whitewashed world, severely uneducated and clueless to what Patrick was trying to share with me.

Questions Linked to Additional Research

- **Concealed Stories and the Media: The Media Impacted My Perception of People of Color. I Referred to Patrick as “Well Spoken and Dressed” (Revealing my Negative Assumptions of Black People) and Crystal as Exotic (Revealing My Negative Assumption That Black Women Are Stereotyped as Being Hyper-sexual). How Do Stereotypes In the Media Impact Our Understanding of Others?**

According to Mastro & Yarchi (2015) People of color are underrepresented in primetime shows and when represented “they are relegated to roles around themes of sexuality, criminality, subservience, or intellectual ineptitude” (p.20).

- **Concealed Stories, Colorblind Ideology and Individualism: We See Eye Color, Hair Color, So Why Do We State That We Are Colorblind When We Are Discussing Racism?**

Bonilla-Silva (2003) states that color-blind ideology “ignores or marginalizes people of color’s distinctive needs, experiences, and identities” (p. 18).

- **Concealed Stories, Social Context and Media: What Stereotypes Do You See Portrayed In the Media of Brown and Black Individuals?**

A study (2007) conducted on prime-television found that Latinos were not depicted as articulate, while 25 percent of blacks and 30 percent of whites were depicted as articulate. In addition, 2 percent of whites were depicted as immoral compared to 9 percent of blacks and 3 percent of whites were depicted as despicable in comparison to 9 percent blacks and 18 percent Latinos (pp. 101-114).

- **Concealed Stories and Social Context: Why Do You Think White Students Are Uncomfortable Around Students of Color?**

According (2005) to survey completed at ten different universities 33 percent of nonwhite students experienced harassment and 31 percent of nonwhite students felt the classroom climate was unwelcoming (Rankin & Reason, p. 44).

- **Concealed Stories and the Media: Why Do You Think “The Cosby Show” Did Not Reduce Stereotypes In the 90s?**

In a study conducted by Sut Jhally and Justin Lewis (1992) including fifty-two focus groups of black and white respondents; they found that whites viewed the Huxtables similar to themselves and enjoyed watching the show, but they also found that the show did not reduce stereotypes targeted at blacks (p. 93-98).

- **Concealed Stories and the Media: Media Lacks Diverse Representation and Is an Institution Which Impacts Our Socialization. How Are People of Color Represented In Media?**

According to a study conducted on Media Representation of Race and Ethnicity, (2015) in the “1980s, whites comprised 78.1% of the regular characters in top viewed primetime shows” and between 1995-1997 “white characters’ representation rose to 88%” (p.1).

- **Concealed Stories, Social Context and the Economy: Half of All Americans Think They Are Middle Class. What Social Class Would Identify With?**

For example, four-in-ten Americans with incomes below \$20,000 say they are middle class, as do a third of those with incomes above \$150,000.

And about the same percentages of blacks (50%), Hispanics (54%) and whites (53%) self-identify as middle class, even though members of minority groups who say they are middle class have far less income and wealth than do whites who say they are middle class (Pew, 2008).

- **Concealed Stories and Patterns of Language: What Are Microaggressions? Examples Include:**

“Where are you from?”

“Where were you born?”

“You speak good English.”

“You are a credit to your race.”

“You are so articulate.”

“When I look at you, I don’t see color.”

“Indian giver.”

“That’s so gay.”

“She welshed on the bet.”

“I jewed him down.”

“You people ...”

“We got gypped”

(Burgess, Dill, Stermer, Burgess and Brown, 2011, p. 289-311).

- **Concealed Stories and Social Context: Micro-Aggressions Are Really Aggressions That Cause Emotional Trauma. Can You Think of a Scenario In Which Microaggressions Have Been Used Consciously or Unconsciously Against People of Color?**

One study specifically examined microaggressions and the experiences of African Americans and found that the

cumulative effects can be quite devastating. The researchers reported that experience with microaggressions resulted in a negative racial climate and emotions of self-doubt, frustration, and isolation on the part of victims (Driscoll, M. W., Torres, L., & Burrow, A. 2007, p. 273).

- **Concealed Stories and Economic Context: Do You Think Capitalism Influences an Us Versus Them Mentality? Why?**

According to Gunner Myrdal (2009) observations in “An American Dilemma” “the poorer classes of whites [were] in competition for jobs and for social status” with blacks, and if they were to be educated, then “whites would incur a symbolic cost” (p. 879).

- **Concealed Stories and Media: How Are Poor People Represented In the Media?**

The Media misrepresent people of color as “grossly overrepresented” as American’s poor. In a study conducted on magazine’s portrayals of the poor Martin Glens (1996) commented that of the

560 people selected [of] America's poor, [it] would expect[ed] that 162 [would] be black. But of the 560 poor people of determinable race pictured in newsmagazines between 1988 and 1992, 345 were African American. In reality, two out of three poor Americans are nonblack, but the reader of these magazines would likely come to exactly the opposite conclusion (p.10).

- **Concealed Stories and the Institution of Education: Is Education the “Great Equalizer”?**

According to the Pew Research Center (2013)

white adults 25 and older are significantly more likely than blacks to have completed at least a bachelor’s degree (34% vs. 21%, a 13 percentage point difference). Fifty years ago, the completion gap between whites and blacks was about 6 percentage points (10% vs. 4%). But expressed a different way, the black completion rate as a percentage of the white rate has improved from 42% then to 62% now (p. 2).

- **Concealed Stories, Policies and the Institution of Law: Why Do We Overestimate the “Prevalence and Power” of Affirmative Action?**

Affirmative action is not used in all college and universities. A significant number of colleges—some 75 percent by one estimate place no weight on race or gender for admission.

In addition,

after thirty years of affirmative action, whites and Asians apply to, enroll in, graduate from college at higher rates than Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 267).

- **Concealed Stories, Government and Law: Are We All Equal Under the Law?**

According to Anwar, Bayer & Hjalmarsson (2012)

In cases with no blacks in the jury pool, black defendants are convicted at an 81% rate and white defendants at a 66% rate. When the jury pool includes at least one black potential juror, conviction rates are almost identical: 71% for black defendants and 73% for white defendants (p.1019).

- **Concealed Stories, Socialization and Education: Did You Learn about Racism and Discrimination in US History?**

In 2008, Terry Falk a school board member from Milwaukee Public Schools examined social studies textbooks and according to Falk

none of the 5th grade United States history textbooks—even those exceeding 800 pages—examines the role of racism in U.S. history or even mentions the word “racism.” In two textbooks, the word “discrimination” doesn’t even appear. Nor do the texts tell students that any United States president ever owned slaves, even though 12 of the first 18 did, and all of the two-term presidents up until Lincoln owned and sold human beings (Peterson, 2017, p. 1).

- **Concealed Stories and Historical Context: What did you learn in your American History Class? Do you think some of the Facts Were Distorted or Excluded?**

Du Bois (1935) stated in his review of writers and their documentation of American history after the Reconstruction concluding that

with a determination unparalleled in science, the mass of American writers have started out so to distort the facts of the greatest critical period of American history as to prove right wrong and wrong right (xvii).

Transforming Stories: Letter to Self, Year 2016, Critical Reflections on the Writing Process

. . for all the accumulated associations, with whatever is sweet, and honorable, and sublime, there yet lurks an elusive something in the innermost idea of this hue, which strikes more of panic to the soul than that redness which affrights in blood. This elusive quality it is, which causes the thought of whiteness, when divorced from more kindly associations, and coupled with any object terrible in itself, to heighten that terror to the furthest bounds (Melville, 1969, p. 164).

Dear Self,

I included the quote above from Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* because the story of the whale reminds me of whiteness as an ideology. There are many references to race in *Moby-Dick*, but the great white whale may, at times, symbolize White power and wealth. *Moby-Dick* reminds readers that the obsession that comes from greed requires an ultimate sacrifice: the loss of humanity. Melville (1969) described whiteness as

not so much a color as the visible absence of color, and at the same time the concrete of all colors: it is for these reasons that there is such a dumb blankness, full of meaning, in the wide landscape of snows — a colorless, all color of atheism which we shrink (p. 212).

This quote has been interpreted in various ways, but I read it in the context of race and how I feel when I try to explain whiteness to my students. It is the “absence of color,” invisible; they don't see it, yet it is “concrete” and “full of meaning,” having real life consequences.

When I began writing this chapter, I was coming from a place of frustration and even anger. The feedback I received was that I should reconsider my tone because it

seemed condescending and perhaps too aggressive. I have been advised to be more thoughtful, kind, and understanding by taking a softer approach in discussing racism with my white students. One white colleague who read parts of my letter stated that she was initially angered by my comments but that she understood my approach. She commented that the anger was needed to elicit her emotional reaction, which made her more interested in what I was saying. However, her experience and education is more extensive with regards to conversations on racism and racial inequities. I wondered, with my student population, would the response be the same? The purpose of this dissertation was to find a better way to reach my white students who struggle with resistance and denial to racism and racial inequities. I thought that, through being more vulnerable and honest about my own prejudices and past experiences with denial and further contributions to racism, I could perhaps create space for a rational discussion on racism and avoid the debates that feel more like verbal boxing matches than productive, educated conversations.

I was also concerned with finding an approach that used more layman's terminology, for I have found that material heavy in academic jargon is overwhelming to most of my students. Academic jargon intimidates my students, resulting in silence and thus creating the opposite effect of what I had intended. A student has even commented that they felt stupid after reading the material, which, I believe, lowered my credibility with that student while also reconfirming the student's racist beliefs. I can relate to my student's feelings of stupidity. I have struggled with these same feelings, which can be detrimental to any rational conversation. Quite possibly, one of the most effective ways

an individual can silence a conversation is by making another individual feel stupid and intimidated; the resulting feelings of alienation make the individual less receptive to the conversation. When I have felt alienated, I searched for likeminded people who confirmed my own prejudices. Therefore, the best approach as an educator is to find the middle ground, where you don't intimate and alienate others, while also creating the space for honest dialogue on a topic that continues to be polarizing.

You are asking white students to develop a white identity. This requires continuous self-reflection because Whites rarely view race as central to their identity (Deamond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 436). We have never been forced to develop a “double-consciousness.” According to Du Bois (1994), the double-consciousness is

this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in assumed contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 162–163).

Unlike people of color, Whites are not held accountable to various racial communities. We do not have to consider our racial identity; therefore, asking Whites to develop this identity is challenging, at best.

Also, whites are at various stages in the process of developing a racial identity. This became more apparent to me at a conference session on honest conversations between women of color and white women. We were tasked with grouping ourselves by race, which was initially complex due to generational differences and individuals who self-identified as both white and non-white. A young lady asked the speaker what she

should do if she self-identified as both, and a Black woman spoke up from the crowd: “It doesn’t matter how you identify yourself, it is how society identifies you.” The look on the young woman’s face was one of dismay and confusion, and she ultimately choose the non-white group. The process of choosing a group seemed very painful for many of the young women, and I have wondered what it would have meant if they had been allowed to self-identify as both instead of one or the other. Would this have somehow negated the realities of racism, or does our focus on a Black and white binary obfuscate and ignore the exploitation and harm caused to other racial and ethnic groups? Does this binary somehow prevent us from seeing the totality of racism and its effects on all people of color? Perea (1997) stated:

I define this paradigm as the conception that race in America consists, either exclusively or primarily, of only two constituent racial groups, the Black and the White. Many scholars of race reproduce this paradigm when they write and act as though only the Black and the White races matter for purposes of discussing race and social policy with regard to race. The mere recognition that “other people of color” exist, without careful attention to their voices, their histories, and their real presence, is merely a reassertion of the Black/White paradigm. If one conceives of race and racism as primarily of concern only to Blacks and Whites, and understands “other people of color” only through some unclear analogy to the “real” races, this just restates the binary paradigm with a slight concession to demographics. (p. 2)

For this conference session, the focus was on a Black and white binary, but I wonder what the conversation would have looked like if we had acknowledged the complexity of racial and ethnic identities and the “history and experiences” of these identities for all people of color (p. 2). I have asked, “How do we go about dismantling systemic racism if we are ignoring the histories and experiences of other racial and ethnic groups?” These

histories are not the same, so neither are the experiences. Racism is endemic, but how an individual experiences racism may differ, and those differences matter in our approach to dismantling racism, which requires a conversation that does not “conceive of racism as primarily of concern only to Blacks and whites” (p. 2).

During this same session, Whites were asked to address the question, “What do we want women of color to know?” There were two groups for non-whites and two groups for whites. I chose the group in the front of the room and listened to the conversation while watching with great discomfort and horror to a list being formed on a flip chart with items like “be patient with us,” “teach us,” “we are not racist,” “we are not responsible for the past,” and “all lives matter.” I slowly moved away, with the hope that the second group had something different to add, but I found myself in the same position. I felt mortified and angered by what was being listed. I wanted to leave, but I didn’t.

Time grew short, and the lists were briefly covered. Each time an item was read from the list, I flinched as I watched the two groups of non-white women listen with little or no reaction. It was as if they were not surprised by the comments or, worse, they already knew what would be said. In the back of the room, a White woman raised her hand as tears ran down her face. She was trying to catch her breath from being so overwhelmed with emotion and stated that she had never been so disappointed by the comments made in her group, that she was angry and embarrassed to even be associated with being white. I felt the same way, and, for the first time, I understood what it meant to have a racial identity, for better or worse. Racially, these were my people, and I was disappointed and embarrassed for all of us.

This experience led me to want to write about racism and racial inequities by highlighting my own whiteness. However, this experience made me realize that not much has changed for whites. The conference I attended was during the summer of 2016, I picture the Black man I met in one of the conference sessions. We were paired off to discuss the history of racism and Reconstruction. I recalled a short documentary on colonialism and the destruction of the American Indian tribes. When I looked to my left to continue our conversation, the man was in tears. I didn't know what to do. Our bodies were facing one another, but he was looking down at what appeared to be the tips of his sleeves, and the only thing I could think to say was, "I am sorry."

He looked back up and said, with tears streaming from his eyes, "Why, why do people do these things to others? Why do white people ignore what they have done, the pain they have caused?"

And all I could think to say was, "I don't know, I don't know why, but I am sorry." Once I spoke those words I reached out my hand and squeezed his hand, looking down at his sleeves. He squeezed my hand back and we sat there. I assume, to others, we looked like two people praying together as the sadness overtook us both. The only thing I knew to do was to be there. There were no words to console or fix what has happened or what continues to happen. I have seen and felt sadness in a number of ways, but what I experienced that day is difficult to describe. His eyes told a story of pain and grief that I will never completely comprehend. I felt grateful in that moment because, for whatever reason, he trusted me enough to join him in silence, just two people with no answers.

As I mentioned before, I began writing this dissertation with more frustration and anger than I expected, but all I could think of was the many amazing people who have come in and out of my life, like this man, and the anger I felt knowing that he was in pain, and that I have, in some way, contributed to a system that inflicts pain and suffering. I want my white students to understand the realities of race and move past this supposed superiority that has been constructed. I am angered by the thought of placating white fragility because its placation recenters whiteness in front of racial equity to make Whites feel better about themselves. White fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves (DiAngelo, 2011). These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt; argumentation; silence; and abandonment of the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate White racial equilibrium (p. 54).

By buying into white fragility, racism may continue to be seen only as individual acts, feelings, or utterances that intentionally disrespect, insult, or devalue an individual based on race. In actuality, racism is not limited to interpersonal situations or conscious beliefs; rather, racism is pervasive and embedded in institutions and policies that normalize Whiteness and its perceived superiority, supported by the belief of equality and justice for all, where anyone can achieve the American dream (Werkmeister, Rozas & Miller, 2009, p. 26). Racism functions just like the woman at the conference stated, “It doesn’t matter how you identify yourself, it is how society identifies you.”

I don’t want to play into white victimization or the need to maintain a view of self that is positive by framing racism as a problem for brown and Black communities rather

than as a systemic issue that all whites play a role in supporting (Cabrera, 2014, p. 771). I am aware of the complexity in discussing racism and racial inequities, and I find it difficult to balance white students' emotions that result from asking them to interrogate their whiteness (Ruparelia, 2015, p. 842). But I do understand that we are all in various stages of developing racial cognizance and that human beings deserve respect and understanding even when we have difficulty empathizing. I also recognize the patience required from others who have helped me develop understanding of racism and racial inequities.

Remembering my own journey has helped me calm my approach, but I still feel it is important to explain my struggle and rationale for choosing an emotional approach. I also believe it is important to name white fragility and white victimization so that we educators may find a better way to navigate the responses that may evolve from the difficult feelings of our white students.

Sincerely,

Me

CHAPTER VI

LETTER THREE: RESPONSE TO COLORBLIND IDEOLOGY

This chapter focuses on a broader narrative of society relation to colorblind ideology. Colorblind ideology in another narrative that contribute to the perpetuation of Whiteness (Winant, 2000, p. 172). This chapter calls attention to socialization, internalized dominance, culture and conformity as it relates to institutions and systems of oppression. In this chapter, I begin with composite stories from the classroom, which are portrayals of socialization and systematic training of dominant culture norms (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17).

Within the composite story I attempt to address questions proposed to me by students who argue that they are colorblind. I incorporate statistical data and questions within textboxes that reveal concealed stories of history, victimization, exclusion and inequality as it relates to various institutions. This chapter also includes my personal narratives and analysis which relate to the broader narratives of society including colorblind ideology. My personal narratives are “cultural conformity stories” and portray my systematic training of dominant culture norms connecting my personal narrative with the broader narratives of society that reinforce Whiteness (Ozlem & DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17). This chapter concludes with an analysis of my personal narrative and a reflection on the writing process. The analysis and reflection are “emerging

transforming stories” which critique and analysis stories associated with colorblindness (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

Composite Stories from the Classroom: Dear C. Hope: “Mrs. V, I Don’t See Color, I am Colorblind!”

Dear C. Hope,

I have been thinking about our in-class conversation on Monday, and I am concerned with how difficult it was for you. You were so resistant, and you challenged a great deal of the information I provided in class. Today, I have prepared to talk about incarceration rates and racial inequity. I am hopeful that our discussion will raise important questions about systematic racism and White supremacy. I recognize those are challenging conversations, especially when I ask you to consider systems. It is difficult to understand the complexity of systems because we Americans tend to be very individualistic.

I am concerned that individualism will redirect the discussion today as it did in class on Monday. When I was talking with your group, I could tell you were annoyed.

You said, in a commanding voice,

Mrs. V, race doesn’t really matter anymore, or at least it doesn’t matter like it use to. If we keep talking about race, it will just cause more problems. People should be judged for who they are and not based on the color of their skin. If all people would just ignore race, then racism wouldn’t be a problem. I am colorblind, I don’t see race and I am not racist. I was lucky because I never learned about racism. I grew up in an all-White neighborhood and went to a school that was mostly White. My parents taught me to treat everyone the same. Did you know my sister has a Black boyfriend, and some of my closest friends are Black? My sister and her boyfriend are getting pretty serious, but I hope she doesn’t decide to marry the guy.

At this moment, I felt confused and fearful of what would be said next because I was anticipating what has been said to me multiple times over the years. However, I was hopeful. I was hopeful that I was wrong, so I asked you, “Why? Why shouldn’t she marry him if she loves him?”

You looked up at me and said so confidently, “Well, I think if they have kids it will be confusing.” I looked around at your group and noticed that all six students are White. I was briefly grateful that a student of color was not sitting with your group, but then, I reminded myself, if a student of color was sitting with your group, you probably would have never said those things. I have been teaching long enough to see this same scenario played out over and over again; I will be honest with you—I am tired of this conversation. I have had it too many times, and I know I am privy to this conversation because I am White. You only say these things to me because I am White and because you assume I will understand. When I looked back at you, I believe you noticed my reaction because you quickly said,

I am not racist, but I don’t believe mixed marriages work, you know different cultures. I really like the guy, he’s a good guy, but I don’t see it lasting. They are just too different. Anyways, people should be judged based on who they are. It’s the person and their actions that matter most.

The students in your group responded in agreement and understanding, which only emboldened you.

I was speechless for a moment as I considered what I should say to you, but didn’t have enough time to unpack every part of your statement. I am writing you this letter

because I care about you, and I owe it to you and to all of my students to tell the truth. I want to unpack this conversation and further discuss with you the ideology behind colorblindness and individualism.

In our conversation, you seemed to say that individualism matters more than race, but let me ask: “What color are your eyes? What color is your hair and your clothing? Do you see those colors? Are they recognizable?” My point is that we do see color, and, oddly, we see color with everything but race. Our claims of colorblindness are disingenuous and foolish. I can recall the moment I first had racial awareness at 5 years old and how that moment shaped the way I would view relationships. Let me share my stories with you. Meanwhile, ask yourself when you first became aware of race because, when you tell me you are colorblind—I am sorry—I just don’t believe you.

Please consider what I say for there is much at stake, not only for people of color but also for those of us who are white.

Sincerely,

Mrs. V

P.S. In direct to response to your comment “Mrs. V, I Don’t See Color, I am Colorblind!” Yes you do and please stop saying you don’t.

Cultural Conformity Narrative: Year 1983, “No, I Want Her!”

I was 5 years old when the first Cabbage Patch dolls came out. I remember sitting in front of a black-and-white television set in awe at their advertisements. I desperately wanted one of those dolls, but we were living in Germany at the time, and I knew I would not be able to have a doll until we returned to the United States. The dolls were in high demand; I was worried we wouldn't get one. Luckily, we had already spent 4 years in Germany, so the military had scheduled us to move again, back to the States. Of course, my memory is fuzzy, trying to recall events that took place when I was five, but I do remember my intense feelings of excitement because I had already been promised a doll when we returned home.

Finally, I was at a commissary, walking down the darkened aisles of the store to look for my doll. The shelves were so tall, to my five-year-old self, and I felt anxious as I intensely began searching for the new doll. We passed two aisles full of toys but no Cabbage Patch dolls. I could feel the tears forming as I searched, fearful that I would have to walk out the door with no doll. But then, I spotted her at the top of the shelf, pushed to the very back, in a pink and white dress with little white socks and shoes. She was the only Cabbage Patch doll left, and I felt like the luckiest little girl in the world. A store clerk pulled her down for me, and, without hesitation, I wrapped my arms around the big box, denting the sides while hugging my new doll. The store clerk looked down at me in confusion and said, “We will have more dolls at the end of the week, if you want to wait!”

I thought to myself, “Wait, but why? Is this someone else’s doll, is she already sold?” I looked up at the clerk and said “I want her!”

The clerk said, “Honey, are you sure you don’t want a White doll? She’s Black!”

I looked down at my doll. It had not occurred to me that she was Black until that moment. I looked at the lady, who was White, and said, “No, I want her!” I walked to the front of the store with my doll in hand, and I couldn’t have been happier.

Over the next few weeks, past friends of the family noticed I had a Black doll, and they bought me a White Cabbage Patch doll with bright yellow hair. I recall a statement made by a family member that alluded to the fact that I picked the Black doll because I had no other options. I don’t recall the entire conversation, but I remember how it made me feel. The message was subtle but clear: I should not be playing with a Black doll. I felt a mixture of sadness, confusion, and loss when I stuffed my Black Cabbage Patch doll in the back of my closet and placed the new White doll at the foot of my bed. I did not completely understand why I should not play with a Black doll, but I did understand that the color of your skin matters and that White skin was preferable. This was my first memory about race, and, from the age of five up to adulthood, I knew race mattered even when I claimed to be colorblind.

Emerging Stories: An Analysis of “No, I Want Her!”

Colorblindness is a fictitious story we tell ourselves, but why? If we are willing to tell such stories to ourselves and others, then race must matter. The truth is we see color in all aspects of life. I have mentioned the importance of stories, especially stock stories. They are ubiquitous and the most public of all stories because they are

mainstream and exist within institutions, which perpetuate stock stories until they are considered the norm (Bell, 2010, p. 30). These stories represent the “tales told by the dominant group”; ideologies formed by these stories present as systems of dominant beliefs and values that loom over society and people (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

You said that “race doesn’t matter” and that “if we keep talking about race, it will cause more problems.” However, regardless of whether we talk about race, we are still clearly divided. Racial disparities are apparent in income, wealth, incarceration rates, poverty, health, homeownership, and many other areas. Race matters in U.S. society, but it is often obscured by our profound belief in individualism, a pattern that I am seeing in our previous conversation (DiAngelo, 2010, pp. 1–24). Hyper-individualism makes racism difficult to see because it denies the importance of race and the benefits ascribed to Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2010). Hyper-individualism denies the importance of historical context and prevents us from viewing society at a macro level (DiAngelo, 2010).

Specifically, individualism reproduces the myth of colorblindness and meritocracy by allowing us to deny that we are shaped by dominant ideology through socialization within our institutions such as family, media, religion, and education (DiAngelo, 2010). Our insistence of individualism protects Whiteness because we are not described in “racial terms” and are instead seen as “just people” (Semsoy & DiAngelo, 2017, pp. 104–107). We are rarely described as the White man or woman, the White producer, White doctor, or White teacher; we are mostly known as either a man or woman who is a producer, doctor, or teacher (Semsoy & DiAngelo, 2017). We view ourselves not in terms of race but rather as individuals, yet our ability to deny “having a

race” is an example of the privilege afforded to Whites (Semsoy & DiAngelo, 2017). People of color, on the other hand, “are denied individuality” because they are associated with a racial group (DiAngelo, 2010, pp. 1–24). Being White, I have the ability to claim objectivity. I am not seen by society as having an agenda or bias because my Whiteness is not associated with who I am (DiAngelo, 2010).

Whites, however, associate people of color with having bias and or an agenda. Too often, I have heard the accusation that people of color play the “race card,” or display reverse racism through affirmative action policies. But, being White, I receive no such accusation; it is assumed that, as an individual, I have earned and worked hard for all I have. However, as a woman, I am identified in terms of gender. I have been accused of having bias or an agenda when I attempt to challenge systemic sexism. I have been called a “Feminazi” or a man-hating feminist when I speak up and against sexual assault, wage gaps, or sexist comments. Social identities shape our experiences, and experiences are not one and the same. My experience as a White woman differs from a Black woman’s. We share a social identity as women, but the experience of being a woman will differ because we belong to different racial groups. Intersectionality is important to note when discussing oppression and inequities. We all occupy positions of privilege and oppression, depending on our social identities (DiAngelo, 2010, pp. 1–24). Intersectionality is the recognition that social identities intersect, shaping our lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). For example, race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality differentiate our experiences. My intersectional position, for example, affords me racial privilege because I am White, but, depending on context and power relations,

my gender may disadvantage me because I am a woman. My intersectional position also affords me privilege according to class, ability, and sexuality. Understanding social identities highlights “the dynamics of power, privilege, and sociocultural contexts” and the influence that these contexts have on our identities, which are “tied to sociocultural histories of particular groups” (Jones, 2009, p. 287). Our social identities “play out in different forms in different discursive domains and temporal spaces” (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 303). For instance, Bowleg (2012, p. 755) confers the “temporal chasm” in “meanings of being a black man in the United States during slavery” and now, but concludes that historical legacy influences and reinforces their self-identities. She suggest that men born and nurtured in “majority black regions outside the United States may have a different awareness of Blackness and what it means to identify as Black” (Bowleg, 2012, p. 764).

We have already discussed what is problematic with claims of individualism and the complexity of social identities as well as the privilege and oppression associated with these identities. The ideology of individualism constructs race as an obsolete social identity, but that only works if you are White. In some ways, you were right when you said that “race doesn’t matter” because it doesn’t if you are White. However, “race matters” for communities of color; our white privilege blinds us from this reality. I also want to discuss colorblind ideology in relation to your comments in class the other day. First, the term “colorblindness” is problematic when we are attempting to discuss race. Separate from the discussion on race, the term colorblindness is problematic and potentially damaging to people with disabilities. We must not forget the impact words have and the narratives they create (Frank, 2012, pp. 20–25). Consider what kind of

message we are sending when we use “disability metaphors” in everyday conversations (Frank, 2012, pp. 20–25). These metaphors perpetuate oppressive disability stereotypes portraying the disabled as “the other,” the “evil,” “pitiable” (Baynton, 2001, p. 4). I do not like using the term colorblindness because it reinforces the perception that individuals with disabilities as not normal. I do feel it is important to recognize ableism and the potential impact and harm this term and its conception, may cause persons with disabilities (Longmore and Umansky, 2001, pp. 33-58). This goes back to our discussion on the importance of intersectionality and the power and privilege associated with social identities. However, for the purpose of this discussion, we will continue to use the term with the intention to debunk racist ideologies.

Why do you think we make the claim that we are colorblind? I understand intentions; to you, colorblindness is a moral notion based on character and not on skin color. If we lived in an ideal society, this could be the standard by which we judge individuals. It could be one of our moral principles to judge individuals based upon the “content of their character [and] not by the color of their skin” (Martin Luther King, Jr., 1963). Although I appreciate Martin Luther King’s message, I cannot help but think that this message, while delivered with the best intentions, was understood by Whites as permission to confidently say, “I am colorblind.” But what is wrong with being color conscious (DiAngelo, 2010, p. 108)? Race is part of our social identity. We embrace religion, culture, heritage, language, but we don’t embrace race? Why are we more willing to acknowledge and value other identities? Also, what message are we sending to people of color when Whites claim colorblindness? Is it just another means to disregard

or invalidate the experiences and identities of people of color? Personally, I want people to appreciate me for all my social identities.

Colorblindness may be a nice theory, but it doesn't work in practice (DiAngelo, 2010, p. 107). In practice, it denies the reality of racial inequity. For example, you stated that you never had to learn about racism because you lived in an all-White neighborhood and went to a predominantly White school. If you were taught that all people were created equal and that you should never judge others by their skin color, why do you think you have lived apart from people of color? Doesn't this statement appear contradictory? We uphold the belief that people are created equal, yet we live separately from them; why? I believe the choice to live separately speak louder than our lip service to inclusion and diversity (DiAngelo, 2010, pp. 108–110).

Arguments for segregation have been justified by “naturalization,” which is the belief that racial segregation is natural or biological, though studies have declared this to be false (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 28–29). Residential segregation was forced on communities of color during the twentieth century using racial violence, which was intended to prevent people of color from moving into White neighborhoods (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006, pp. 11–35). Additionally, racially restrictive covenants prevented homeownership or rentals to non-whites (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006, pp. 11–35). From 1930 until the 1960s, the National Association of Real Estate Boards guidelines prevented people of color from entering White neighborhoods. Real estate agents were not allowed to sell the homes to People of Color in White neighborhoods (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006, pp. 11–35). Real estate agents also used the practice of steering to

encourage residential segregation by showing families of color only housing in non-White neighborhoods (Oliver & Shapiro, 2006, pp. 11–35). Beginning in 1930, people of color did not have equal access to federal housing policies that have been associated with the increased wealth of White families who have maintained and passed down their wealth to future generations (Oliver and Shapiro, 2006, pp. 11–35).

People of Color have been forced to segregate; this is apparent due to racial discrimination in homeownership, predatory loan lending practices, and the current resegregation of public education. According to a study involving 2000 Black families, Black families prefer more racially diverse neighborhoods (Krysan & Farley, 2002, pp. 937–980). In the study, only 20% of Black families chose to live neighborhoods that were predominantly Black (Krysan & Farley, 2002, pp. 937–980). Clearly, a preference for racial segregation is not natural; it is enforced.

Also, I have a question regarding your comment on interracial relations. Why do we continue to state that interracial relationships will “confuse” children? What do we mean when we say this? I have not found a study that confirms children are confused by interracial relationships. I have, however, found studies that conclude the hardships experienced by interracial families result from racism, not confusion. According to a study published in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, “bias against interracial couples is associated with disgust that in turn leads interracial couple to be dehumanized (Skinner 2017, pp. 68-77). Interracial families must “navigate an environment where racist opposition is always possible (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 25–30). The most potential confusion for children might be expressed as, “Why do I have to

suffer as the result of racial discrimination when I have been told that it is my character that matters and not the color of my skin? Why am I treated differently, if everyone is equal? Why do people say they are colorblind, if race matters, because it matters to me?"

As a teenager, I recall similar conversations on interracial relationships. I had bought into the notion that race means difference in character. I was told race mattered, and I believed it. Now let me share with you my second narrative on "Love Affair Not Allowed" which displays my lived experiences with the notion that race means difference in character.

Questions Linked to Additional Research

- **Concealed Stories and the Institution of Higher Education: What are Some Of the Benefits for Colleges and Students when Including Race as a Factor in Admission Policies?**

According to the University of Michigan Law School, admissions based on race has educational benefit for all students. One expert stated

that removing consideration of race in the admissions process would have a 'the very dramatic' negative effect on underrepresented minority admissions,' pointing out that while 35% of minority applicants had been admitted in 2000, only 10% would have been admitted if the University had not used race as a factor (Ledford, 2011, pp. 355-360).

- **Concealed Stories and the Institution of Education:**

Between 2006-2007 school year, blacks college-bound seniors had an average SAT score of 1287 (433 reading, 429 math, 425 writing), compared to 1579 (527 reading, 534 math, 518 writing) for white students.¹⁶ In 2007, blacks made up 13.1% of students enrolled in degree-granting colleges, while white students counted for 64.4% of students enrolled in such institutions” (pp. 355-360).

- **Concealed Stories and the Economy:**

According to a study conducted by Devah Pager (2007)

in applications to 171 employers, the white tester received a callback or job offer 31.0 percent of the time, compared with a positive response rate of 25.2 percent for Latinos and 15.2 percent for blacks. These results show a clear racial hierarchy, with whites in the lead, followed by Latinos, and blacks trailing behind (pp. 104-133).

- **Concealed Stories and Social Context: Do you agree with McIntosh? Have You Ever Been Asked to Speak for Your Racial Group?**

McIntosh wrote (2000)

I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race. . . . I can do well in challenging situations without being called a credit to my race. . . . I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group (p. 11).

- **Concealed Stories and the Institution of Education and Law: Now That We No Longer Inforce Busing or Integration, Will Schools Continue to Become More Segregated?**

Boger and Orfield stated (2005) that

public school segregation between black and white students in southern states increased in the 1990s, reversing several decades of stable integration. In 1990, the public schools in metropolitan area counties were on average, 40 percent less segregated than the housing patterns in their corresponding county. By, 2000, public schools were only 27 percent less segregated (pp. 459-460).

- **Concealed Stories, Ideology and Meritocracy: Americans Are in Favor of Liberty but They Also Favor Ensuring Equal Opportunity? In What Ways are Liberty and Ensuring Equal Opportunity Contradictory?**

According to Clark (2012)

about six-in-ten (62%) disagree with the idea that “we should make every possible effort to improve the position of blacks and other minorities, even if it means giving them preferential treatment”; 33% agree. Over the past 25 years, sizable majorities have consistently rejected the use of preferences to improve the position of minorities (pp. 1-5).

- **Concealed Stories and the Institution of Education and Socialization:**

In 2001, 88 percent of schools that were over 90 percent non-white were also majority-poor schools, with over 50 percent of the student body living below the poverty line (Orfield and Lee, 2004, p. 5).

- **Concealed Stories Socialization and the Ideology Naturalization: Was Your School Segregated and if So, In What Ways?**

Boger and Orfield state (2005) the

potential threat [to school resegregation] comes less from overt, intentional racism than from policies, race-neutral on their face, that work to the systematic disadvantage of nonwhites (p. 3993).

- **Concealed Stories and the Institution of Medicine:**

According to Williams & Jackson (2005) data on health disparities for the years 1950-2000 collect from the National Center for Health Statistics found that heart disease was similar for Whites and Blacks in 1950 but in 2000 Blacks had a rate 30% higher then Whites. Rates for cancer were lower for Blacks in 1950 but are 30% higher then Whites by 2000 (pp. 325-334).

- **Concealed Stories, Socialization and the Ideology Naturalization:**

Gotham (2000) studied the racial integrations and segregation of Kansas City and found that “88 percent of non-whites would have to move to live in integrated neighborhoods” (pp. 616-633). Gotham stated that segregation was implemented and promoted by the real estate industry (pp. 616-633).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and the Institution of Government: What Is Problematic With Supreme Court’s Interpretation Of the Law Based upon the Individual? What Does This Mean For Racial Groups Who Have Been Harmed By Unlawful Discrimination?**

According to Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia (1995)

Individuals who have been wronged by unlawful racial discrimination should be made whole; but under our Constitution there can be no such thing as either a creditor or a debtor race. In the eyes of government, we are just one race here. It is American (p.1).

Cultural Conformity Narrative: My Stories, Year 1993, “Love Affair Not Allowed”

I was 14 years old when I met Fred. He was almost 3 years older than me. He was artist, or so he claimed he would be someday. He had dark brown eyes, tan skin, and a smile that would make anyone feel happy in his presence. He became my best friend in my freshman year of high school. Everyday, he wore his favorite hoodie, a coarse material with brown, white, and black stripes across it. He let me wear it whenever I was cold, and he walked me to class everyday. He was one of those individuals you could trust immediately, just a genuinely kind person. I knew he liked me. He drew red roses in handwritten letters for me every week. I liked him, too, as much as you can like someone at fourteen.

One day after school, Fred and I were walking down a dark hallway with my bright red Viking jacket, frizzy hair, and glasses too large for my head. As we walked out the door together, he grabbed my hand and said, “You know how much I like you, right?”

I just stood there, trying to process his words. I muttered weakly, “Yea, sure, I know you like me.”

He said, “I mean really like you, like love you, kind of.”

I was taken aback. I responded, “Ok,” and, “I have to go.” I walked to my friend’s car, and, as I looked over my shoulder, I smiled in Fred’s direction and yelled, “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He smiled back and said, “Call me.”

I felt surprised and confused. I remember thinking, “Do I like him? Well of course I like him but do I like him like that?”

In the car, I told my friend what had happened, and she said, “You can’t go out with him.”

“Why?”

“Well, he is too old for you and he will only be around for another year, and beside he’s Mexican, a wetback.”

I didn’t respond to her, but I thought about what she said all the way home. The high school I went to had very little diversity; in fact, I can only recall one Black girl, Fred, and his younger brother as non-White classmates. My friend’s comment didn’t phase me because I was used to racial slurs, and I thought that I did not see slurs in the context of race. I saw them as a way to be mean or even playful, kind of a “boys will be boys” mentality. To me, my friends weren’t racists even though they said racist things. They made comments like, “Oh, she’s an Oreo,” or “Why are you acting like a wigger,” or “You’re an inside out Oreo.” I recall saying things like, “Don’t be an Indian giver,” and “Why are you being so ghetto?” I used phrases like, “He jew you down,” “You sold him down the river,” or “You’ve been gyped.” I also heard and used words like “thug” and “gangster.”

One of my worst memories includes sitting behind a trailer sharing a cigarette with a friend. She grabbed the cigarette out of my mouth, putting it to her lips with a horrified expression on her face, and said, “Don’t nigger lip it.”

I was shocked and confused by her phrase. I said, “What does that mean?”

She explained that I had made the cigarette too wet with my lips “like how Black people’s lips are really big.”

Part of me knew I shouldn’t use that phrase, but another part of me thought, “What’s the big deal, she was just joking.” I just continued smoking my cigarette. All these sayings and words were normal to me. They were used daily. I never once associated slurs with being racist because we had convinced ourselves that we didn’t see race.

I knew Fred was Mexican, but it hadn’t mattered up to that point. I really did like him, but my friends began making harsh comments when they found out he liked me. I one friend said, “Ah, Julie loves a pool-digger,” and asked, “What happens if you get married and have children? Won’t the kids be confused?” Boys in my classes whispered behind my back, calling Fred a “river nigger” or “wetback.” It never occurred to me what kind of impact these words had on Fred; I perceived my friends’ comments and the boy’s slurs as just joking around. I didn’t think they meant any harm by it.

One day at church, I confided in an adult about the things people were saying about me and Fred dating. When I mentioned that he was Mexican, the adult told me that the Bible states it is a sin to date anyone outside your own race. This person told me that God wanted the races to remain separate. He mentioned something about the “Tower of Babel,” which didn’t make any sense to me. I was confused by his comments, of course, but this was a prominent and well-respected figure in the church, so I didn’t dare contest his perspective. He ended with some comment on not being racist himself but rather “it was God’s will.”

I had decided at that point to tell Fred I could not date him. I never told him why. I made up some excuse about not liking him that way and wanting to be “just friends.” As time passed, our friendship weakened until we stopped talking altogether. It was as if our friendship never existed, and, in truth, my life became less complicated because the harassment stopped.

Emerging Stories: An Analysis of “Love Affair Not Allowed”

If you would have asked me at ages 5-25 if race mattered, I would have said no. I even would have alluded to being colorblind even though I was not. It is painfully apparent in my story that race matters. I have spoken earlier about the importance of context; historical context, individualism, colorblind ideology, and institutions such as education, law, and government are all fundamental in understanding racism. Understanding socialization and dominant culture is also vital for understanding racism. Let’s discuss these two concepts further in relation to “My Stores, Year 1983” and “My Stories, Year 1993.”

In “Love Affair Not Allowed” and “No, I Want Her,” I was conditioned through the process of socialization to believe race matters. Socialization is the systematic conditioning by which we come to learn the norms and cultural values of society, which are a product of dominant ideologies produced by dominant groups (DiAngelo, 2010, pp. 14–15). Systematic conditioning takes place within our institutions. Institutions are customs, practices, organizations, and laws that govern social, economic, and political aspects of our lives (DiAngelo, 2010, pp. 80–81). Institutions include, for example, religion, family, government, media, education, law, and prisons (pp. 80–81). In my

story about my Black Cabbage Patch doll, the institution of family socialized me to believe that playing with a Black doll was not allowed. Even the White store clerk encouraged me to wait for the White dolls instead of purchasing the Black doll. The message I received was that there is a hierarchy in which Whites occupy the dominant position (Helms, 1993, pp. 49–66).

I may not have understood the complexity behind the message, but it was obvious to me that playing with my Black Cabbage Patch Doll was not appropriate. I felt the need to conform due to pressure from my family and friends. I did not want to be seen as abnormal, so I played with my White doll because that was seen as normal.

In my story “Love Affair Not Allowed,” I again was being conditioned by various institutions. You can see the influence my friends had on me, which took place within the institutions of education and religion. Looking back, I am horrified by what took place in my own behavior, my friend’s behavior, and my lack of action in addressing racist comments. However, this behavior was normal, and I didn’t question it. Racism was a part of the “common sense” that I had internalized until I did not feel as if I had a choice (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2010, pp. 48–49). I accepted my group’s feelings of superiority and acted in ways that reflected my “internalized dominance,” including the message imposed on me through socialization that Whites are entitled to occupy superior positions (Griffin, 1997, p. 76). According to Hitchcock (2002), internalized dominance is

A belief system grounded in miseducation and in the politics of social inequality. This belief system is the result of an advantaged relationship to privilege, power, and cultural affirmation. The premise of white superiority undergirds the various attitudinal and behavioral expression of internalized dominance. (p. 143).

According to Sensoy and DiAngelo (2010), examples of “internalized dominance” include

- Rationalizing the naturalization of privilege and power; one example would be thinking that “it’s just human nature for some to be on top”;
- Rationalizing merit behind privilege; one example would be thinking, “I work hard to get where I am”;
- Rationalizing that Whites are entitled to the best job because they are more qualified; one example would be saying, “She only got the job because she is Hispanic”;
- Rationalizing living in segregated communities as natural; one example would be saying, “It is just normal for people to live with people who are like themselves”;
- Rationalizing living in segregated communities by saying, “I want my kids to grow up in good neighborhoods and go to the best schools” (p. 49).

These rationalizations explain my prejudices and bias, which exist at the individual level, but racism and oppression cannot only be explained in terms of individuals’ thoughts and behavior (Foster, 1993, pp 129–141). Racism is “systematically embedded” within the structures of our society, which include institutions (Tappen, 2005, pp. 2116–2135).

Throughout history, we have been socialized to conform to and accept dominant cultural ideologies (Tappen, 2006, pp. 2116–2135).

Culture is the values, practice, norms, language, patterns of communication, customs, laws, and shared meaning share in a group of people relative to historical, political, social, and economic context (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2010, p. 15). Culture,

according to Katan (2004), is similar to an iceberg: The bulk of culture exists below surface perceptions (p.171).

On the surface, culture often includes language, food, art, celebrations, music, and dress (Indiana Department of Education, 2017, p. 1). Below the surface, culture includes our unspoken rules of conduct, nonverbal communication, rules of conduct, and more. Then, even deeper, there exist the unconscious rules such as roles relative to age, race, ethnicity, social class, ability, sexuality, and gender (Indiana Department of Education, 2017, p. 1). In society, there are cultural norms specific to dominant groups. We are socialized to accept these norms as truth, even if there is no inherent truth to these norms. I had accepted the unconscious rule that white girls don't play with Black dolls and that White girls don't date Mexican boys.

My conformity relates to a historical context that defined race as biological and cultural, but the meaning of race is also grounded in a long timeline of legal and social processes (Guo et al., 2014, p. 144). In 1705, the United States defined race by the one-drop rule which established a racial hierarchy defining individuals as Black if they had "one drop" of African blood (Guo et al., 2014, p. 144). In the eighteenth century, Johann Blumenbach also created a racial hierarchy based on five human categories, labeling the Caucasian category at the top of that hierarchy as the "most beautiful form. . . from which. . . the others diverge" (Blumenbach, Marx, Flourens, Wagner, & Hunter, 1865). In 1883, Francis Galton coined the term "eugenics," which meant "well-born" (Allen, 1986, pp. 225–264). This concept led to the eugenics movement that intended to breed individuals with "well-born" genes to ensure future generations would not transmit traits

deemed “undesirable” (Allen, 1986, pp. 225–264). The Eugenics Records Office was established in 1910 and, until 1940, was responsible for sterilization programs in 33 states, operated by the state government; it was not uncommon to sterilize the poor and Women of Color (Allen, 1986, pp. 225–264). In 1924, the Immigration Act was passed to limit immigrants from entering the country due to the belief that immigrants would bring inferior genes (Goliszek, 2003, pp. 76–181). The Immigration Act was signed by President Coolidge, who stated, “America should be kept American. . . . Biological laws show that Nordics deteriorate when mixed with other races” (Goliszek, 2003, pp. 76–181).

The social construction of race, as well, has evolved historically in the United States since the 1700s. Race was first constructed to protect the interest of rich, White slave owners who used physical differences to identify who was a slave and who was not (Allen, 2012, pp. 71-90). Scientific literature on race also established a racial hierarchy which reinforced notions of inferiority and biological difference (Allen, 2012, pp. 71-90). This supported defenses of slavery as well as the eugenics movement’s sterilization of those viewed as inferior. In addition, the science of race supported the Naturalization Act in 1790 that gave only Whites the rights of citizenship. In *The People v. Hall* (1854), the Supreme Court determined that non-Whites were not allowed to testify in court (Tehrani, 2000, pp. 817–848). Chief Justice Charles J. Murray even stated during the case that

the Chinese are a race of people whom nature has marked as inferior. . . . The same rule which would admit them to testify, would admit them to all the equal rights of citizenship, and we might soon see them at the polls, in the jury box, upon the bench, and in our legislative halls. This is not a speculation...but an actual and present danger (Kunnan, 2009, pp. 37-48).

American history reflects a series of laws and social policies that have been implemented by the government based on notions of White supremacy. White supremacy is a social system that encompasses the “totality of the social relations and practices that reinforce white privilege” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 9). White supremacy is a systemic social system that is pervasive and normal and operates to reinforce “common sense” notions of White privilege and White superiority, positioned under the guise of moral goodness and virtue (Liu & Pechenkina, 2016, pp. 186–204).

Again, my conformity in my stories relates to a historical context that has constructed race as a biological, cultural, legal, and social process (Guo et al., 2014, p. 144). My understanding of race dates back to the 1700s or further, and U.S. society’s values, norms, practices of communication, customs, and laws reflect pieces of historical contexts that built upon the notion that race means difference (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2010, p. 15–18). My common-sense assumptions in my stories cannot be understood without first examining U.S. history (Mills, 1959, pp. 3–15). To understand any accepted notions of freedom, individualism, meritocracy, equality, patriotism, colorblindness, and race we must examine them within the context of history.

Questions Linked to Additional Research

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Law: What Consequences Do We Suffer Today as a Result of Legal Segregation?**

Anti-Miscengenation Laws required mandatory racial segregation in regard to relationship and marriage (Martin 1979, pp.1026-1033). The laws were not ruled unconstitutional until 1967 (1979).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Government:**

Operation “Wetback” of 1954 was an initiative to address illegal immigration in response Mexican immigrants living in the US who were not citizens (Kernandez, 2006, pp. 421-444). The program was known for the mistreatment of Mexican labors, including physical abuse, deportation to unknown locations in Mexico, deportation without contacting family members and the inability to recover personal belonging in the US (2006).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and the Government:**

The 1790 Naturalization Act reserves adopted citizenship for whites only. African Americans are not guaranteed citizenship until 1868, when the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution is ratified during Reconstruction (Slavery and the Making of America, 2003).

See timeline: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/timeline/1829.html>

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and the Government:**

1860 Black Codes were implemented during the period of Reconstruction 1865-1877 which restricted Blacks rights, although they were free (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 68).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Government:**

Jim Crow Laws 1876 authorized “de jure racial segregation” in all public facilities, creating a "separate but equal" status for Blacks (Foreside & Morial, 205, pp. 221-247).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Government:**

In the Dred Scott decision, the U.S. Supreme Court declares that "Negroes," whether free or enslaved, are not citizens (Slavery and the Making of America, 2003).

See timeline: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/timeline/1829.html>

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Government:**

Fugitive Slave Law or Fugitive Slave Act of 1850

enforced by the federal government, strengthens the rights of slave owners and threatens the rights of free blacks. Many states pass personal liberty laws in response (p.1).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and the Institution of Government:**

Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882,

signed into law on May 6, 1882, by President Chester A. Arthur, effectively halted Chinese immigration for ten years and prohibited Chinese from becoming US citizens (Chinese Exclusion Act, 1882).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and Government:**

Literacy Test for Voting 1890s-1960s required that all individuals be able write and read in order to vote (Williamson, 1984, pp. 5-9). This tactic was specifically used to exclude people of color from voting (1984).

- **Concealed Stories, Historical Context and the Institution of Government:**

1942 Japanese-American Internment were created during World War II for all individuals with Japanese ancestry to relocate to concentration camps after Pearl Harbor attacks (Brooks, 2013, pp. 1-8).

Transforming Stories: Letter to Self, Year 2017, “Critical Reflections on the Writing Process”

Dear Self,

When I first began this dissertation, I intended to find a better way to communicate with my White students by humanizing academic material. Writing this chapter, I kept thinking about the power behind socialization and ideology. Although I have provided statistical support in the argument against being post-racial and the mythology behind the American dream, I still find myself making comments in my personal life about the value of hard work and being an individual with choices. The irony in writing this dissertation is that I am only able to do so because of my privilege. Here I sit at my desk, in the safety of my own office, espousing arguments to counter racist ideology, knowing that, at any moment, I could walk away and take a break from the emotional strain of addressing what many consider to be a controversial topic. The exhaustion I feel comes from my own reflections, which I don't want to share because I am fearful.

Truthfully, I am fearful of someone reading this dissertation and thinking, “Wow, she is racist.” I hold this fear despite having stated that all individuals have been socialized in a racist society and that, therefore, regardless of your character, you will forever be stained by the consequences of our history. However, I am still fearful of being called a racist, despite my education and the years I have spent researching and understanding racism as a system. I have been taught this is the worst kind of person you can be and as I sit here. But the way I fear being called a racist has changed, or, at least, I

think it has. I am currently considering the truth behind that statement because I was going to write that I used to be fearful of people of color viewing me as racist. But for what reason would I have had to be fearful of people of color viewing me as racist? If there have been any opportunities for fear in the past, they have been few and far between. Maybe Whites stating “I am not racist” was never about our concern for people of color but rather was a statement of reassurance, or even a statement of racial resentment (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, pp. 4–8). According to a study conducted by Parker (2010) for the University of Washington Institute on racial resentment, White respondents were asked to answer the following questions:

1. “Irish, Italians, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without special favors.”
2. “Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.”
3. “Over the past few years blacks have gotten less than they deserve.”
4. “It’s really a matter of some people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.”

Parker (2010) found that 70% of respondents agreed with question 1, 58% of respondents disagreed with question 2, 72% of respondents disagreed with question 3 and 56% of respondents agreed with question 4 (p. 3). It is apparent according to the study, there are elements of racial resentment (Parker, 2010, p. 3). According TO Parker (2010) “America is definitely not beyond race.” (p.3).

Maybe “I am not racist” is a statement to reiterate change and progress, or maybe it’s just a statement of group position to protect White interests (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, pp. 4–8). I am not sure how I would define my past behaviors as it relates “I am not racist.”

Maybe it was statement of change and progress or a statement of group position to protect my White interests. As you can see, I am still unpacking my own beliefs and past behaviors, and there is still much to bring to light.

These days, I am not fearful of people of color reading my material because they already know and have always known White racist behavior. I have been told this many times. Once, I was at a conference session about communication and difficult conversations. We were asked to pair up with someone who was different than us racially or ethnically. I found myself paired with a young Asian woman. We were asked to face one another and look each other directly in the eyes while asking a series of questions related to our race/ethnicity. The questions (Parker, 2010) my partner asked included the following:

- “What’s hard telling people of color the truth about racism for you as a white person?”
- “In what ways, as a White person, do you keep people of color from telling you the truth about racism?”
- “What’s the price, to you as a White person, of not telling the truth about racism?”
- “What would it take for you, as a White person, to feel courageous enough to talk to other whites about racism and White privilege?”

First, we introduced ourselves and describing our occupations and where we were from. Then, I began asking a series of questions under the label “PEOPLE OF COLOR.” With each question, I sensed my partner’s hesitation. I knew she didn’t trust me, but I thought, “Why should she? What have I done to earn her trust?” The way she answered the questions led me to believe they were responses she had given many times in the past.

They were responses that made Whites feel comfortable; they were unchallenging and safe. In that moment, I thought, “This is what has to be done to navigate Whiteness, to navigate to me!”

I immediately determined to answer the questions under the label “WHITES” as honestly as I could. When she asked the first the question, I said,

I am racist! I live in a racist society, and to say that I am not racist would be disingenuous. I have contributed to a racist system that historically has inflicted pain and suffering on people of color. I am trying to tell the truth but sometimes I am scared of what others will think of me, but I continue to try, knowing at times I will fail.

She stopped asking the questions and, for moment, looked down at the floor.

When she looked back up at me, I could see something had changed. I could feel the beating of my heart against my chest because I was afraid of what I had just said; I felt too vulnerable, and I was scared of what her response might be. She looked directly in my eyes and said,

When you told me you were a Sociologist, I thought great, another White woman here to tell me about my oppression, another middle class, White woman, wearing her fancy clothes, living in her fancy house who doesn't know a thing about my oppression.

I felt sick to my stomach and thought, “Is this how I am perceived? Is this what my students think? Probably so, and why wouldn't they?”

I swallowed hard and looked her in the eyes. She said, “You're the first White person who has ever admitted to me that they are racist. No White person I know would

ever make such a claim.” I looked back down. She grabbed my hand and said, “Thank you for being honest and taking responsibility for your actions.”

I took a deep breathe. This was the first time I had ever vocalized being racist in a space that I did not feel safe, and I was grateful for her kindness. For the rest of the hour, we had one of the most meaningful and honest conversations I have ever experienced. In our conversation, my partner said,

White people need to talk to other White people about racism. You need to talk to other White people about racism and say to them what you said to me, if you really are invested in dismantling racism.

I thought to myself, “Crap, this was hard enough!” But I looked back into her eyes and softly said, “Ok, I will!” I hugged her goodbye, and, as I walked to the next session, I asked myself, “Will you?” At that moment, I didn’t have an answer, but I would continue to ask that question of myself the rest of the weekend and for a long time after that experience.

Writing about my own beliefs and behaviors, I am more fearful of the judgement of whites because of the “relation of power” and because I fear that, despite my efforts, they will view this dissertation as racist, subjective, and not real science. I fear they will disregard it because they will not be able to see the system at large. I fear that this will change nothing. How many times have we disregarded pieces of work that challenged dominant ideologies because they made us feel uncomfortable? How easily do we label something as lacking in creditability because we consider the work too subjective and, therefore, not real science? It seems that this label is a great silencing mechanism. If you

are not considered creditable, then who is going to listen to you? The paradox is that what “objective, real science” doesn’t seem to matter in U.S. society either. We have the research and the data to prove systemic racism, but those appear discreditable as well because they surely have not made a difference.

Autoethnography is seen as self-indulgent. This technique is typically used to highlight the narratives of the marginalized, but I have chosen this method as a means to disrupt Whiteness in an authentic and vulnerable way. My autoethnography concerns interpersonal self-reflection because I have been challenged by educators, editors, students, colleagues, friends, and family members throughout the entire dissertation process. I have found myself in precarious situations in which I felt like an outsider because I was contesting dominant ideology.

Many white individuals have difficulty seeing racism as a system because they see racism as only individual acts of prejudice and discrimination. I see racism as a system, and I have reconciled with and taken responsibility for my historical inheritance. I do not feel a sense of guilt for history. What I feel is a combination of anger and fear toward a system that continues to inflict pain on people of color. I am angry that I have been socialized in a system that has contributed to my own racism. I am angry that my relationships with any individuals of color will be surface level, and I grieve for the past relationships I could had. I have been deceived, and I am fearful of the power behind

dominant ideology and socialization. Finally, I am fearful that the power of dominant ideology and socialization may be too strong and will continue unchallenged.

Sincerely,

Me

My Final Letter to Dear C. Hope

Dear C. Hope,

Things are not always as they seem, and uncovering the truth requires deliberate self-reflection and perseverance, for it is never easy to reconstruct the ways we have come to understand the world. Racism is our problem, and, if we are tired of hearing about racism, it is time to “get beyond tired” and act (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p.417). Lack of action costs our humanity greatly and it means nothing will ever change. We will remain prisoners to racism and to our history (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p.417). We must talk about injustice not in fear but rather with righteous anger so that we may challenge and change a system that continues to hurt so many, including ourselves. . I wish to act in service for a more socially justice society (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p.417). I have found Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) comments on how to be an ally helpful in my own journey and maybe you will as well. Consider the following list, which has been adapted from Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) “Is everyone really equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education. I must:

- Acknowledge that racism is ubiquitous and influences my life daily.
- Acknowledge and understand the meaning associated with whiteness and the privilege and power attached to being white.
- Use the privilege and power attached to my whiteness to call out racist behavior.
- Educate myself and continue to learn how racist ideologies have historically shaped U.S. institutions through legislation and public policy, resulting in institutional discrimination (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 57).
- Understand that race and racism can only be understood within the context of history.
- Understand that racism is connected to other forms of injustice, such as economic and gender inequality (Levinson et al., 2011, p. 209).
- Recognize how power is structural and institutional and oppression is never a choice (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 57).
- Recognize that “racial oppression exists in multiple layers based on gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality” (Levinson et al., 2011, p. 209).
- Recognize that the experiences of oppression cannot be separated into one specific identity.

- Recognize that white guilt is an obstacle that perpetuates systemic racism. It recenters whiteness and obligates People of Color to console and comfort my white fragility.
- Acknowledge race as an important social identity because claims of colorblindness disregard or invalidate the experiences and identities of People of Color.
- Grapple with my own racial identity and what it means to be part of a racial group.
- Acknowledging that American society is not a meritocracy and that my success is not gained through hard work alone.
- Communicate with others the realities of race.
- Communicate with my children the realities of race.
- Promote institutional change, collective action, and antiracist initiatives within public policies and laws (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 417).
- Seek out the voices of People of Color and listen to their racial viewpoints. Do not allow my own voice to dominate the conversation (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 57).
- Recognize and accept with humility that I am not entitled to reassurance or concern for my “racial feelings” (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2016, p. 57).

- Recognize that being a white ally is not the same as being a “white savor.” I must resist the “white savor complex” and continually reexamine the ways in which I try to help.
- Understand that racism is not just about individuals acts of “racial prejudice or discrimination” but is a system of oppression (Algeo, 2008, p. 599).
- Choose to act as an ally because I wish to invest in my own personal growth, and because I am interested in cultivating a just society (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 156-157).
- Take risks, know I am going to make mistakes but be willing to learn.
- Strive to uncover my own “socialized blind spots” of privilege and internalized dominance (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 50-51).
- Continue to walk through life with racism, in continual self-reflection working in solidarity to build authentic relationships with critical hope that “trust will be earned through action, but never expected nor demanded” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p.158).
- Support People of Color “in whatever ways I can (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p.158).

This list helps guide me in all my daily interactions. What else could be added to this list? What would your list look like if you desired to act in service for a more socially justice society?

Racism is dehumanizing and wreaks havoc on our institutions, damaging education, the government, the criminal justice system, the family and the economy (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75). Racism damages civic and human rights for all people (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75). Racism contributes to the loss of contributions from People of Color, who could have progressed our society in science, technology, medicine, education and philosophy. We all benefit, whether we choose to challenge the system for reasons of morality or personal interests (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75). You do not have to be a moral person to see that “racism benefits no one (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75).” All of us would benefit from a just society (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 67-75). You and your family would benefit from a more just society.

Sincerely,

Mrs. V

CHAPTER VII

FINAL DISCUSSION AND THOUGHTS ON WHITE RESISTANCE TO AND DENIAL OF RACISM, WHITE PRIVILEGE AND RACIAL INEQUITIES

The central purpose of this research was to make whiteness visible, to help white students' overcome resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities in the classroom. This research used autoethnography, as a methodological approach with an emphasis on an analysis of the interactions between individuals and institutions. This research drew upon the emphasis on institutions from "institutional ethnography." The methodological approach was framed by letter writing with elements of the "storytelling project model" using personal narratives and composite stories from the classroom. The theoretical framework for this research incorporated various theories, including constructivism theory, standpoint theory, critical theory, critical race theory, and critical Whiteness theory.

This research examined my lived experiences and reflections, in the context of institutional social relations with the application of theoretical analysis to produce an authentic and rich explanation of White resistance and the struggle to fight against racism—for myself, and I hope, for my students. This research as it relates to White privilege and racial inequities is about bridging the gap between the individual and structure in order to alter oppressive cycles, seeking to raise awareness and create a space for open dialogue on racism to promote a more socially just society. I conducted an institutional

autoethnographic study analyzing narratives and stories using theoretical application guided by the follow questions in my research:

1. How have dominant cultural ideologies, power relations, and institutional processes shaped and formed my understanding of race and racism?
 - a. How have institutional processes, power relations, and dominant cultural ideologies of race contributed to my white resistance to and denial of racism, white privilege, and racial inequities?
 - b. How has positionality as it relates to gender, social class, and religion informed my understanding of race and racism?
2. What struggles and concerns have I encountered during the process of writing this dissertation?

Summary

My completed research incorporated a unique approach by combining theory and statistical data, interrogating personal narratives and composite stories from the classroom as it relates to dominant racial and cultural ideologies, power relations, and institutional processes. According to Czarniawska (2004) a “narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/action chronologically connected” (p.17). My personal narratives are about my experiences and the relationship that exists between my narrative and the broader narratives that influenced my life. Personal narratives capture a broader narrative of society, such as the narrative of individualism. According to Jennings (2017) stories surround the narrative bringing it to life, making it “human and accessible” (p.1). Jennings stated

A story that's not connected to a broader narrative is mere entertainment. And a narrative without a story is mere information. Narratives need stories to inject them with context, emotion and meaning (p.1).

I could have shared stories for entertainment and I could have shared narratives providing “mere information,” but stories and narratives combined are “influential forces that forge emotional connections” (p.1). Stories capture the relationship between personal narratives and the broader narrative of society in meaningful ways (p.1).

In this dissertation I incorporated a methodological approach using autoethnography with an institutional analysis. I framed my methodological approach using letter writing as a means to foster connections between writer and reader, showing vulnerability, authenticity and most importantly, accessibility. These methods were also framed within elements of the “storytelling project model.” I believe that stories have a way of building community and are an “accessible vehicle” and analytical tool that provides readers the capability to connect with the writer, providing an opportunity to assess and challenge the “status quo” (Bell, 2010, p. 30).

I incorporated autoethnography for various reasons. I wanted an approach that would help me address the topic of white privilege, resistance, and denial of racism and inequities with my white students in a way that would avoid generating more resistance and denial. I wanted an approach that would avoid creating a situation in which students might feel attacked, resentful and therefore disengage. I also wanted an approach that would avoid placating white fragility and thus perpetuate a racist system. This research was about making whiteness visible through self-reflection, allowing students to connect

to the world through my narratives and stories (Bocher, 2007; Sitton, 2003). I am sharing a unique point of view, representing a valid interpretation by means of theoretical analysis that make connections to general patterns of behavior (Huang, 2015).

Qualitative methodologies are a way to take abstract ideas formed by theory and make them more accessible to students, to encourage students to think critically about how their personal experiences tie to institutional and historical forces (Huang, 2015). I sought to bridge the gap between the individual and structure, using, in my opinion, a more practical approach. I ultimately choose an autoethnographic approach as a means to address a sensitive and complex topic, modeling through self to students, honesty, vulnerability, and humility, displaying to students my willingness to take risks knowing I was going to make mistakes, but I took responsibility for my actions and hopefully demonstrated a desire to continue to try and learn.

My completed research incorporated multiple theoretical perspectives including social constructivism theory, standpoint theory, critical theory, critical race theory, and critical whiteness theory. I included both epistemological and ontological perspectives regarding the nature of reality and the ways in which people come to know reality. Applying these multiple theoretical perspectives to my intellectual work and my lived experiences showed authenticity based on reflexivity, creating what I believe is a rich explanation of white resistance and the struggle to fight against racism. Reflective authenticity “is a moral quest toward the value and practice of self-discovery,” originality with deep felt concern for humanity (Vannini and Williams, 2009, p. 6). Theoretical reflexivity combined with autoethnographic personal narratives and stories produced

research that captured my voice within the text as it related to institutions, systems of oppression and white privilege (Butryn, 2009).

In my research I provided a series of composite stories and narratives in three letters to my white students addressed as C. Hope. C. Hope represented “critical hope” which is defined as “an act of ethical and political responsibility that has the potential to recover a lost sense of connectedness, relationality, and solidarity with others” (Zembylas, 2014, p. 14). The letters were included in Chapters IV, V and VI. The letters incorporated a critical reflection on the writing process. This included my response to questions and criticisms I received from those who read my material. Each letter was framed within elements of the “storytelling project model” in which I addressed a “stock story” as it relates to common questions my students asked in classes I teach. Chapter IV focused on stock stories of the American Dream and white supremacy. Chapter V focused on stock stories of post-racial ideology and Chapter VI focused on stock stories of colorblind ideology.

Exposing “Stock Stories” of the American Dream and White Supremacy

I began Chapter IV with stock stories of the American Dream and white supremacy as it relates to the construction of whiteness as a “social and historical process” (Winant, 2000, p. 172). I thought it appropriate to begin this chapter with a focus first on ideology, power, knowledge and social control. I addressed the question from my composite story in the classroom on “What was wrong with President Trump wanting to ‘Make America Great, Again!’” This chapter was heavy in statistical data but

I wanted to provide nonpartisan research to support my rational and to emphasize to students that there was no agenda being pushed from either the right or the left.

I have come to the realization that using statistical data can be tricky and misinterpreted depending on the context in which the information is being provided. If I was not careful, I knew statistical data could reinforce prejudices or notions of superiority. With that in mind, I tried to offset statistical data with questions to promote critical thinking, incorporating data within an historical context as it related to employment, the criminal justice system and the political system. Incorporating this data along with the questions provided an element that helped me further engage in institutional analysis. The questions and data provided in the text boxes revealed “concealed stories” of inequality including various social identities such gender, social class, religion and race, to note experiences of oppression and how they may relate to social identities.

I provided the questions for my students to consider, but I noted that I too was considering the questions, which helped me further my discussion and analysis. It kept me focused as I navigated my own personal connection to the social context while also connecting my narratives to institutional processes. The questions and statistical data provided drew attention to whiteness. This was key because I suddenly became aware of how difficult it was to write my narrative in a way that explored how institutional process and relations impacted my life as it relates to whiteness. It is challenging enough to ask oneself the question “who am I” in the context of social relations, but trying to understand oneself in relation to institutional practices and policies can be down right

confusing and overwhelming. I realized that part of my struggle related to the invisibility of whiteness. I had to ask myself “how does whiteness relate in my failure to see institutional practices and policies?” Growing up I learned that racial categories were products of biology and not the result of social and historical processes (Fairhurst, Gail, Grant, & David, 2010, pp. 171-172). These racial categories excluded whites, which further normalized whiteness. The questions and statistical data drew attention to whiteness, making it more visible. However, I still found it difficult to remain consciously aware of whiteness.

In my writing I had to regularly stop and ask myself “what am I missing? What am I not seeing as result of whiteness?” In the process of writing this dissertation I had moments in which I felt extremely self conscious as I grappled with notions of whiteness. I wanted to make whiteness visible to help others examine and deconstruct it, but I was concerned with how I would help others examine and deconstruct what I have been socialized to view as normal and therefore invisible? I am not an expert at discerning whiteness and I recognized I would never be an expert in this process. I relied on my theoretical framework to help guide me through moments of self doubt. Throughout this entire process I had to continue to go back to the literature, to help me explore the pieces of whiteness I could not see.

In my writing, I also considered the critiques of “whiteness studies” made by various researchers who were concerned with the ways in which we explore whiteness, centering it as the norm while labeling non-whiteness as different (Dyer, 1997, p. 10). I purposely went back through my writing uncapitalizing white or whiteness because the

words were so prominent and distracting. I noted words such as brown and people of color were not capitalized. I felt uncapitalizing whiteness would in some small way decentered it as the norm.

I recognized that I needed to maintain an awareness of whiteness but I also had to be conscious of what I was writing and how it may reinforce white privilege or what Dyer (1997) referred to as “me toosim” or “poor us syndrome” which strengthens the belief that whites are disadvantage and are now the “new victim group, oppressed by gigantic strides taken by affirmative action policies” in addition to feeling “burdened with responsibilities we didn’t ask for” (p. 10). I understood the concern associated with reinforcing white privilege and white victimization, but I grappled with the question “how do we come to understand white supremacy and institutionalized racism if we don’t investigate the social construction of whiteness for fear of reinforcing white privilege?”

When I first began this research I incorporated autoethnography as my methodological approach as a means to use my personal experiences as “valid data to gain insight” as it relates to society (Anderson, 2006a: p. 387). Autoethnography is a “method that connect[s] the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social and political” to “seek to understand some aspects of lived experience within a particular cultural context” (p.10). However, I found that this methodology alone focused more on self and social relation. Although this is important, I needed a way to explore the self in relation to complex systems, institutions and historical context. I wanted to explore the complexity of relations and their interconnectedness across “space and time as it relates”

to the self, social relations, institutional relations, systems of relations and historical context (Smith, 2005, p. 11).

Autoethnography with an emphasis on institutions from “institutional ethnography” provided a framework that helped me further explore and analysis my narratives and stories in relation to social systems, institutions and historical context (Taber, 2010, pp. 9-16). Drawing from institutional ethnography helped me address the question “how do we come to understand white supremacy and institutionalized racism if we don’t investigate the social construction of whiteness for fear of reinforcing white privilege?”

Whiteness is a social and historical system that has been constructed due in part to capital investment and production in an economy that once relied on the categorization of human beings as property and free labor to generate more wealth (Bonds, A. & Inwood, J. 2015, pp. 715-733). The categorization of human beings as property required a social hierarchy that rationalized and legitimized the myth of white superiority and difference, based on skin color (Bonds, A. & Inwood, J. 2015, pp. 715-733). Institutional ethnography created an alternative perspective in which I was able to analysis my narratives through the lens of whiteness as a social and historical system (Taber, 2010, pp. 9-16). In addition, I was able to connect my narratives across “space and time,” recognizing the importance of history as it relates to whiteness as well as recognizing whiteness as social, political and economic system (Smith, 2005, p. 11).

This knowledge helped me navigate my concerns in regards to reinforcing white privilege and white victimization in my research. By using an institutional

autoethnographic approach, I was able to provide an analysis of whiteness in everyday interaction as it relates to the “ruling relations” in social systems and institutions within a historical context (Taber, 2010, pp. 9-16). In analyzing my narratives with the knowledge of social systems and institutional processes I began to re-conceptualize another narrative of whiteness and white privilege that avoided “demonizing white people” while also avoiding placating white fragility (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 185) Generating more resistance and denial to racism and racial inequities is counter to what I am trying to achieve in my writing. I needed an approach that would avoid creating a situation in which students might feel attacked, resentful and therefore disengage.

In Chapter IV, critical whiteness theory helped me conceptualize the social construction of whiteness. Social constructionism theory also inform my understanding of society existing as an objective and subjective reality in which social relations create subjective truth and knowledge (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). This theory also guided my understanding of race as a socially constructed category, a “taken for granted reality” cultivated through social relations and adopted by society (Fairhurst, Gail, Grant, & David, 2010, pp. 171-172). Racial categories are constructed by people. They are not predictable products of biology, but are the result of social and historical processes (Hacking, 1999).

Social constructivism theory helped me conceptualize white supremacy as a socially constructed “system of exploitation” based on notions of white superiority, used to maintain power, privilege and wealth (Martinez, 2004, p. 1). The philosophies of white supremacy were essential to my research to understand how whites as a dominant

group have rationalized and legitimized domination and exploitation of minoritized groups (Bonds, A. & Inwood, J. 2015, pp. 715-733). White supremacist ideology has been imposed because whites, as a social group, possess institutional power (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 50). Power is the ability to impose ideology, which refers to myths, stories, definitions, explanations and “rationalizations that are used to justify inequality” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 50-51). Gramsci’s theory of cultural hegemony and Foucault’s theory on power and knowledge helped inform my understanding of how power and ideology maintain white supremacist ideology.

Critical race theory helped me examine society through the intersection of law, race, and power (Levinson et al., 2015, p. 206). Intersectionality supported my notions of identities and how “racial oppression exists in multiple layers based on gender, class, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and sexuality” (Levinson et al., 2011, p. 209). In my analysis of my narratives, critical theory supported the notion that society has oppressive systems in place that need to be deconstructed. In my writing I attempted to deconstruct the dominant, “taken-for-granted knowledge” that controls and constrains certain groups of people (Allan, 2004, p. 29). I discussed power in relation to Foucault’s perspective on power and knowledge, and I addressed the notion of common sense. I was able to make connections to American ideology and the belief of freedom, the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness, the value of hard work, individualism, competition, practicality, innovation and efficiency. I incorporated historical context as it relates to Mills, which supported my conceptualization that humans can only be understood in the context of history and the society that structures our lives (Mills, 1956, p. 162).

In my critical reflection of the writing process I grappled with ideas of justice, white resistance and resentment. I grappled with the notion of violence and systemic violence. Again, critical race theory informed my reflections, in particular interest-convergence and Bell's (1980) thesis on whites perception and investment in social justice as it relates to what "will be profitable or at least cost-free" to whites (p. 53). I questioned whether whites would invest in social justice, if it was not profitable or cost free to them. Investment in social justice requires a disinvestment in the American Dream and recognition that society is not a meritocracy. Having this knowledge created a sense of despair in which I began to question my own investment in social justice. Racism to whites as a social group, in my opinion has always been associated "as an issue that People of Color face and have to struggle with" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6). I believe this relates to the invisibility of whiteness and whites perception of individualism.

I never considered the notion that claiming individuality was a privilege until I began this project. I knew hyperindividualism was problematic but even with that knowledge I could not see how claiming individuality in and of itself was a privilege. I walk through life asserting my individualism but with further analysis of my narrative I began to process the consequences of that notion and how it relates to social justice and my own participation in anti-racist work. This made me question 'what is anti-racist work?' Is it simply an "act of compassion for the other" or an "optional extra project" that I can participate in and then pat myself on the back for doing good work (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6)? Is it work in which I present a self that is "well-meaning" or "good" using my privilege to position myself so that people are unable to question or

criticize my behavior, and how does this perception create barriers for real and honest conversations?

If I approach anti-racist work as a “well-meaning” individual, with no acknowledgement of how racism is a part of my own biography, am I not, with a kind of arrogance, contributing to the othering of People of Color and the narrative of racial difference (Kendall, 2013, p. 114)? I concluded, obviously I am, and with this knowledge I had to remind myself that I would continue to discover this over and over again. I have discovered in my writing how little I understand. Nothing is what I thought it would be, but why would I have ever known (Kendall, 2013, p. 82). I have been taught very little about the experiences of People of Color, but I recognize more now, that we are all systematically interconnected and that racism is “intimately and organically linked” to my life (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6). Racism is not just an “issue [for] People of Color to handle”, “it is all our business” and “meaning well, doesn’t equal doing well” (Kendall, 2013, p. 82).

Exposing “Stock Stories” of Post-Racial Ideology

In chapter V, I focused on the stock story of post-racial ideology from the classroom as it relates to race no longer being a problem. I continued using statistical data within my letter while, again, providing a series of questions to promote critical thinking. I discussed the impact of institutions such as the media and the economy associated with the process of socialization, including social networks and the construction of stereotypes and impact of microaggressions. Critical whiteness theory supported my examination of whiteness as a system associated with social networks and

the process of socialization, including the invisibility of whiteness as a racial category. According to Leonardo (2007), “whiteness is nowhere since it is unmarked, and everywhere since it is the standard by which other groups are judged” (p. 25). I spoke about white victimization and the narratives that “attempted to invalidate charges of racism by proving that the speaker has always been connected to People of Color” (Thompson, 2003, p. 9). I addressed, in this Chapter, individualism and white identity or whiteness, being replaced by notion of the individual and, thus positioning conversations as a personal attack on self for whites, rather than conversation on whiteness as an institutional or structural issue. I discussed the economy as an institution and racism as an ideology whose roots and evolution are tied to capitalist ideology (Allan, 2004, p. 71). This discussion included the notion of intersectionality and capitalism as an economic system that divides people by wealth, gender, and race, in which Marx’s theory of “historical materialism” contributed to my conceptualization of capitalism and racism. Marx’s theory proposed, according to Reed (2013), that racism is a “historically specific ideology that emerged, took shape, and has evolved as a constituent element within capitalism” (p. 9).

My narratives and stories were supported by Mill’s argument that humans can only be understood in the context of history and the society that structures their lives (Mills, 1956, p. 162). My narratives and stories include a historical context along with the institutions and social relations that have structured my life. My narratives symbolized the metaphorical “iron cage” in which I exist in a socially and economically hierarchical system (Fave, 2013, pp. 60-61). I was born into the system, and I have

replicated the system because I knew no other way to exist. I could not recognize the power contained in the normalization of supposed truths and norms, therefore I could not separate the power from the social forces, because I gave consent while being coerced, further legitimizing hegemony (Lears, 2000; Gaventa, 2003).

Max Weber's theory of the "Iron Cage" framed my discussion on capitalism and how people exist in a socially and economically hierarchical system. In my personal reflections, I addressed my concerns in placating white fragility, which was informed by critical whiteness theory and white victimhood, including concerns of turning the attention away from those who are truly victimized. In addition, the notion of replacing whiteness with the individual led to the discussion on hyperindividualism and the socialization of racial ideologies.

Exposing "Stock Stories" of Colorblind Ideology

In Chapter VI, I addressed the stock story of colorblind ideology in relation to students' comments in the classroom. I spoke about context and institutions as they relate to our understanding of racism. I continued to include statistical support and questions revealing concealed stories to promote critical thinking. I discussed socialization, internalized dominance, culture and conformity, which were all supported by my theoretical framework. In my reflection I addressed my concerns of "relations of power" and how dominant ideologies and the process of socialization create barriers to challenge racism" (Kendall, 2013, p. 82).

In this chapter, I again experienced feelings of despair as I considered how racism resides within myself, for it is part of the "cultural non-consciousness that [I] inhabit"

(Dyer, 1997, p. 7). I began to realize that my feelings of despair were in fact a “manifestation of whiteness” because these feelings are rooted in privilege (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2012, p. 142). I believe it is acceptable to allow a space for feelings of despair and grief because ultimately it is part of the process of becoming cognizant of “oppression and injustice” (p. 142). However, one cannot allow these feelings to immobilize them because they are “manifestation of whiteness” (Dyer, 1997, p. 7) that protect privileged positions, professing “I feel so overwhelmed by my unearned privileges, [that] I don’t know what to do,” which sounds ridiculous (p. 142).

In this chapter I also considered the knowledge gained as a result of standpoints of marginalization, which in my case provided a narrow proficiency to glimpse the “patterns and outcomes “of racism. I also realized that it takes a willful effort and practice to see “patterns and outcomes” of racism due in part to a “contradictory consciousness” (Lears, 2000, p. 52). Even with standpoints that help people understand that oppression is real, it is still “difficult to escape or resist believing in dominant ideology” that is hegemonic (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, p. 50). It is an ongoing process of self-reflection and humility.

Additional Reflections on the Writing Process

During the process of my writing a number of fears and concerns developed. Recognizing my whiteness through my perceived individuality created concerns that I would cause myself pain by writing down my truth. This fear was minor when I first began writing, but I was unprepared for the emotional fatigue I felt as the result of engaging in persistent self-reflection, challenging my own “internalized dominance.” I

realize now that the fear I was feeling was actually discomfort, due in part to my perceived “moral reputation” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 66). I was regularly contending with my internalized conviction that it is forbidden to openly express or address “racially based feelings” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 68). The messages I have received via culture and socialization insist that “race does not matter” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 68). This message constrains my ability to explore “racial perspectives,” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 66) because discomfort emerges like an old friend, challenging my “moral reputation” running the proverbial record in my head that I am a bad person, a racist, because I believe race matters (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 66). All of this is a “manifestation of whiteness” that I could not see during my writing (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 68).

I also realize now that my emotional fatigue was white fragility as a result of having to process my racialized identity (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 66). Ironically, I was concerned about reinforcing white fragility in my students, but I never conceptualized how white fragility was ever present within myself, during the writing process. I didn't make this connection until I was asked to unpack further my fear and my statement of emotional fatigue in a previous draft. I also realize now that individualism is a privilege of whiteness that promotes the belief, whites are “unracialized individuals.” This belief is reinforced by the “discourse of universalism” in which whites are able to declare that people are all the same (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59). I often hear whites state “we all bleed red blood” or “we are all human beings,” without ever questioning what universalism means in the context of race (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59).

I now know, in writing this dissertation I was experiencing racial stress because what was “racially known” to me was now disrupted (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 57). I had to grapple with my racial identity and what it means to be part of a racial group. I began recognizing that my beliefs came from a “racialized frame of reference,” which challenged my notions of objectivity (p. 57). I began recognizing the importance of group membership, which challenged my notions of individualism (p. 57). I had to acknowledge that inequity exists between racial groups, which challenged my notions of meritocracy (p. 57). I had to acknowledge that I behave in racist ways, which challenged my notions of good and evil (p. 57). I began listening with intention to people of color discuss their racial viewpoints, which challenged normalized “white racial codes” (p. 57). I listened, recognizing that I am not entitled to reassurance or concern for my “racial feelings” (p. 57).

This dissertation required that I build up the “stamina to sustain conscious and explicit engagement with race” (p. 66). I grappled with notions of oppression, social stratification and the ways in which we internalize oppression and dominance. I questioned notions of power and how I would define racism because of the constant rhetoric, whether in media or in conversations that took place between myself and others. I grappled with the understanding that whites as a social group are able to claim objectivity when it comes to being white. We are not seen by society as having an agenda or being biased because “whiteness” is not associated with who we are (DiAngelo, 2011). Whites are not denied individuality, and individualism protects us and our supposed unracialized identity (Semsoy & DiAngelo, 2017). Whites perceive racism

as individuals acts of “racial prejudice or discrimination” and not as a system of oppression, because we become blinded by the ideology of individualism (Algeo, 2008, p. 599).

I kept thinking about my education and how sociology trained me to recognize the impact social groups, institutions and systems have on our daily lives. But even with this training, I failed to thoroughly process what it means to be associated with a racial group. I failed to recognize the ubiquitous nature of whiteness because I became too overconfident in my ability see relations and patterns of behavior (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 50-51).

I struggled to conceptualize racism as “a form of oppression that combines prejudice, discrimination and power, which goes further than individuals, occurring at the group level (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 50-51).” I knew this definition, but what I failed realize is that having knowledge is distinct from having the ability to process what that knowledge means. Whites see society, in my opinion, through the lens of individualism and not through the lens of systems or institutions. My lens is no different although I have been trained to do otherwise; a lifetime of socialization of internalizing dominance trumps that training most every time (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 50-51). This dissertation required continual self-reflection which was significantly more difficult than I originally thought it would be. Maybe, I thought I was, what people refer to as “woke,” but being “woke” in this context supposes individuality, which again is a manifestation of whiteness. I struggled with self doubt, resistance, denial and disappointment, but I also gained a greater understanding and a bit more humility.

I, too, became conscious of my other social group identities and the impact they had on my writing and conversations with others. I noted that my gender influenced my ability to trust my own awareness. I struggled and fought against my own internalized oppression and my emotional state, feeling inferior and hopeless. I found it difficult to speak up because I had always felt less vulnerable when hidden in the background. I felt as if a record was constantly playing in my head stating “you are awkward, self-conscious, fearful and unqualified to contribute in any meaningful way. This work is beyond your capability.” I also noted that my social class contributed to these feelings, but it was not my current social class but the remnants of a previous social class in which I felt devalued and unintelligent because I was poor. I had to constantly remind myself that what I was feeling were patterns of internalized oppression (Semsoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 55). My struggle with my other social group identities were also a reminder that we do not exist solely in one social group identity but rather we reside in multiple groups that are intersecting (p. 56) and the oppression that I face as a woman does not cancel out my race privilege, because the experiences of oppression are not one in the same, but differ according to social context (p. 116).

In writing this dissertation I also feared the loss of privacy because of self-revelation and the potential for any emotional reprisal that I might experience from colleagues, educators, friends, and family who read what I have written (Barrington, 1997, p. 146). I am well aware, and even more so now, the expectations and unspoken rules that accompany group membership. I belong to whiteness and within my racial group, there is an unspoken expectation of loyalty, meaning members who step out of

line may face “social ostracism” and be labeled a traitor to the group (Barrington, 2002, p. 146). I have not, to my knowledge, been labeled a traitor, but when I’ve discussed this work, I have been challenged, whether by humor or direct confrontation, by whites. I also think my gender in some way protects my relations, ironically as a result of lacking creditability due to being a woman. I come off as idealistic and misinformed with cute ideas. I also feared that my writing would be perceived as self-indulgent or interpreted as an attempt to shed my white guilt for some type of redemption. However, I hope that my writing is perceived as authentic and genuine. I do fear that being a woman makes this dissertation less credible, thereby making the topic less credible. I worry that although I am white, I am also a white woman who encounters the perception that I am cute and sweet which comes off as weak and unintelligent. Unfortunately, I consistently have people tell me that they underestimated me because they perceived me as pretty and kind.

I have critical hope that sharing my truth may inspire others to be brave enough to do the same. This is my truth as I understand it. Society has influenced my stories and my personal experiences do not “exist within a vacuum” but rather they have taken place within a context that is political, economic, social, and historical (Barrington, 2002, p. 146). I hope by showing this connection to greater society, I may help others see the connections for themselves and no longer “invalidate charges of racism” (Brook & Witherspoon-Arnold, 2013, p. 171). I believe it is my responsibility to confront oppression when a group is oppressed and not because I am trying to act as a “savior of People of color.” I choose to act as an ally because I wish to invest in my own personal growth, and because I am interested in cultivating a just society (Sensoy & DiAngelo,

2012, pp. 156-157). Oppression is both a loss and an injustice. Oppression causes the loss of individuals' gifts and potential achievements that could have contributed to the greater good of society. Without those potential achievements, society loses. No group wins over another; the loss is everyone's. The narrative and stories I have shared are about the struggle to rise above racism. For me, this process was in part about no longer being complicit in perpetuating people's pain.

Limitations

One limitation I noted in my research included the caveat on utilizing a sociological approach because it focuses on group membership and human behavior, which is complex and unpredictable. In recognizing this limitation, general trends in particular groups help students in an individualistic society tie their personal stories to institutional ideologies that perpetuate racial inequality, to help them understand racial issues. Another limitation includes using autoethnography as a methodology. Critics of this approach have referred to it as a form of "navel gazing" and "vain self-indulgence" (Sitton, 2003, p. xii). One criticism I do have in using autoethnography as a methodology relates to my concern with reinforcing whiteness. I know how easy it is to get caught up in the ideology of individualism especially when focusing only on social relations. Seeing whiteness through the lens of individuality focuses on self in relation to others but not in relation to systems. I could deconstruct whiteness as it pertains to white guilt and shame along with my racist thoughts and or actions but if I see my behavior as individual acts of prejudice and discrimination, how will I come to understand racism as system of oppression? Understanding racism requires a macro-level analysis. Autoethnography is

very valuable, but I have concerns about using this method in the context of understanding racism without an analysis that moves beyond the individual, to interpersonal, societal and institutional levels. I incorporated an emphasis on institutions from institutional ethnography with these concerns in mind. Personal work is important and one must “know thyself” to understand the role we may play because of history and social structure, but that requires macro-level thinking. When I read other works that used autoethnography, specifically to deconstruct whiteness, the primary focus was on self, which made me question “how might an autoethnographic approach on deconstructing whiteness reinforce whiteness?” It was difficult for me to maintain macro-level thinking in my writing, and if I had not an emphasis on institutions from institutional ethnography I am not sure I would have been able to see how my whiteness was manifesting. As soon as I became aware of my whiteness in my writing I went back to the literature and researched more, using my theoretical framework along with institutional autoethnography to better guide how I analyzed my writing. I believe a “macro level of analysis” is required in order to have a constructive conversation on racism (Diangelo, 2011, pp. 65-67).

Application of the “Reflexive Storytelling Paradigm” in the Classroom

The “Reflective Storytelling Paradigm” is about making connections using stories and narratives to highlight internalized dominance and the interconnectedness of systems of oppression and power. My letters to students are a means to communicate my personal narratives drawing attention to cultural conformity and portrayals of socialization and the systematic training of norms by dominant culture (Ozlem &

DiAngelo, 2012, pp.15-17). In the classroom the application of the narratives may stand alone in which students could read the narratives, identify stock stories while providing their own analysis. Educators could also impliment the paradigm by having students incorporate the paradigm in their written work, discussions, and activities such as poetry, visual arts, songs and role playing (Bell, 2010, pp. 91-111).

Also a specific example may include showing the TED Talk “The Danger of a Single Story” by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and then have students discuss the power behind stories and how single stories can create stereotypes which highlight how we are different rather than how we are the same (Adichie, 2009). This conversation could segway into a discussion on race and how whiteness has been defined historically. This brings up important questions of power and who ultimately profits off of the creation of whiteness. Educators could use Adichie’s single story to introduce the idea of “stock stories” and the paradigm, including a dicussion on concealed stories and our assumptions or “common sense” notions. At this point it would be ideal to pull in the narratives which may be presented in various ways, such as podcasts or blogs. Educators could include my analysis but they could also have students analyze the narratives themselves, asking students what are the “stock stories” and what “concealed stories” they noticed when reading the narratives? Students could also create their own narratives anonymously and then educators may assign these narratives to others students in the classroom to analyze, based on previous readings and/or discussions. Considering the ubiquitous nature of whiteness it would be good to have another student analyze anonymous narratives because they would be more likely to see the blind spots after

reviewing of the literature. This approach may be an easier way to have discussions on race and racism since the narratives are anonymous, which I believe may limit feelings of being personally attacked.

I created the “letters to self” with educators in mind. Those are written to establish a connection with educators. I want educators to see my personal concerns, struggles and growth. It is my opinion that educators need to know that they are not alone in this process, so that they do not lose hope and they continue to pursue open dialogue on race and racism with their students, colleagues, friends and family.

Closing Statements

Moving forward with the knowledge I have gained, I feel it is important to encourage researchers to value qualitative methods as it relates to anti-racist education. I believe that self-reflexivity is key to having critical discussions on racism. I believe using autoethnography with an emphasis on institutions from “institutional ethnography” is valuable because it creates a framework that includes both micro-level and macro-level thinking. Within this framework everyday social relations may be analyzed by way of social institutions and systems.

Autoethnography with an emphasis on institutions from “institutional ethnography” created a method that provided me an opportunity to analyze my narratives and composite stories from the classroom at the micro and macro level.

By incorporating institutional autoethnography I was able to examine my lived experiences and reflections, in the context of institutional social relations according to my theoretical basis which helped me produce what I believe is an

authentic and rich explanation of white resistance and the struggle to fight against racism. My research as it relates to white privilege and racial inequities was about bridging the gap between the individual and structure to alter oppressive cycles, raising awareness. I wanted to create a space for open dialogue on racism in order to promote a more socially just society.

I wanted to model – through self to students – honesty, vulnerability, and humility, displaying to students my willingness to take risks, knowing I was going to make mistakes. I made mistakes and uncovered many “socialized blind spots” of privilege and internalized dominance (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 50-51).

Writing this dissertation was truly a humbling experience, noting my failures. I don't know if I will ever be able to rise above racism. Maybe it is not about rising above racism but rather about walking through life with racism, in continual self-reflection working in solidarity to build authentic relationships with critical hope that trust will be earned through action, but never expected nor demanded (p.158). I am an “anti-racist racist” who lacks experience but desires to learn, and will continue to fight for and help foster a just society (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012, pp. 150-151).

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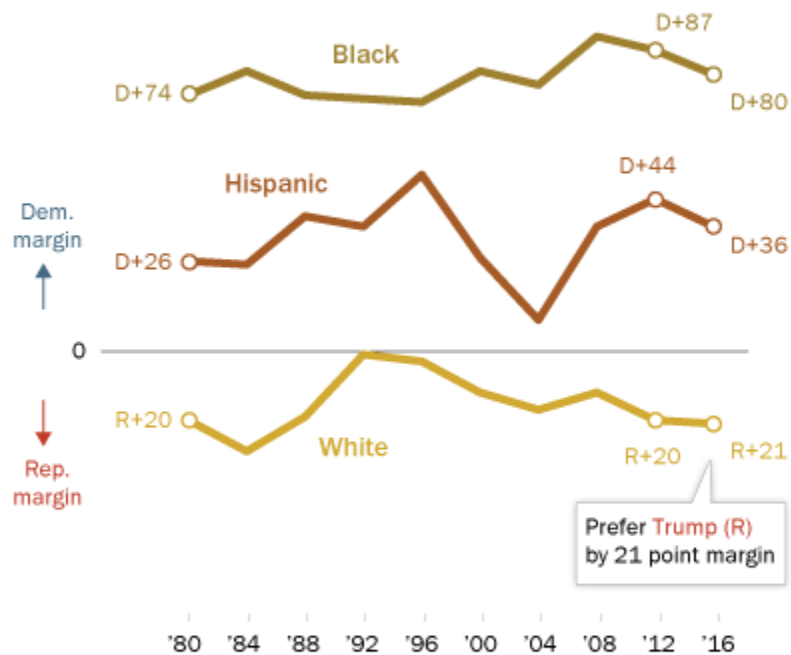
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APPENDIX A

BEHIND TRUMP'S VICTORY: DIVISIONS BY RACE, GENDER, AND EDUCATION

In victory, Trump won whites by virtually same margin as Romney in 2012

Presidential candidate preference, by race or ethnicity



Source: Based on exit polls conducted by Edison Research for the National Election Pool, as reported by CNN. Data from prior years from national exit polls. Data for 1972-1976 not shown due to differences in question wording and administration. In 1980, race was coded by the interviewer instead of being asked of the respondent.

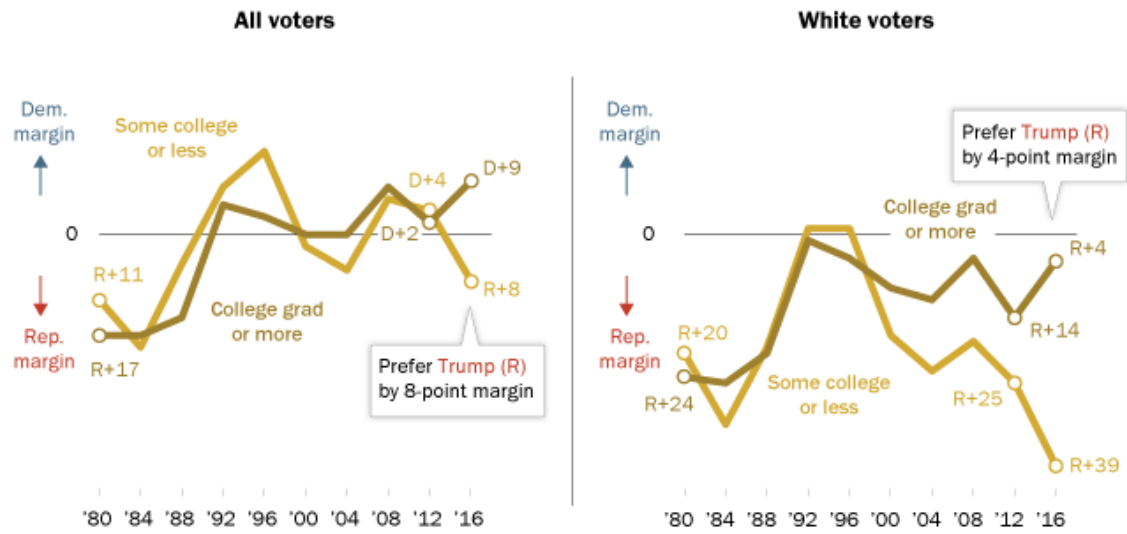
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APPENDIX B

BEHIND TRUMP'S VICTORY: DIVISIONS BY RACE, GENDER, AND EDUCATION

Wide education gaps in 2016 preferences, among all voters and among whites

Presidential candidate preference, by educational attainment



Source: Based on exit polls conducted by Edison Research for the National Election Pool, as reported by CNN. Data from prior years from national exit polls. In 1980, race was coded by the interviewer instead of being asked of the respondent.

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APPENDIX C

HOW THE FAITHFUL VOTED: A PRELIMINARY 2016 ANALYSIS

Presidential vote by religious affiliation and race

	2000		2004		2008		2012		2016		Dem change '12-'16
	Gore %	Bush %	Kerry %	Bush %	Obama %	McCain %	Obama %	Romney %	Clinton %	Trump %	
Protestant/other Christian	42	56	40	59	45	54	42	57	39	58	-3
Catholic	50	47	47	52	54	45	50	48	45	52	-5
White Catholic	45	52	43	56	47	52	40	59	37	60	-3
Hispanic Catholic	65	33	65	33	72	26	75	21	67	26	-8
Jewish	79	19	74	25	78	21	69	30	71	24	+2
Other faiths	62	28	74	23	73	22	74	23	62	29	-12
Religiously unaffiliated	61	30	67	31	75	23	70	26	68	26	-2
White, born-again/evangelical Christian	n/a	n/a	21	78	24	74	21	78	16	81	-5
Mormon	n/a	n/a	19	80	n/a	n/a	21	78	25	61	+4

Note: "Protestant" refers to people who described themselves as "Protestant," "Mormon" or "other Christian" in exit polls; this categorization most closely approximates the exit poll data reported immediately after the election by media sources. The "white, born-again/evangelical Christian" row includes both Protestants and non-Protestants (e.g., Catholics, Mormons, etc.) who self-identify as born-again or evangelical Christians.

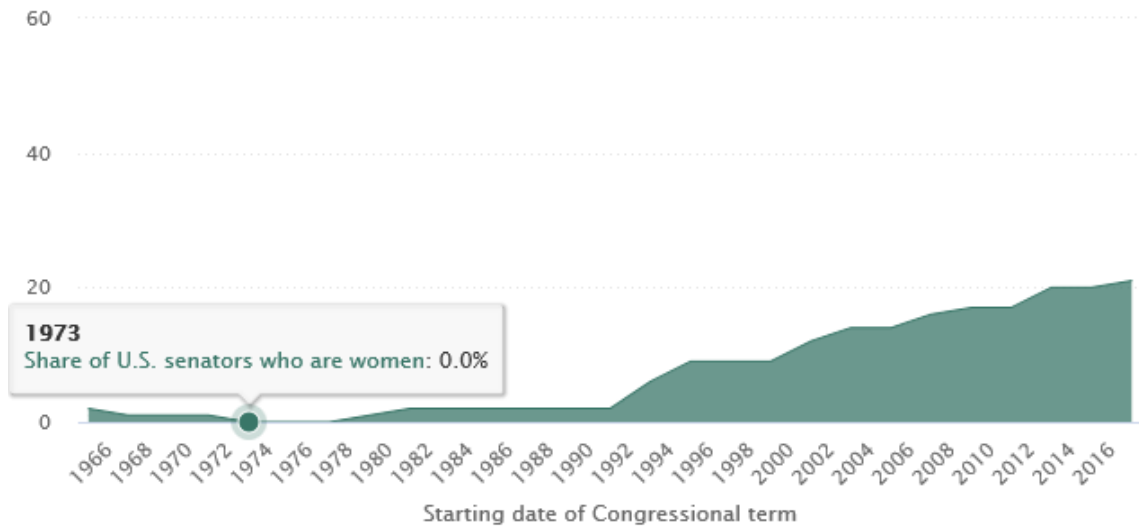
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of exit poll data. 2004 Hispanic Catholic estimates come from aggregated state exit polls conducted by the National Election Pool. Other estimates come from Voter News Service/National Election Pool national exit polls. 2012 data come from reports at NBCnews.com and National Public Radio. 2016 data come from reports at NBCnews.com and CNN.com.

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APPENDIX D

WOMEN IN THE U.S. SENATE, 1965-2017

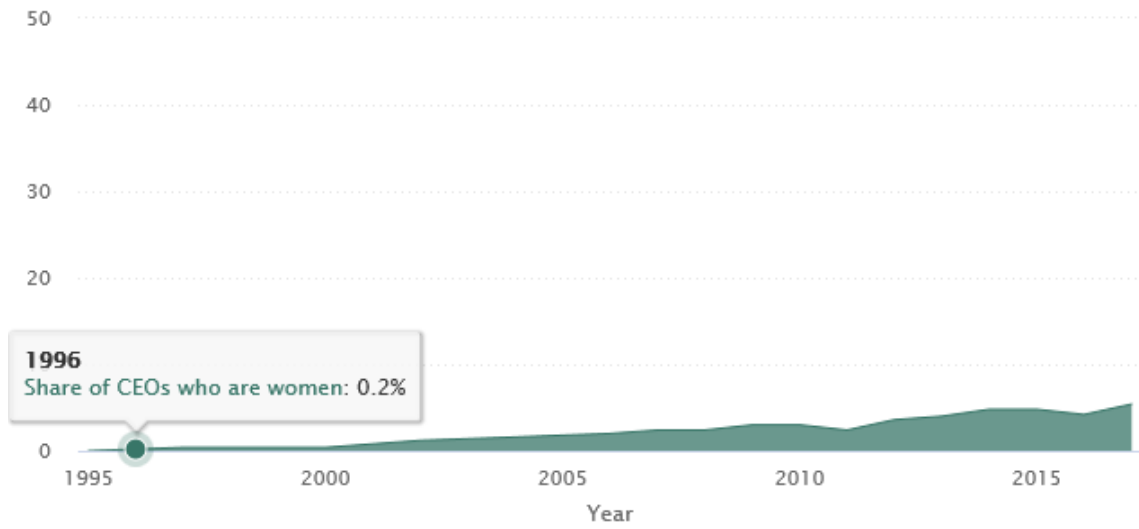
Percentage of U.S. senators who are women



APPENDIX E

WOMEN CEOS IN FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES, 1995-2007

Percentage of Fortune 500 CEOs who are women



APPENDIX F

ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW

The Narrowing of the Gender Wage Gap, 1980-2012

Median hourly earnings of women as a percent of men's



Note: Estimates are for civilian, non-institutionalized, full- or part-time employed workers with positive earnings. Self-employed workers are excluded.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.

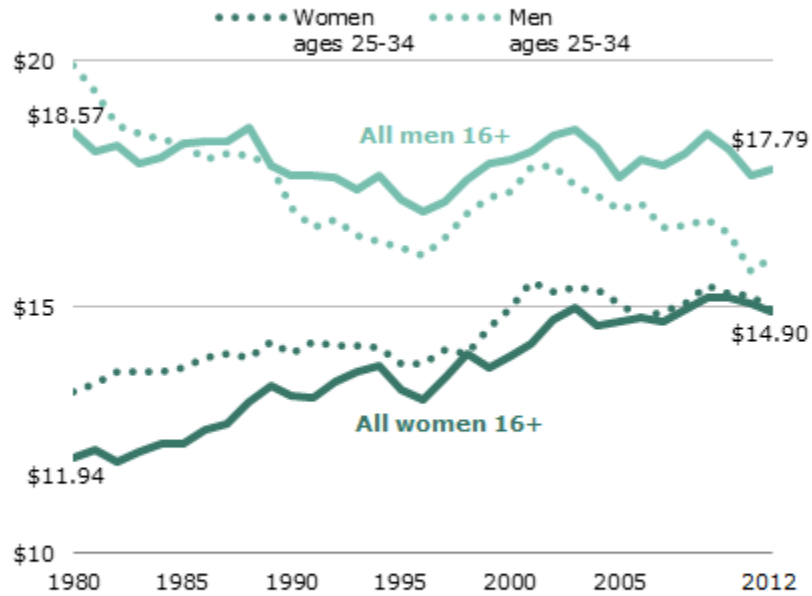
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APPENDIX G

ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW

Wages Trending Up for Women, Down for Men

Median hourly earnings (in 2012 dollars), 1980-2012



Note: Estimates are for civilian, non-institutionalized, full- and part-time employed workers with positive earnings. Self-employed workers are excluded.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.

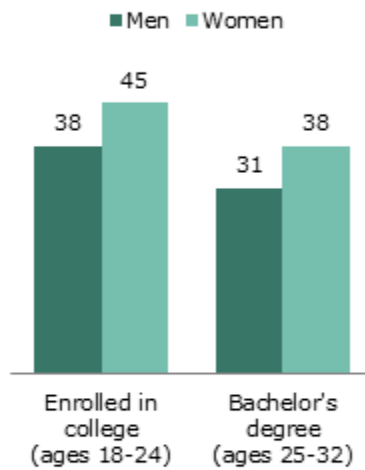
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APPENDIX H

ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW

**In Educational
Attainment, Millennial
Women Outpace Men**

% of Millennial adults ...



Note: "Enrolled in college" comprises those who are enrolled in a two-year or four-year college or university.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the Current Population Survey (CPS). Enrollment figures are for 2012 and are based on the October 2012 CPS. Bachelor's degree figures are for 2013 and are based on the March 2013 CPS.

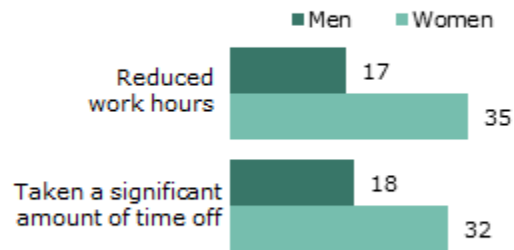
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APPENDIX I

ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW

Mothers More Likely to Say Time Away Has Hurt Career

% saying ... hurt their career



Notes: Based on fathers/mothers who are or were employed and said they have done each in order to care for a child or other family member. Sample sizes vary across items.

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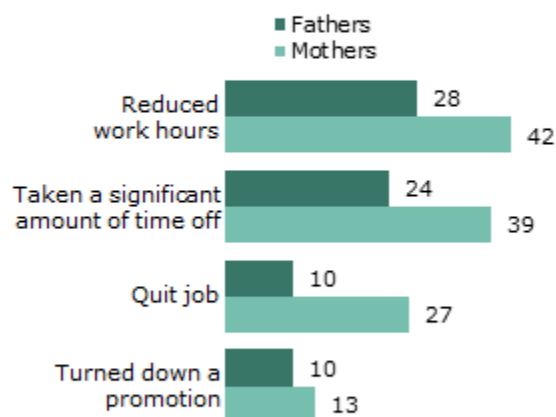
Q58a,b

APPENDIX J

ON PAY GAP, MILLENNIAL WOMEN NEAR PARITY – FOR NOW

**Mothers, More than Fathers,
Experience Career Interruptions**

% saying they have ... in order to care for a child or family member



Notes: Based on those who have ever worked, "Fathers" and "mothers" include those with children of any age, including adult children (n=1,254).

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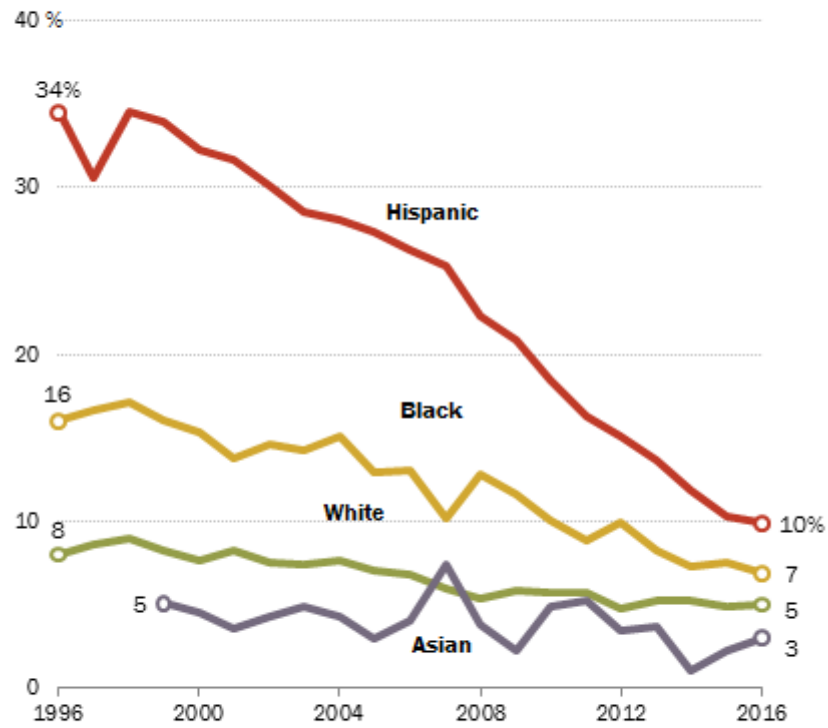
Q56a-d

APPENDIX K

HISPANIC DROPOUT RATE HITS NEW LOW, COLLEGE ENROLLEMENT AT A NEW HIGH

Hispanic high school dropout rate has plummeted in past two decades

% of 18- to 24-year-olds who dropped out of high school, by race and ethnicity (1996-2016)



Note: Civilian noninstitutionalized population. Blacks and Asians include the Hispanic portions of those groups. Whites include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Source: U.S. Census Bureau October Current Population Survey.

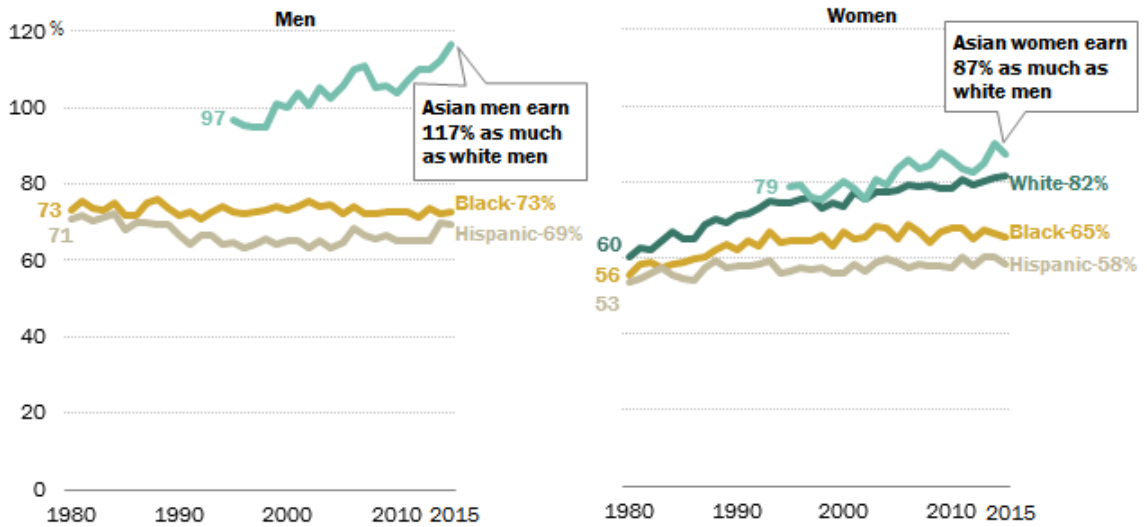
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APPENDIX L

RACIAL, GENDER WAGE GAPS PERSIST IN U.S. DESPITE SOME PROGRESS

White men out-earn black and Hispanic men and all groups of women

Median hourly earnings as a percent of white men's earnings



Note: Estimates are for all civilian, non-institutionalized, full- or part-time workers ages 16 and older with positive earnings. Self-employed workers are excluded. Hispanics are of any race. Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Asians include Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.

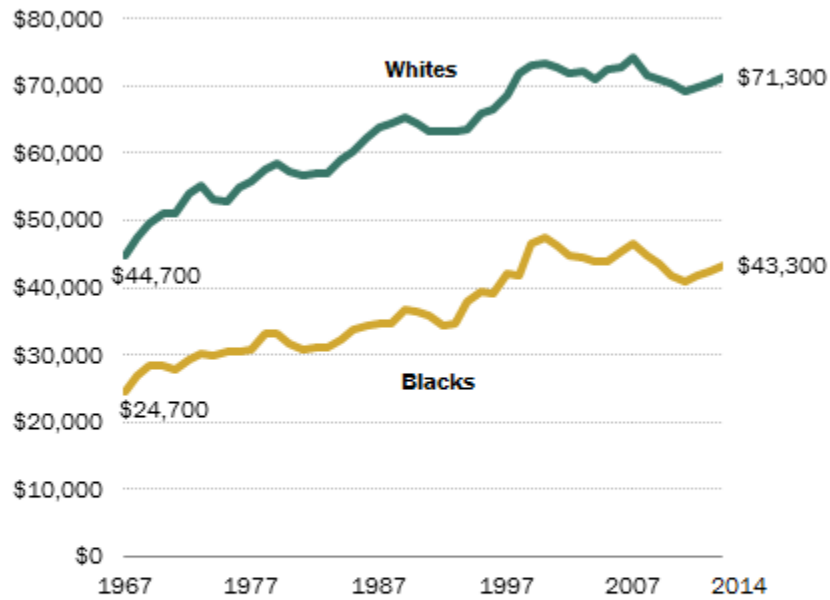
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APPENDIX M

ON VIEWS OF RACE AND INEQUALITY, BLACKS AND WHITES ARE WORLDS APART

Racial gaps in household income persist

Median adjusted household income in 2014 dollars



Note: Income standardized to a household size of three and is reported for the calendar year prior to the survey year. For details, see Methodology. Race and ethnicity are based upon the race and ethnicity of the head of household. Whites and blacks include only those who reported a single race. Data from 1970 to 2014 include only non-Hispanic whites and blacks; data prior to 1970 include Hispanics.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the 1968-2015 Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS)
"On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart"

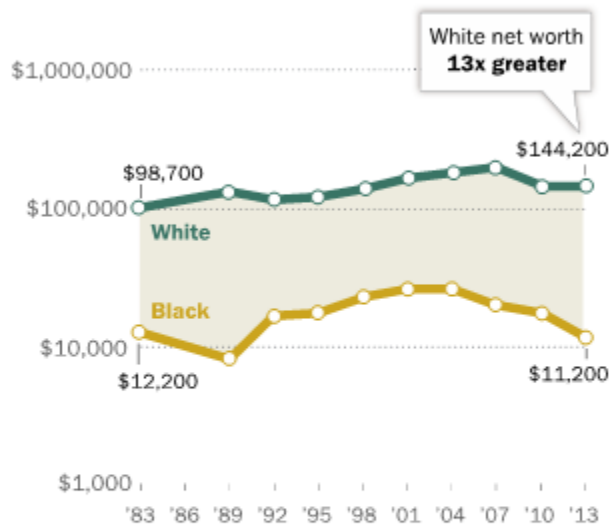
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APPENDIX N

ON VIEWS OF RACE AND INEQUALITY, BLACKS AND WHITES ARE WORLDS APART

Whites have significantly higher levels of wealth than blacks

Median net worth of U.S. households in 2014 dollars



Note: Race is based on the race of the head of household. White and black householders include only persons who reported a single race. Data for whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Chart scale is logarithmic: each gridline is ten times greater than the gridline below it.

Source: Survey of Consumer Finances public-use data

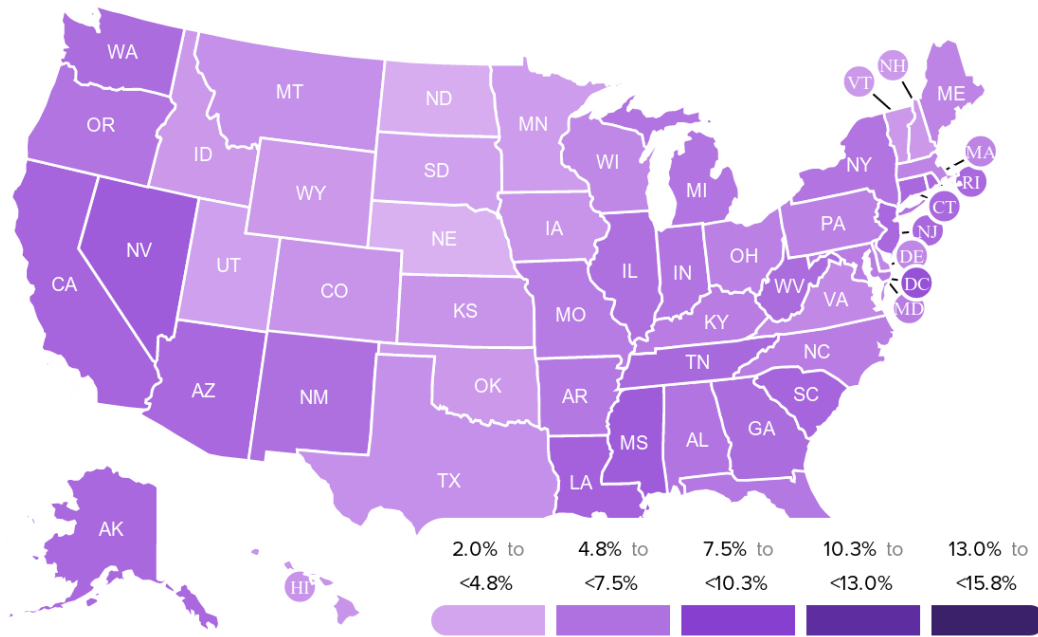
"On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart"

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APPENDIX O

SO FAR, THE BLACK UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HAS ONLY RECOVERED IN STATES WHERE IT WAS HIGHEST BEFORE THE GREAT RECESSION

State unemployment rates, by race/ethnicity and overall, 2015Q1



Note: The map only reports unemployment rates for state subgroups with sample sizes large enough to create accurate estimates.

Source: EPI analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Local Area Unemployment Statistics (LAUS) data and Current Population Survey (CPS) data

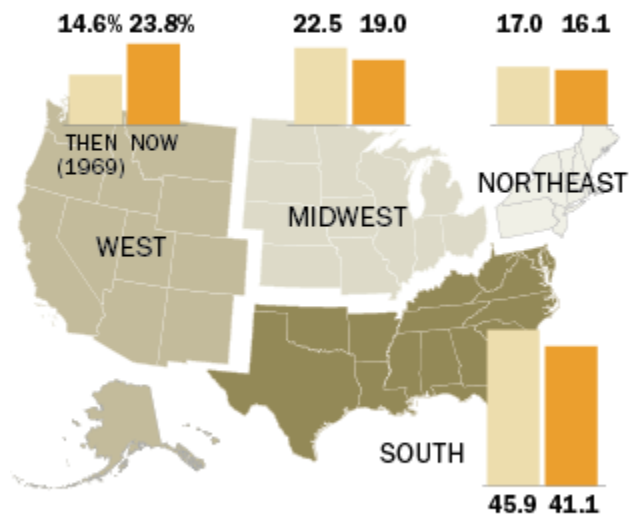
Economic Policy Institute

APPENDIX P

WHO'S POOR IN AMERICA? 50 YEARS INTO THE 'WAR ON POVERTY,' A DATA PORTRAIT

The Geography of America's Poor

Percent by region of total U.S. below poverty line



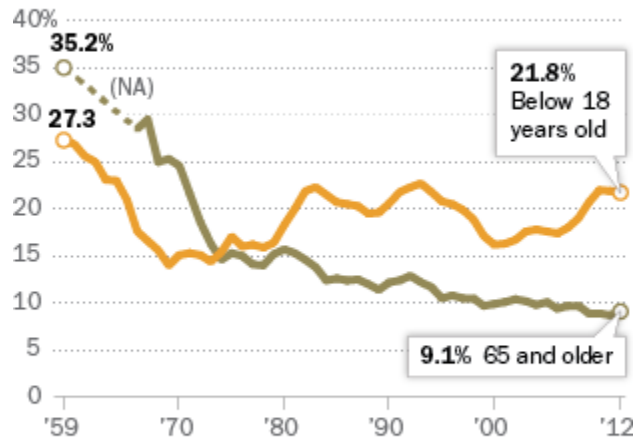
Source: Census Bureau

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APPENDIX Q

WHO'S POOR IN AMERICA? 50 YEARS INTO THE 'WAR ON POVERTY,' A
DATA PORTRAIT

Poverty Rates for Children and Elderly



Source: Census Bureau

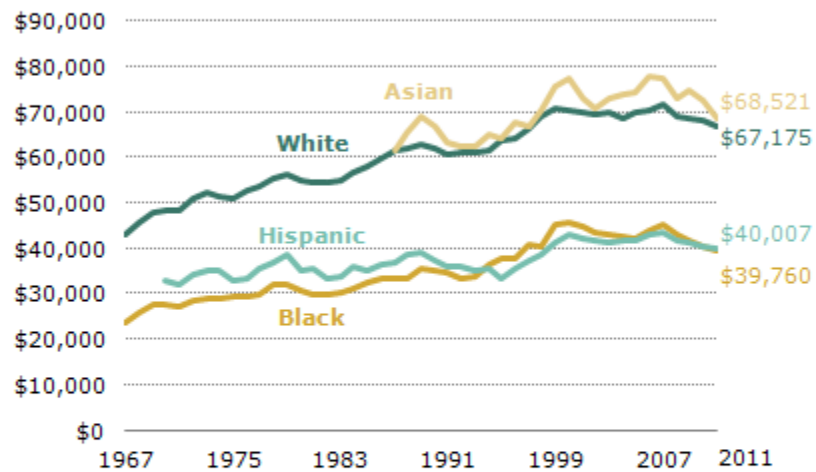
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APPENDIX R

CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA, BY RACE

Median Adjusted Household Income by Race/Ethnicity of Householder, 1967-2011

in 2012 dollars



Note: White, black and Asian householders include only those who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. Data for whites, blacks and Asians from 1971 to 2011 include only non-Hispanics. Data for whites and blacks prior to 1970 include Hispanics. Comparable data for Hispanics not available prior to 1970. Data for Asians not available prior to 1987. Asians include Pacific Islanders. Income standardized to a household size of three. For details, see <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/11/07/the-rising-age-gap-in-economic-well-being/4/#appendix-a-data-sources-and-methodologyappendix>.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS)

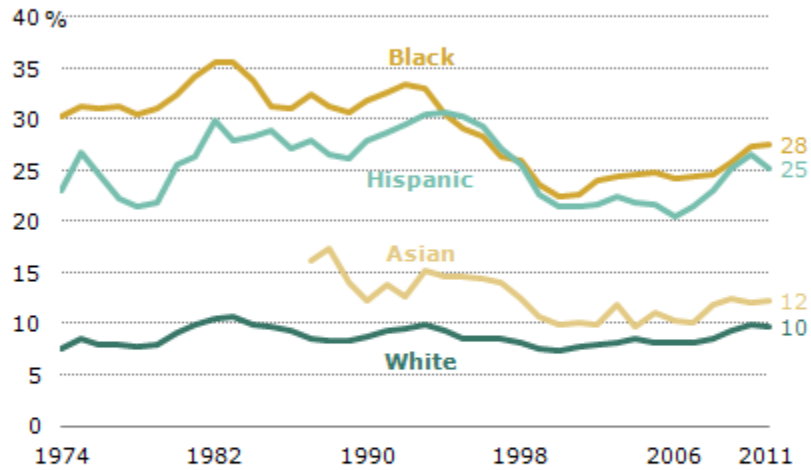
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APPENDIX S

CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA, BY RACE

Persons in Poverty by Race/Ethnicity, 1974-2011

(%)



Note: For 2002-2011, whites, blacks and Asians include only persons who reported a single race; for 2001 and earlier years, respondents (including those who may be of more than one race) were allowed to report only one race group. Blacks and Asians include Hispanics for all years. Asians include Pacific Islanders prior to 2002. Data for Asians not available prior to 1987. Native Americans and other groups not shown.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Historical Poverty Statistics
<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/historical/people.html> Table 2

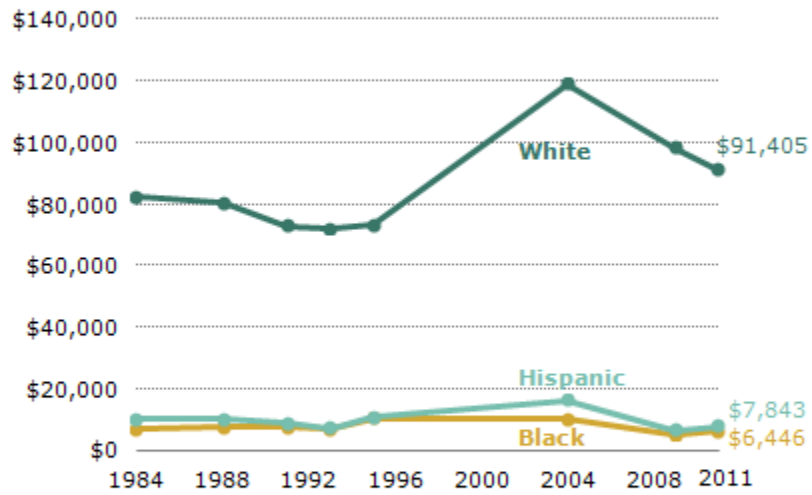
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APPENDIX T

CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA, BY RACE

Median Net Worth of Households, by Race/Ethnicity, 1984 to 2011

In 2012 dollars



Note: White and black householders include only persons who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. Blacks and whites include Hispanics.

Sources: Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP). For 1984 to 2004; various U.S. Census Bureau P-70 Current Population Reports. For 2009 and 2011 U.S. Census Bureau net worth tables: <http://www.census.gov/people/wealth/>

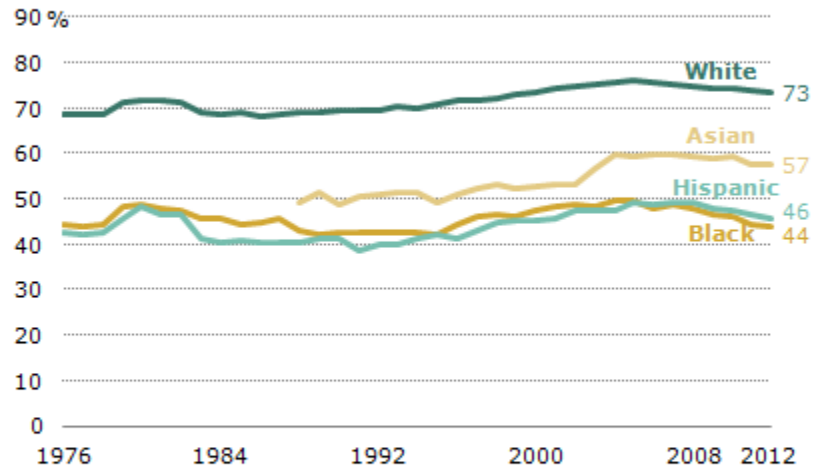
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APPENDIX U

CHAPTER 3: DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC DATA, BY RACE

Homeownership by Race/Ethnicity, 1976-2012

% of householders owning home



Note: White, black and Asian householders include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race. Native Americans and mixed-race groups not shown. Data for Asians not available prior to 1988. Asians include Pacific Islanders.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (IPUMS)

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APPENDIX V

FALL IN HOMEOWNERSHIP CONTINUES AMID “HOUSING RECOVERY”

**Fall in homeownership continues amid
“housing recovery”**

% of households owning home



Note: 2016 figure based on the third quarter of 2016. Data labels are for 1965, 1994, 2004, and 2016. Great Recession began December 2007 and ended June 2009. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancies and Homeownership Survey “In a Recovering Market, Homeownership Rates Are Down Sharply for Blacks, Young Adults.”

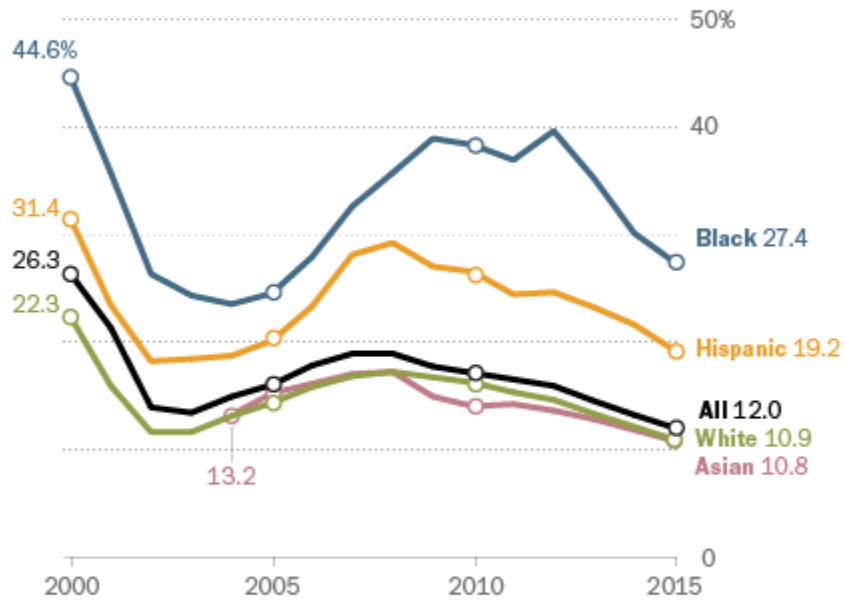
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APPENDIX W

BLACK AND HISPANICS FACE EXTRA CHALLENGES IN GETTING HOME LOANS

Despite recent improvements, blacks and Hispanics still have harder time getting mortgages

Denial rates



Note: Data based on applications for conventional loans for one-to-four-family home purchases, including manufactured homes. Data on Asians were not broken out separately until 2004. Hispanics may be of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data

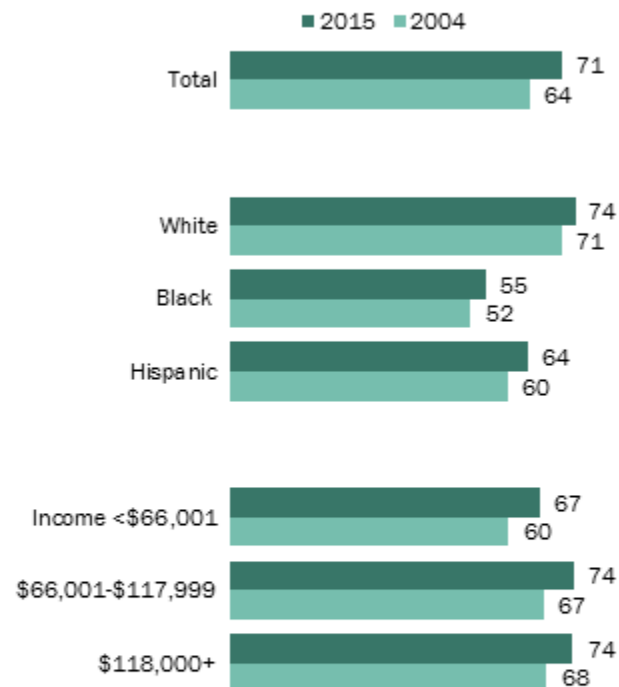
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APPENDIX X

SHARE OF CONVENTIONAL LOAN APPLICATIONS THAT ARE APPROVED
HAS GROWN SINCE 2004

**Share of conventional loan applications
that are approved has grown since 2004**

% of home purchase loan applications originated



Note: Limited to conventional loans for one- to four-family home purchase for owner occupancy, first liens only. The total includes racial and ethnic groups not shown separately. Whites and blacks include only those who are single-race non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data.

"In a Recovering Market, Homeownership Rates Are Down Sharply for Blacks, Young Adults"

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APPENDIX Y

HOMEOWNERSHIP HAS DECLINED THE MOST AMONG YOUNGER HOUSEHOLDS AND BLACK HOUSEHOLDS

Homeownership has declined the most among younger households and black households

% of households owning home, by characteristic of head

	1994	2004	2016 Q3	1994 to 2016 Q3 change (%)	2004 to 2016 Q3 change (%)
Total	64.0	69.0	63.5	-1	-8
Younger than 35	37.3	43.1	35.2	-6	-18
35-44	64.5	69.2	58.4	-9	-16
45-54	75.2	77.2	69.1	-8	-10
55-64	79.3	81.7	74.9	-5	-8
65+	77.4	81.1	79.0	+2	-3
White	70.0	76.0	71.9	+3	-5
Black	42.3	49.1	41.3	-2	-16
Hispanic	41.2	48.1	47.0	+14	-2

Note: The total includes racial and ethnic groups not shown separately. Whites include only single-race non-Hispanics. Blacks include both Hispanics and non-Hispanics who are single race. Hispanics are of any race. Change calculated before rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of Current Population Survey/Housing Vacancies and Homeownership Survey.

"In a Recovering Market, Homeownership Rates Are Down Sharply for Blacks, Young Adults"

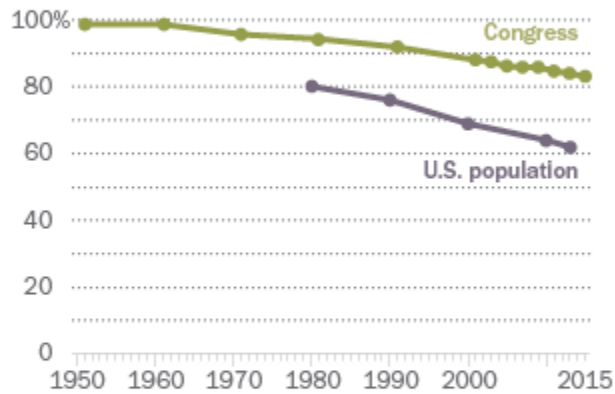
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APPENDIX Z

WHITES MAKE UP A LARGER SHARE OF CONGRESS THAN OF U.S. POPULATION

Whites Make Up Larger Share of Congress than of U.S. Population

% white of ...



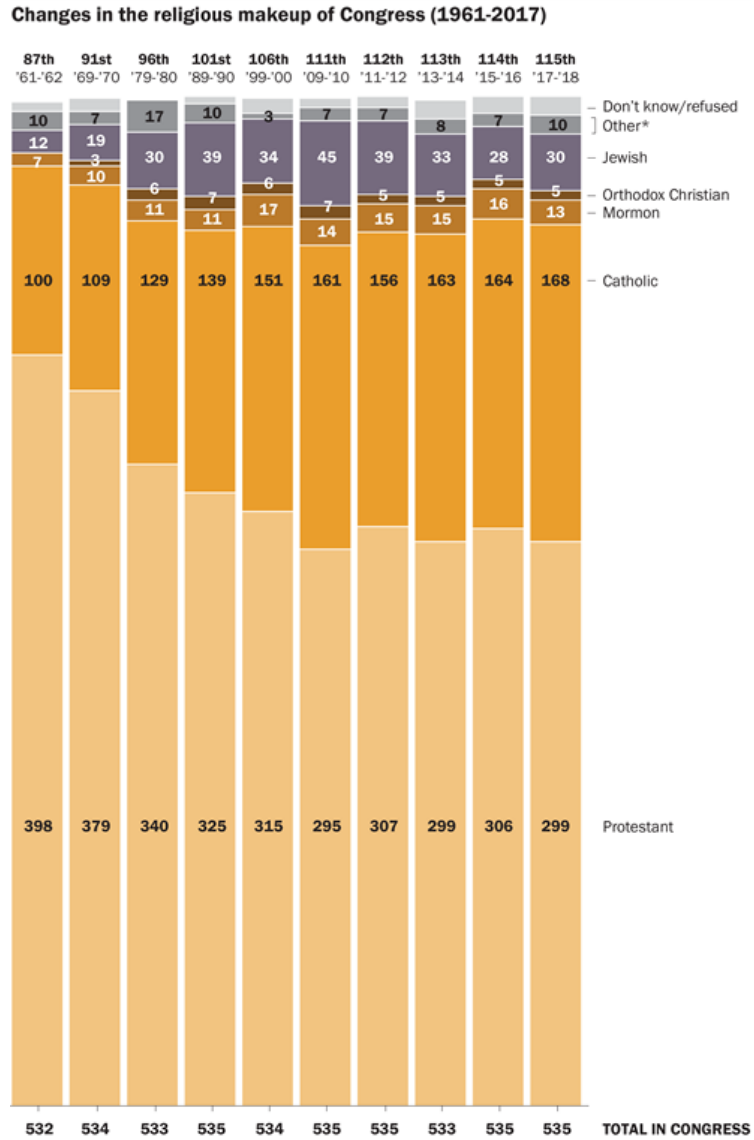
Note: Nonvoting delegates or commissioners excluded. Makeup of Congress reflects composition on session's first day. For 1980, 1990 population figures, whites include only non-Hispanics. For 2000 and later, whites include only non-Hispanics who reported a single race.

Source: CQ Roll Call, Congressional Research Service, Brookings Institution, Census Bureau population figures

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APPENDIX AA

CHANGES IN THE RELIGIOUS MAKEUP OF CONGRESS



*Includes Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, Unitarian Universalists, the unaffiliated and other faiths.
 Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.
 Source: 1961 data from the Library of Congress; other data from CQ Roll Call and Pew Research Center. Figures for 115th Congress based on Pew Research Center analysis of data collected by CQ Roll Call, reflecting members of Congress to be sworn in on Jan. 3, 2017.

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APPENDIX BB

THE IDEOLOGICAL CONSISTENCY SCALE: 5 FACTS ABOUT CONSERVATIVES

Responsibility Tops List of Child-Rearing Values Across Ideological Groups

% saying each quality is one of the three MOST important to teach children...

Total %	Consistently liberal %	Mostly liberal %	Mixed %	Mostly conservative %	Consistently conservative %
Being responsible 55	Being responsible 47	Being responsible 55	Being responsible 56	Being responsible 57	Being responsible 61
Hard work 42	Empathy for others 34	Hard work 42	Hard work 46	Religious faith 44	Religious faith 59
Religious faith 30	Helping others 28	Helping others 26	Religious faith 29	Hard work 43	Hard work 44
Helping others 22	Hard work 26	Being well-mannered 24	Being well-mannered 26	Being well-mannered 21	Being well-mannered 17
Being well-mannered 22	Curiosity 23	Religious faith 23	Helping others 24	Independence 16	Obedience 15

American Trends Panel (wave 3). Survey conducted April 29-May 27, 2014. "Most important" is the share selecting each quality as one of the (up to three of 12) most important to teach children. Data is ranked by the percent most important for each group.

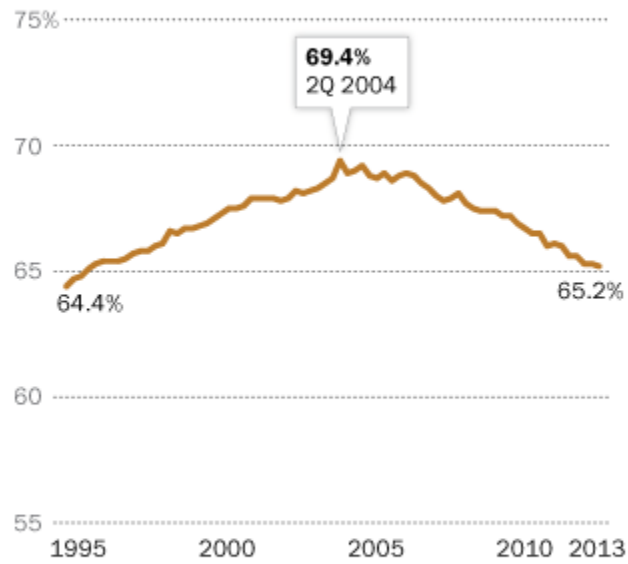
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APPENDIX CC

HOME OWNERSHIP RATES, 1995-2013

Home Ownership Rate, 1995-2013

Percent of homes that are owner-occupied



Note: Rates seasonally adjusted.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

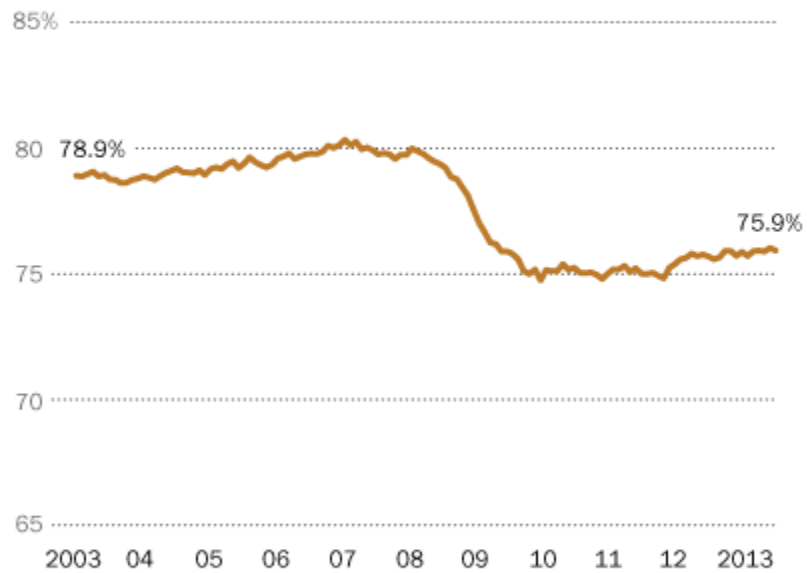
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APPENDIX DD

EMPLOYMENT RATE, 2003-2013

Employment Rate, 2003-2013

Percent of adults ages 25-54 who are employed

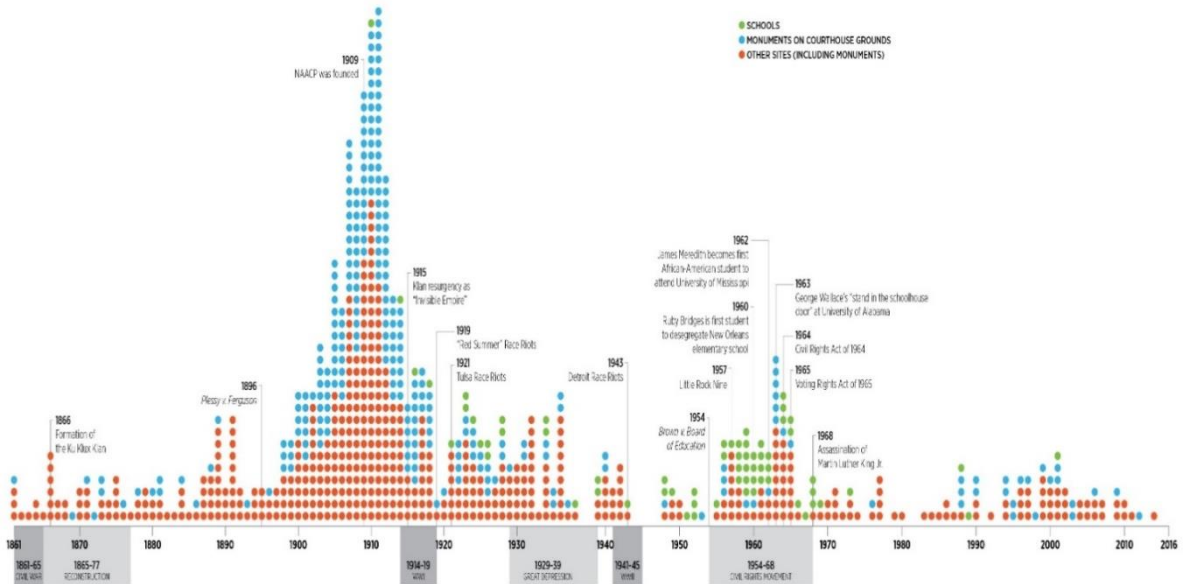


Note: Rates seasonally adjusted.
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

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APPENDIX EE

WHOSE HERITAGE? PUBLIC SYMBOLS OF THE CONFEDERACY

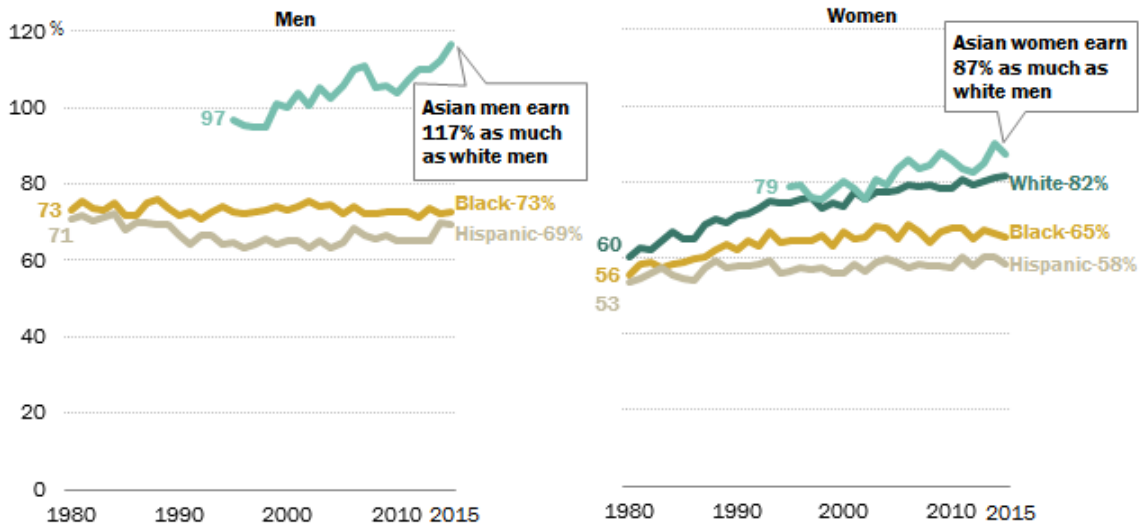


APPENDIX FF

RACIAL, GENDER WAGES GAPS PERSIST IN U.S. DESPITE SOME PROGRESS

White men out-earn black and Hispanic men and all groups of women

Median hourly earnings as a percent of white men's earnings



Note: Estimates are for all civilian, non-institutionalized, full- or part-time workers ages 16 and older with positive earnings. Self-employed workers are excluded. Hispanics are of any race. Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Asians include Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of Current Population Survey data.

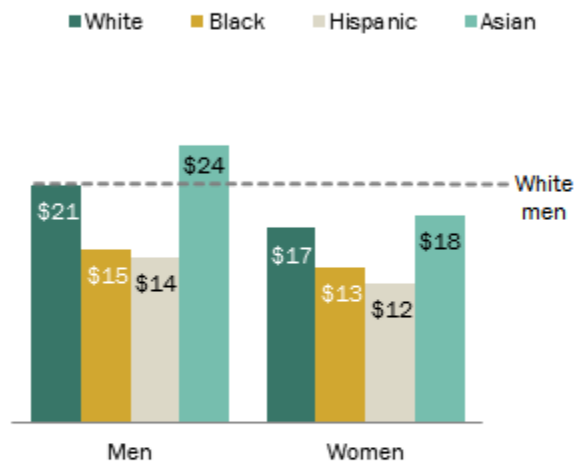
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APPENDIX GG

RACIAL, GENDER WAGES GAPS PERSIST IN U.S. DESPITE SOME PROGRESS

White men had higher hourly earnings than all except Asian men in 2015

Median hourly earnings of men and women from each race/ethnicity



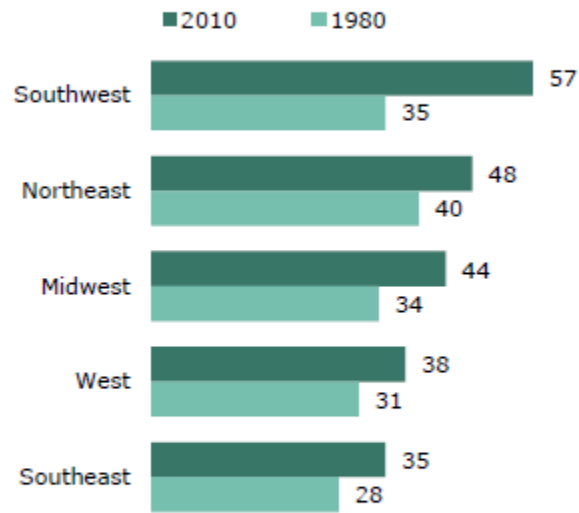
Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest dollar. Based on civilian, non-institutionalized, full- or part-time workers with positive earnings. Self-employed workers are excluded. Hispanics are of any race. Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Asians include Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of 2015 Current Population Survey data.

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APPENDIX HH

THE RISE OF RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION BY INCOME

Residential Income Segregation Index (RISI) by Region, 1980 and 2010



Notes: The regional RISI is computed by averaging the RISI scores for the large metros in the region. The averages shown are the simple unweighted averages.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year file and Geolytics 1980 Census data in 2000 boundaries.

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APPENDIX II

IN GREATER DALLAS AREA, SEGREGATION BY INCOME AND RACE

In Dallas-Fort Worth Metro, 95% of Mostly Upper-Income Areas Are Dominated by White Households

Share of census tracts in which majority of households are headed by ...



Note: In Dallas, lower-income households are defined as those with annual incomes of less than \$38,000 in 2010; upper-income households are those with annual incomes of at least \$113,000. Whites include only non-Hispanics. Non-whites include Hispanics.

Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of 2006-2010 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year files.

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