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"Take it with You": Humanizing and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies as Racial Literacy in Undergraduate Education

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**“Take it with You”: Humanizing and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies as Racial
Literacy in Undergraduate Education**

A Dissertation Presented

by

R. Jamaal Downey

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2021

Language, Literacy, and Culture

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**“Take it with You”: Humanizing and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies as Racial
Literacy in Undergraduate Education**

A Dissertation Presented

by

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DEDICATION

For Lionel Walker.

For Montgomery Lee.

For the Brown, Black, and racially ambiguous people in the world that operate in mostly white spaces. While this work focuses on White identities, it is for the protection, care, and healing of us POC.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Lionel Walker.

To Montgomery Lee.

To the “Beckys, Karens, Kevins & Chads.”

To the midwives—of me, of this project, of my success, I am forever indebted.

Your guidance has helped usher greatness into this world and your value—our value—should never be underestimated nor overlooked.

ABSTRACT

“TAKE IT WITH YOU”: HUMANIZING AND CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES AS RACIAL LITERACY IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

May 2021

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Given the current racially charged climate around the world, but more specifically in the US and on college campuses, we as instructors of undergraduates are vastly underserving our future generations by avoiding tough questions in the classroom surrounding race. Without the proper language and space to discuss issues surrounding race, students are left behind without the words to express how they are thinking, feeling, and dreaming. The purpose of this qualitative critical ethnographic study through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework is to examine the ability of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies to elicit racial literacy in three White undergraduate students enrolled in a general education course at a PWI. This project is a call to teach our students a new literacy—racial literacy—and provide pedagogues the tools and pathways for achieving this goal. Racial literacy is a literacy that will help them put words to feelings and experiences they’ve had but not able to articulate. This study offers insight of the positive impacts that humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies had on how racial literacy was learned and/or taught. The tools used to implement an ontological shift with the White student participants include: the importance of reflexivity for both the teachers and students, concrete connections between the content and theory being presented to the

reality of the students, fostering pluralisms through dialogue, counternarratives and creating a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1999), and creating different ways of expression for students to express their thoughts and feelings. By implementing these tools, the results of this study concluded that all of the participants made movement toward a deeper understanding of racial literacy, albeit at different depths.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING THE STUDY

I identify white. Italian and Irish. Coming from where I have, I've seen a lot of white. That color... I feel that people I've grown up with have a sense of privilege. Somehow better. In my mind, I've always thought, it's just a color. Your skin. Everyone is a human. DNA. We're all the same. I just feel like it's crazy to think some feel they are better cause they are white. It doesn't make sense. Doesn't feel right. (Meghan, pre-interview)

Compared to Jim Crow racism, the ideology of color blindness seems like “racism lite.” Instead of relying on name calling (niggers, spics, chinks), color-blind racism otherizes softly (“These people are human, too”). (Bonilla-Silva, 2014, p. 3)

Like this student, I too have seen a lot of white. There are my lived experiences as a Black/White biracial while growing up with my White mother in mostly white spaces. More recently, my ascension in academia that have been mostly white spaces. Because of these real and visceral experiences, race has always been a salient identity for me. Embedded in the first quote by a participant of this study is both a recognition of the power that race has in people's lives along with colorblindness language and an ahistorical understanding that deflects and obfuscates responsibility for the current racial context with which we operate. The quote also shows a discomfort and a lack of language to speak directly to the observations relating to race—the discomfort that comes when White students notice race but can't speak directly to or about it.

The second quote decodes the first. Bonilla-Silva reminds us that there is what *is* said, and there is the *interpretation* to what was said. All of this language can be very coded and hidden like the unwritten rules of baseball. Without the literacy skills to unpack the true meaning of coded racist language (be it overtly racist or colorblind), we as a society perpetuate the systemic structure of racism in everyday interactions.

To understand the nature of systemic racism, how one has benefitted from its devastating effects and what to do moving forward is a daunting task to some of the White bodies (Menakem, 2017) whom have benefitted from but not been reflexive of the normalization of whiteness which “perpetuate[s] white racial supremacy through color-blindness, historical justifications, and sleights of mind” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 79).

Whiteness is defined and contains

ideologies (Brown, 2009; Theoharis & Haddix, 2011), emotions (Matias, 2016), rhetoric (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995; Ratcliffe, 2000), symbolism (Stryker, 2009; Yancy, 2012), and speech (Gillborn, 2009) that, upon its expression, is used to dominate or control a populace without even actively acknowledging such domination (Matias, 2017, p. 317).

It is as if students are hearing and trying to interpret a new language when they engage in discussions about race and racism. The truth is, they are. Without the proper language and space to discuss issues surrounding race, students are left behind without the words to express how they are thinking, feeling, and dreaming. They know too well that if they say something in front of their peers that is too taboo, they will be ostracized and perhaps given the dreadful label: RACIST. Often, these students end up not engaging—which only allows systemic racism to perpetuate itself and hence, Racism without Racists (Bonilla-Silva, 2014).

This study offers insight into how racial literacy is learned and/or taught by implementing humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies. This project is a call to teach our students a new literacy—racial literacy—and provide pedagogues the tools and pathways for achieving this goal. Racial literacy is a literacy that will help them put words to feelings and experiences they have had but were not able to articulate. A literacy that identifies, de-normalizes silence, and actively works toward burning down

oppressive structures that, while seemingly only to squelch the human capacity of the oppressed, equally limit the capacity of their oppressor. Oppression not only hinders and dehumanizes the oppressed; it hinders and dehumanizes all involved. In the words of Amie Cesaire (2001):

[C]olonization... dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization that I wanted to point out. (p. 5; Emphasis added)

Racial literacy, coined by Twine and summarized by Grayson (2017), “emphasizes the development of language practices through which to discuss race and racism” (p. 145). For this project, racial literacy will be defined as the ability to identify the structural nature of racism, where one’s positionality fits within the structure of racism, and how one can speak to and/or change the structure and systemic nature of racism through various forms, but beginning with the ability to directly think and speak about race. Knowing that individual acts of racism are part of the broader culture and are manifestations of systemic and institutional structures of white supremacy, how can we as educators foster environments that promote and teach a new literacy that stimulates deeper racial understanding? How can we, as critical and humanizing scholars, broaden our students’ concept of literacy to include *racial* literacy? This study seeks to explore pedagogies that allow our educators to better prepare our students for a racialized world and the ways they might help during the third wave of racial awakening in the United States and across the world.

The foundation of this project is to better understand how humanizing pedagogy and CSP affect the development of racial literacy. In their book *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, Freire and Macedo (1987) propose that we as humans read the world before we read the word and that without the ability to read the world which allows us to contextualize written words, the collection of letters known as words mean nothing. Already, the traditional definition of literacy is being rehoused and shifted from its popular conception of decoding symbols on the page to reading the world around you. As stated by Freire (2013):

To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate those techniques in terms of consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands: It is to communicate graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words or syllables, lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe, but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context (p. 45).

In this sense, literacy not only includes letters and symbols which constitutes simply reading texts. In order to understand the full meaning of literacy is to include the way we read and interpret the world around us, the dialogue and discourses that shape who we are, what we write, and what we do, which constitute forms of taking action.

Adding to the broadening conception/conceptualization of literacy is the work of scholars, such as Street and Gee. In the pivotal work titled, "Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics" Gee (1989) is answering the question, what is literacy? In it, Gee describes language as "surely not grammar, but *saying (writing)- doing-being-valuing-believing combinations*" (emphasis added, p. 6). Gee defines literacy as "the mastery of or fluent control over a secondary Discourse" "liberating and a meta-language" (p. 9). This is further discussed in the literature review. However, important for this section is the

understanding that language, discourse, and literacy takes on a macro approach to language—written and unwritten, said and not said—and the multiple avenues and modes in which these messages can be sent, or not.

Language and discourse are social practices and its consequences (Fairclough, 2001; Thomas, 2006). Foucault (1972) refers to discourse as statements that provide a way for talking about, a way to represent knowledge. Therefore, discourse is a “complex of three elements: social practice, discursual practice (text production, distribution and consumption) and text” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 74). These nuanced understandings of language and discourse not only allow for but beg us for a more nuanced understanding of literacy. Relating to this study, racial literacy is not simply knowing that racism exists. Being racially literate allows you to understand how some races enjoy certain privileges that others don’t, where the self fits within said structure of privileges and benefits, and how to manipulate the structure to, as in the words of Dr. Barbara Love, leverage your privilege.

Background of the Problem

The current racial climate in the United States is one of strife, uncertainty, and tension. While we are embroiled in the recent development of a worldwide Covid19 pandemic that has vastly affected disenfranchised and minority communities, protesters from around the world have embarked on a journey toward racial equity and against police brutality and anti-Blackness in the name of George Floyd. The tone and tenor of the upcoming presidential campaign was full of racial fearmongering from the GOP that stressed Law and Order. While the contemporary phrase of Law and Order can be traced back to old Western movie titles, the phrase was often used in US politics by President

Richard Nixon and George Wallace as a dog-whistle for racism in order to police Black and brown communities (in all fairness, President Bill Clinton also used this phrase).

The rising temperature of the racial climate was due to several factors, one of which include, recorded state sanctioned brutality on Black and brown bodies including the likes of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, and the 12-year-old child Tamir Rice, and more recently, the brutal police killing on George Floyd. Three police officers participated in helping kneel down on George Floyd's neck and spine for eight minutes and forty-six seconds while several bystanders stood and watched a man take his last breaths, gasping, and muttering "I can't breathe." *Eight minutes*. For context, 8 minutes and 46 seconds is longer than the songs "Layla" (1970) by Derek and the Dominos (7:04), "Hey Jude" (1968) by The Beatles (7:06) or "Cold Sweat" (1967) by James Brown (7:24). The police cruiser had not come to a complete stop before Tamir Rice was shot in the torso within seconds of the officers arriving to a 9-1-1 call of a male with a gun at a local Cleveland Park. These incidences, along with too many to list in this introduction, indicate how Black bodies are viewed as less than human (Wynter, 2014). We as a people can do better by understanding the importance of racial literacy and the way whiteness operates.

These recent state sanctioned murders and other police brutality on brown bodies, have galvanized a multiracial, multigenerational coalition fighting for racial equity. As an example of how white America is involved more than before, at the time of this writing, two of the top five *New York Times* best seller books include DiAngelo's (2018) *White Fragility* and Kendi's (2019) *How to be an Antiracist*. While Black and PoC America have been calling for systemic change, we are finally being met in the streets and local

organizations with our White brethren. In Portland, Oregon (and since other chapters have sprouted), an activist group who call themselves the Wall of Moms has been showing up to protests fighting for racial equity and against police brutality. Dressed in yellow shirts and bike helmets, this group was formed to “protect and amplify protesters” (Blum, 2020). These (mostly White) moms show up and put their bodies in the way of harm by standing between protesters and the police. For many, this is their first foray into activism. This is one example of the multigenerational, multigendered, multicultural, and multiracial coalition that has risen during the ongoing 3rd phase of racial reconstruction in The United States.

The progress of racial relations in the United States has gone from what is known as the greatest sin committed, slavery (1619-1865), through Reconstruction (1863-1877), the 2nd reconstruction of Civil Rights (1954-1968), and one could argue the 3rd reconstruction that started with Trayvon Martin’s death in 2012, through the most recent killing of George Floyd in 2020. The United States is in a vicious and circuitous cycle of racial evolution. There have been many setbacks and overlapping eras on the road to racial progress, which Yancy calls “White Backlash” (2018). In 1865, the creation of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) was created on the heels of the Emancipation Proclamation and 13th amendment to the US Constitution that outlawed slavery. This gang of White men (and supportive White women) wreaked havoc and brutality across the United States, and is still in operation today, albeit with different tactics than cross burnings and public lynching. However, one of the chief objectives of the KKK was voter suppression, which is still occurring today through strict ID laws, the closing of polling stations in minority communities, and the purging of voting rosters for lack of involvement. Anti-Blackness is

at the core of, and the unifying theme in, the series of back-and-forth steps towards racial progress and has been since the political theories of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant (Mills, 1997).

Also occurring after the 13th amendment was the creation of the Jim Crow era which continued the perpetuation of legal segregation of Black and White people. This started with the Black Codes which strictly stated where formerly enslaved Black people could work, when they could work, and the amount of compensation they would receive for said work. These Black Codes would serve as a restructuring of the possible ways of being for people of color—an ontological framework for the future that exists today. The Jim Crow era did not formerly end until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. However, many argue that this era continues in the form of The New Jim Crow (Alexander, 2010) through the criminal justice system that has created a mass incarceration rate among Black bodies (33%) along with state sanctioned murder of Black bodies (32%) that includes a fatality rate 2.8 times higher for Black bodies than White ones (DeGue et al., 2018). These statistics far exceed the per capita rate of Black people (13%) of the US population (Pew Research Center, 2020).

To show how this operates within the walls of government and congress, on the night of President-elect Barack Obama's inauguration, several top GOP strategists gathered in a Washington, DC steakhouse to discuss their strategy moving forward. Their decision, once they emerged from this Hollywood picturesque scene, was to oppose any and all things the Democrats propose and bring Washington, DC to a standstill (Barker, 2016). While it is common for opposite political parties to oppose their rivals, this explicit and said-out-loud scorched earth policy was uncanny. We cannot directly blame

racial relations for this style of politics. We can make inferences about the roll racism played since President Obama was the first Black president and garnered an overwhelming percentage of the vote –365 to 163 electoral college votes and the popular vote by 7.2%, a difference of nearly 10 million votes (*New York Times*, 2008).

Within the myth of a post-racial society stemming from our nation's first Black president coupled with, and in the wake of Donald Trump's election, heightened racial tensions have called for educators to better prepare students for a racialized world (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). This can be achieved by promoting a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of systemic racism, where one's racialized body is located within the structure of racism, and the ways racism is manifested, perpetuated, and normalized. The time period in which the study was conducted, is vital to understanding the larger context of racialization and racism that was occurring. That is, the ways in which our racialized and white supremacist society was and is shapeshifting, changing, and hopefully (re)presenting.

College campuses are not immune to these racial episodes. Incidents ranging from bananas hanging on banners highlighting Black history month (*The Atlantic*, 2016), a swastika drawn in feces on the wall of a residence hall (*Columbia Missourian*, 2015), to a confederate flag poster adorned with cotton balls on bulletin boards (*The New York Times*, 2017), have elevated racial tensions on campuses to an overboil. During the 2016-2017 school year, the Anti-Defamation League counted 147 incidents of white supremacist fliering on college campuses in 33 states (ADL, 2017). The FBI has seen a 44 percent rise in hate crimes being reported through college campus police from 2015 (194) to 2017 (280) (Bauer-Wolf, 2019). This rise of overt racism calls for a new literacy

for our White college students in order to dismantle white supremacy at best, or at least to help protect the rights and humanness of those being oppressed.

The predominately white institution (PWI) under study which is 73% White (Diversity Matters, 2018) is also not immune from the untenable racial climate. White supremacist fliering, which constitutes of posting fliers on campus bulletin boards and stuck to walls in common areas that promote a white supremacist agenda, has also been seen on the university campus where this study takes place. In November 2018, fliers and stickers from a group known as Identity Evropa, a white nationalist group looking to enlist college-aged White males, were found on lamp posts around the campus pond and on bulletin boards in a student residence hall. Between September 2018 to December 2019, there were 33 bias-related incidents on this one campus. A bias-incident is “conduct, speech, or expression motivated, in whole or part, by bias or prejudice” (Diversity Matters, 2018). In September of 2018, campus police were tipped to an “agitated Black male” walking with a duffle bag. This Black man was simply walking to work after working out at one of the campus gyms and was seen as a threat to some passerby. Later that same month on campus, the words “Hang Melville n***ers” was written in the bathroom of a dorm building. On December 5, 2018, a swastika was drawn on a Hanukah sign of a resident assistance’s door. The rising tide of white supremacy on this college campus and many more PWI’s, serve as important reminders that we are failing our students in identifying and addressing racial inequity and in promoting greater racial literacy.

Racial climates on PWIs has led African Americans to have a more negative experience on campus verse their White counterparts (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Rankin

& Reason, 2005; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). In her conceptual paper titled “White Institutional Presence: The Impact of Whiteness on Campus Climate,” Gusa (2010) outlines several factors for this disparity which are beyond the scope of this project. However, she explicitly states that, “Today’s PWIs do not have to be explicitly racist to create a hostile environment. Instead, unexamined historically situated white cultural ideology embedded in the language, cultural practices, traditions, and perceptions of knowledge allow these institutions to remain racialized” (p. 465). Due to this unexamined white cultural ideology and lack of racial literacy, the racial climate on PWIs has become untenable and not often directly addressed beyond the surface level of impromptu diversity workshops and speakers. These types of topical fixes only serve as mere band aids for bullet holes, as the common saying goes.

The perpetuation of whiteness on college campuses manifests through colorblindness, a lack of understanding, and overt racial assaults. In a moment of candor and speaking directly to school administrators and professors: we have been underserving our (White) students. We have failed to stress the importance of racial literacy in order to critically examine the structure of whiteness, where one is situated within the structure of whiteness, and how one can manipulate whiteness. We as educators, academic scholars, leaders and, most importantly, humans, can and should do better.

Given this worldly context which funnels down to higher education, there is a greater need to find ways to build racial literacy within White students at PWIs. This work continues to explore humanizing pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, racial literacy, critical whiteness studies, and the use of counternarratives in education in order to identify better ways to foster an environment that can actively promote racial literacy.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative critical ethnographic study through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework is to examine the ability of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies to foster racial literacy in three White undergraduate students enrolled in a general education course at a PWI.

Purpose of the Study

Due to several factors, the current racial climate in the United States, and more specifically, on college campuses, has remained and is becoming increasingly harmful for minority students (Solorzano et al., 2000). How are we as educators strengthening our students' ability to decode covert and overt colorblind and racist tropes? How do these discourses perpetuate the nature of systemic oppression? How can we as educators create more spaces that promote students to be in dialogue with themselves and each other in order to encourage critical reflection? As critical pedagogues that understand education as a political act, how do we reconcile that there are better ways of teaching that are messy and use materials that are not seen as traditionally academic? How can we find ways of being vulnerable as humans that challenge the normal power roles between student and teacher in order to create community and establish a genuine caring that far surpasses grades? This study is designed to capture the core of these questions so that we might better comprehend how racial literacy is learned and/or taught, or not, through humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

In an everchanging world that includes the shifting demographics of the United States, "white, middle-class cultural and linguistic skills are no longer the only keys to the country's opportunity structure" (Kuttner, 2016, p. 531). The need to prepare our

students for the world they will meet through innovative forms of pedagogy that “promote, perpetuate and sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms as part of the democratic process of schooling” (Paris, 2012, p. 93) are vital to our development as a multicultural, multiracial, and multigenerational nation.

Research Questions

The guiding questions for this research project are:

- RQ1: What specific practices of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were used by the teaching team in order to potentially facilitate the development of racial literacy?
- RQ2: What effects if any, do humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies have on White undergraduates’ racial literacy language practices at a PWI?

Significance of the Study

As instructors of undergraduates, we are vastly underserving our future generations by avoiding tough questions in the classroom surrounding race. Troubling the notions of humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) when employed toward racial literacy will allow future teachers the ability to use these pedagogies. These pedagogies have been historically known to service and benefit oppressed groups. This study will provide teachers and facilitators the ability to help White students understand the systemic nature of oppression, where they fit within that structure, and how to create change. Understanding more effective ways to promote and foster racial literacy in academia will help thwart the pervasiveness of a colorblind mentality as well as provide White students the necessary tools to identify and combat racism on individual, cultural, and institutional levels.

Organization of the Dissertation and Summary of the Chapters

In the introduction above, I have contextualized the racial climate in the United States. From the racialized rhetoric and policies of the current White House administration surrounding topics, such as immigration and reversing anti-discrimination laws for higher education, to the increased presence of white supremacist groups on college campuses, I call attention to the need for new ways that increase racial literacy for undergraduates at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). This context establishes the problem and purpose of the study.

Chapter 2 begins with the positionality of the researcher and the theoretical framework. This includes an exploration of critical race theory (CRT), and more specifically, CRT in education and a review of the relevant literature, defining and understanding the implications of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), and Racial Literacy. Frontloading the positionality of the researcher and theoretical framework for this project allows the reader to understand the lens by which the researcher read the concepts, texts, data, and material. Centering the focus on race and the methods that CRT utilizes, such as counternarratives, will locate the researcher and anticipate the expectations of the reader. CWS encompasses the defensive responses often employed by White people and students when presented the detrimental effects of whiteness. These include White fragility, White resistance, and White guilt. A review and understanding about the evolution of Racial Literacy helps ground this research in the theoretical constructs of race and literacy so that the insights provided in this study and built upon previous research.

A literature review of humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy is presented in Chapter 3. This chapter not only defines humanizing and culturally

sustaining pedagogies, it provides the connections between humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies and racial literacy and their impact on the main questions in this research project. Stating the connections clearly among the research questions, theoretical framework, and the methodology builds a sense of validation and confidence in the findings and discussion that follow in Chapters 5 and 6.

The design of the study is presented in Chapter 4. This includes defining critical ethnography and a justification for its use. In Chapter 4 is a rich description of the site, participants, criteria for the study, and the methods for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of Research Question 1, starting with a troubling of the concepts of humanizing pedagogy and CSP as seen in the undergraduate classroom. This intentional shift to identify and describe the tools of humanizing pedagogy and CSP allow the reader to better understand how I arrived at the findings. By locating, identifying, and describing in detail the methods employed in the classroom, how humanizing pedagogy and CSP can be used to promote racial literacy is better understood. Comparing the way these concepts are defined in the literature versus what the findings suggest might evoke a healthy discussion of the limitations to humanizing and CSP and their applications in higher educational spaces. Concretizing these theoretical ways of conceptualizing race can have large implications for future use of these pedagogies by offering validated tools and specific contexts for their use/application, to further White students' racial literacy in the classroom.

Chapter 6 includes an introduction of Research Question 2, the purpose statement, and the findings of the question supported by specific data that provide evidence for the results. Each piece of empirical data includes a brief discussion locating the evidence

within the context of the study. The information is arranged in a story-like manner. This allows the reader to see each participant's progress toward (or away from) racial literacy throughout the class. Also included is a macro-view of what the class did as a whole for the participants in order to showcase how the class had an impact on their personhood.

Chapter 7 is comprised of a concluding discussion of the findings, future implications of the insights found by asking RQ1 and RQ2, and a conclusion for needed research and practical use moving forward.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The chapter below contains three parts: the positionality of the researcher, the theoretical framework by which this study was created, the data collected and analyzed, and a literature review to contextualize the main concepts as they pertain to this study. The reasoning for front-loading the positionality of the researcher and the theoretical framework was an attempt to help the reader understand who I (the researcher) am, how I understand the terms used, and how I conceived and pursued this project.

Part One of this chapter explains to the reader who I am and how I came to study racial literacy. By contextualizing how I came to understand the importance of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies, the project makes more sense. Also, it is my mission to remind the reader that a real human is writing the words on these pages.

The second section is the conceptual framework that this project follows, which is critical race theory (CRT). I began with a brief history of the term and then located the specific branch of CRT that frames this project, CRT in education. I then explained the central tenets that are the foundation of CRT in education and how they related to this study. Also included in the CRT section—while not directly part of my theoretical framework but my work is informed by—is an unpacking of critical whiteness studies (CWS). Understanding the trajectory of and how CWS is informed by CRT was imperative when performing critical discourse analysis on the data collected from the White student-participants.

Part Three of this chapter further elaborates the terms humanizing pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and racial literacy, which are main components that help answer the first research question. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relevant literature in order to strengthen the connections that the researcher finds.

Positionality of the Researcher

Let me begin by saying that I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing. (hooks, 1991, p. 1)

I, like bell hooks, was searching for a way to understand and organize my hurt—the pain that had built up in me—like scar tissue building on top of itself—came from having to navigate the world as biracial and a perpetual outsider and border-walker in many ways. Using theory was and is important not only to understand *why* or *how* but to know that *I am not alone* in this pain. Theory provides clues that this path, whatever path we are on, has been walked before. There are reasons for our feelings and the way we understand and interpret the world. There are practical explanations to the thoughts in our head. This is how theory becomes medicine. To comfort. To help alleviate. To help cure the ills bestowed upon and through us.

First and foremost, I am a human with emotions and feelings. I have spent my life traversing the racialized world as a biracial man living in mostly white spaces. Living with my White mom, I have found myself too often being *the only* Black person in sight. My mother was disowned by her family for dating a Black man and having biracial children. As a teenager, I have had older White men threaten to kill me for dating their daughter. I have been excluded from public outings with what I perceived to be my White

friends due to my race. All of these experiences forced me to learn how to operate in a white world as a racial foreigner. With this, I have acquired and been afforded a large amount of white cultural currency or “an accumulation of cultural knowledge, skills, and abilities possessed and inherited by privileged groups in society” (Yosso, 2005, p. 76). I have learned ways of being within white spaces that allow White people, more specifically White students, to let down their guard—to let me peer inside of whiteness. My White mother seemingly gave me a visitor’s pass into whiteness, at least in the space of schooling. I approach this study and my life work as an educator with these experiences.

My Black father was absent due to his own demons. While I do not fault him, I do feel the pain of not having a direct connection to blackness. Even if he was around, Dad was always an outcast to blackness; he was in a rock and roll band and loved the affection that whiteness often bestowed upon him. He had several relationships with White women. He lived on the fringes of blackness even within his own family and community.

My Black family is direct descendants of slaves from Mississippi. My namesake, Robert M. Downey, Sr., born in 1910, was light-skinned. The family lore is that he too was biracial. Robert Downey, Sr. was a preacher in Memphis, TN, as was, and are, several other family members. Currently, my great-aunt Deloris and her daughter, Elaura, are both pastors of their own parishes and both serve as educators in their local school districts. Another family story is that Downey, Sr. was so well known that when he died, no children were allowed at his funeral as to make enough room for everyone else. Aunty

Deloris, his daughter, was a teacher in Memphis during the desegregation of the 1960s. I did not choose education so much as education is in my blood.

I knew it was only a matter of time before I received my very own solo class as a teacher. And finally, there I was, standing in the middle of 19 undergraduates. But my task had just begun; the hard work was now to come. I did not know I wanted to be a teacher from youth—my early aspiration was to be a chef. However, as I became more interested in schooling and the process of learning, I was hooked.

From the moment I knew I wanted to be a teacher, I began to make a mental checklist of the things I did and didn't want my class to resemble. Being a military brat, moving around comes with being the child of a service member. My schooling career took place over several different areas and regions—I had 4 high schools in as many years. I began my higher education at a community college at age 27, graduated with my B.A. at 30 and my M.A. at 32. All of these experiences, including the multiple k-12 and various colleges, crafted my idea of what a classroom should and should not be.

What was it that I did not want my classroom to look like as an educator? Thanks to Mrs. W. at the community college, I would never give a student half credit for not having fully read the directions and turning in a mid-term paper in bullet format rather than a narrative in some kind of *GOT YA* scheme. Rather, I would sit this student down and have a great moment of reflection about paying attention, systems, access to resources, and the importance of listening. But ultimately, I would accept the paper and grade it accordingly. I would make sure to treat students like humans—like adults. Was I testing their knowledge of a subject or my ability to pull one over them? These questions about the origins of knowledge, what is knowledge, and who dictates right from wrong

were a few items that led me to understanding the transformative nature of being and seeing your students as fully human.

What did I want my future classroom to look like? Thanks to Joseph, I would make sure students saw me as a human first, before being a purveyor and co-creator of knowledge. Due to his warmth and passion for life, I learned the value of being human, first, and then, only then, teacher-student. Joseph told us stories of playing stickball in the streets of Boston in the 1940s which made him authentic. His stories of being in Korea during the Korean War as a naval officer were compelling and rounded out his character. The way he would speak of his loving wife was heartwarming. Joseph's massive and dense first-generation, Italian immigrant hands—which he said were due to his family being lifelong olive farmers—would wrap themselves around mine when he greeted each of us at the entrance before class. At the time, I did not know that the lists I was creating were the outlines of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

In what follows, I illustrated that there are ways we educators can modify our styles of teaching that allow for White students to understand the impact of systemic and institutional oppression and how it affects, hinders, and squelches everyone's human potential—including their own. My research agenda was informed from my life of walking on borders. Being biracial and not feeling fully belonging in any one group, I have instinctually thought about and navigated race, more specifically how to navigate whiteness in an othered body. This included how to help White people come to better understand how their whiteness affects themselves, their decisions, me, and those like me. There is no way for me to escape foreshadowing race in my everyday underpinnings of reality. My life in this body and asking how the lessons I have learned through

navigating myself and others through whiteness can help shape the way we approach discussing fundamental questions that are dividing our society.

I am sober enough to know these lessons and the subsequent study that follows will not change the world. However, I contribute scholarship to the way we approach whiteness for practitioners and teachers in academia to foster and sustain cultural, linguistic, and literate pluralisms. This is sorely needed in a time with which we educators, and as a country, are faced with a shifting tide of demographics and ontological understandings. While I appreciate all of the work being done to prepare our teachers to better understand, educate, and protect students of color, most of these efforts are made to give students of color the tools needed to combat whiteness and systemic/institutional oppression. More focus needs to be placed on helping White students to support pluralism in all forms. To me, they are two sides to the same coin.

This study is not meant to take away from any efforts to help serve students of color. It is to add more practical tools to teachers and practitioners with their White students, rather than focus solely on ways to help the students of color. This study is not intended to co-opt theories and pedagogical styles for students of color and give them away to White students. By understanding the potential that humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies have for every student, my intent was to identify themes of each pedagogy that work with/for White students.

Given my different life experiences that have shaped the way I view and understand the world, I weave myself in the narrative of this study in ways that show objectivity was and is not an option; I am not easily separated from my study. With this,

my intent is to be transparent—to show how my own reading of the world affects the way I see, analyze, and discuss data.

In a moment of vulnerability, it has been difficult to realize that I have authority to speak on these matters. The folklore of imposter syndrome is real and plagues me in several ways. The process of this dissertation has been one of mitigating and silencing the voices in my head that are screaming, “Who are you to think that? What gives you the authority to speak on these matters? Who cares what you have to say?” The truth is, I still feel as though I do not have the right to discuss these matters with any authority.

However, I know this not to be true. I have spent a great deal of mental energy thinking about and living within the questions of race, racial literacy, education and connection, what knowledge is and how it is valued. I hope never to call myself an expert, which might insinuate that I have arrived at some pinnacle of total understanding. It is my child-like curiosity that keeps me going, and I hope that feeling never escapes me. It does come and remain with feelings of the child-like mentality of not being able to speak with authority. Being someone to speak with authority is something I am learning.

The voices that have been privileged in this study, much to my chagrin, are White students. While the class has a marginal student of color population, these voices were silenced so that I could focus on what White students say toward their journey into racial literacy. I feel as though I am betraying myself and my blackness by focusing on White students. By highlighting White voices, I seemingly have helped perpetuate the way whiteness replicates itself. That could be true. I do know that by not talking about whiteness to White students or not addressing the way we teach White students has not worked. Therefore, I reluctantly have come to understand the scholarship I produce will

be focused on White voices at the expense of marginalized groups. This process does not come without growing pains. Realizing that I as a biracial man and am a scholar of whiteness is a difficult pill to swallow.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

Human nature is a myth that mystifies people into accepting as a given that which is social and historical. It turns ‘human’ into an unquestioned concept, at least racially speaking, and disregards raciology’s project of European humanism, which became a modernist burden for everyone who is not White. As Mills (1997) argues, European humanism meant that only Europeans merit the status of ‘human.’ (Leonardo, 2013, p. 602)

The theory that frames this critical ethnographic study is critical race theory (CRT). Due to its inter-and-transdisciplinary nature (Leonardo, 2013), CRT is directly linked to critical pedagogy and used to critically read the texts and define humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy. The term critical is often overused and misunderstood. In general society, the word critical has a negative connotation. In academia, being critical is to be disruptive, to challenge the status quo. To be and think critically is to break from traditional and everyday assumptions that are guided by many things, including culture, power relations, and discursive practices, in order to “exert more conscious control” over the decisions we make and things we observe (Kincheloe, 2000, p. 24). “Naming oneself ‘critical’ only implies superior ethical standards: an intention to make their position, research interests and values explicit and their criteria as transparent as possible, without feeling the need to apologize for the critical stance of their work” (Wodak, 2001, p. 7). Wodak also described critical as “not taking things for granted, opening up complexity, challenging reductionism, dogmatism and dichotomies, being self-reflexive in one’s research...and making opaque structures of power relations and ideologies manifest” (cited in Amoussou & Allagbé, 2018, p. 12).

You will notice that I have chosen to use the word reflexive rather than reflection. This was a conscious choice. Reflection connotes a sense of passivity as though one is looking in a rearview mirror—not much more than remembering the past. Reflexion is a much more active verb. One that asks us to not only ponder the past but to engage, to wrestle with our actions in the hope that we might change our behavior. Reflexivity is a process of “self-reference,” of “turning back on oneself” (Davies, 2008, p. 4). In this sense, reflexivity is “the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personal and process of doing research” (p. 4). Reflexivity also “expresses researchers’ awareness of their necessary connection to the research situation and hence their efforts upon it” (p. 7). This style of reflexion—that of grappling with how the researcher affects the study—aligns with critical ethnography that is discussed later.

CRT was originally housed in the field of law but has since been used across multiple disciplines to provide an analysis through the lens of race, including CRT in education. The main principle of CRT in education is that race and racism are normal (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Other tenets identified by Delgado and Stefancic that are pillars of CRT that scholars subscribe to which are important to this study include: race as a social construct, intersectionality and anti-essentialism, and voice or counter-narrative. Delgado and Stefancic suggested that operating from the assumption that racism saturates every aspect of US society, knowing that race is socially constructed through language, discourses, actions, and the perpetuation of racist ideology, CRT scholars understand racism “is the usual way society does business, the common every day experience of most people of color in this country” (p. 7). This is the framework by

which this study is understood, the texts are read and interpreted through, and the analysis is formed.

Being aware that scholars employ CRT to fight against essentialism and to better understand the complexity of identity knowing that whiteness “is not now, nor has it ever been, a static, uniform category of social identification” (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 6), Critical whiteness studies (CWS) was included under the CRT umbrella to account for intersectionality and to provide space for the multiple identities that collide through the use of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies. I encountered instances in which the students’ understanding of social class morphed and erased their own sense of the power associated with and privileges drawn from race.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) were the first scholars to employ CRT in education. This theory-dense article emphasized and described racism as endemic and deeply ingrained in American life, and they “challenge claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy in education” (p. 52). Condensing the main elements of Ladson-Billings (1998) article, “Just What is Critical Race Theory and What’s it Doing in the Nice Field of Education,” Stovall (2005) described the five tenets of CRT in education:

1. Name and discuss the pervasive, daily reality of racism in US society that serves to disadvantage people of color.
2. Expose and deconstruct seemingly “colorblind” or “race neutral” policies and practices that entrench the disparate treatment of people of non-White persons.
3. Legitimize and promote the voices and narrative of people of color as sources of critique of the dominant social order that purposely devalues them.

4. Revisit civil rights law and liberalism to address their inability to dismantle and expunge discriminatory socio-political relationships.
5. Change and improve challenges to race neutral and multicultural movements in education that have made White student behavior the norm.

Furthering this definition and funneling down to more specificity of the impacts that CRT has on and in education, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) provided five elements of CRT in education as: a) the intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination, b) the challenge to dominant ideology, c) the commitment to social justice, d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and e) the transdisciplinary perspective. These elements operate as a checklist to ensure that CRT is present in the classroom. While this list differs from Ladson-Billings and Tate's list, commonalities persist: race and racism are a part of our daily lives, there is a need to challenge the existing oppressive structures and to do that, and we need to value and validate experience and different ways of knowing as knowledge. To form a more socially just and equitable world, "CRT deconstructs oppressive structures and theorizes how to reconstruct human agency and resistance" (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 486). Moving the world toward a more pluralistic society through culturally sustaining pedagogy, critical race theorists "seek to decloak the seemingly race-neutral and color-blind ways" (p. 486).

The connections among CRT, humanizing pedagogy, and culturally sustaining pedagogy are embedded in these five elements. By valuing experiential knowledge, we validate people's lived experience while fostering and sustaining their own ways of knowing and being. When we value transdisciplinary perspectives, we allow people to use their own funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) so that they can make connections between the knowledge they already possess and newly learned knowledge. Breaking

down the traditional power binary between student and teacher challenges the dominant ideology and is humanizing for both.

The most important tool of CRT in education for this review and study is storytelling and counter-narratives—telling one’s story and finding one’s self-voice. This technique provided ownership and agency for students and was found in both the counter-narratives presented to them and their ability to craft their own narratives. The students moved from passive recipients of knowledge and history to actively creating both. The transformation was powerful, and students began to realize *they too* have ideas, power, knowledge, and that it *is* valuable.

In my own classrooms throughout the years, my main concern has been focused on how to build a sense of understanding institutional racism and the connections between racism and my students’ own implicitness within the racial structure. The age-old question comes to mind: Do fish know they’re wet? How do I ask mostly White students to connect to race, something most of them have not experienced, understand, or critically thought about? In that, I realized I was relying on the banking style of education—that I was looking to fill empty containers with my great wisdom of past racial atrocities and hope they elicit some call to action. This strategy often failed, and I created individuals who became angry that I, a biracial man, was calling into question their decency, humanity, and want for a better world. Instead, I decided to connect with my students as humans, to build community before trying to share and exchange knowledge.

By fostering an environment of community, ownership, and connection, we, as a class, revealed multiple entry-points to the larger concepts of gender roles, race, and

education. By making connections, by treating both student and teacher as humans, and by modeling vulnerability, students were able to share feelings that helped the class, as a collective, move further toward understanding new theories, concepts, and perspectives of the world. If we treated our students as purveyors of knowledge, as whole people, not just students in our individual class, we could build upon preexisting information to make connections, to concretize, and make sense of new theories. We should be asking students about their lives, their stories, and fully invest in them as people rather than just as students. That has proven to create true and genuine movement. For me, the connection of CRT in education as valid scholarship, which pushes back against traditional power structures, is central to humanizing pedagogy. With this theoretical construct, Leonardo (2013) laid the groundwork for the acceptance of counter-narratives as legitimate and valuable scholarship by using CRT as a methodology.

A central theme of CRT in education is that of naming one's own reality and finding one's voice. Some of the best and most effective orators have been great and gifted storytellers. And not storytellers in the sense of fabricated tales with twistable moral truths; rather, storytelling that connects, unpacks, and makes a connection with the human because "stories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13).

Since discourse is a system of representation (Hall, 1997), a theory of discourse was needed to uncover the lines of power being enacted in the classroom space along with a better understanding of how students perform, try on, and create their new racially literate identities. While attending the class under study, students were bombarded with information that was contradictory to their perceived understanding of the world. They

were shown the realities of a world that was created *for them* as *White majority* individuals. Until being presented with counter-narratives—a reality that had always existed but new to them—students had not considered that there were multiple truths existing within the same context. Students came to realize the reality they were sold through the family structure and media, one of individualism in which hard work equals success juxtaposed to non-successful people as lazy, created a lack of their understanding the roles of institutional, cultural, and systemic racism.

Due to the introduction of this counter-reality in the refined spaces of the lecture, discussion, and their written assignments under study, in the student-participants “a[n] individual emerge[d] through the process of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product, but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate” (B. Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 46). This process was crucial for understanding the ways we critical pedagogues foster environments that permitted the changing realities when presented with new information. The connection to humanizing pedagogy is evident. For students to feel comfortable in discomfort—notice I did not say safe spaces, rather they feel safe enough to try on a new performance of their changing reality—students must trust the environment and leaders in that space. These leaders have power, and the students need to know that they will not be penalized and/or shamed when they try on/work through their changing realities. As the teacher that held power over my students, performing humanizing pedagogy means I must model what it is to be constantly in flux because “who one is always an open question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one’s own and others’ discursive practices...and the stories through which we make sense of

our own and others' lives" (B. Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 46). This means being transparent in my own changing skin.

For this project, a new conception or understanding of power must be implemented to compute the layers of power operating in a humanizing pedagogy classroom and, more specifically, in the spaces under study. Power is thought to be a top-down mentality. Those with the power, authority, and knowledge teach to those without power, authority, and knowledge. However, as Freire (2011) suggested, in a humanizing pedagogy environment, one that abandons the traditional banking style of education, co-creates knowledge, one that encourages dialogue, and fosters an environment in which students and teachers can enact discourse and not be penalized for missteps, power "circulates" and does not "function in the form of a chain" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Power in this instance, "doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but...it traverses and produces things" that can be seen as productive, not simply deductive (p. 119). In a humanizing environment, student and teacher are re/producing themselves in relation to their former selves and each other through the new information being provided and the free space to develop. In a culturally sustaining pedagogical environment that is predominately White, this production is helped furthered by counter-narratives and, at times, uncomfortable truths that had not been previously discovered, unearthed, and understood. The production of the new and uncompleted self was emblematic of a space in which students became active agents in their own history and narrative through the stories and representations of themselves (Darder, 2015). As mentioned, this progress was also in stark contrast to their former self—who they were upon entering. This shift was and is not easy.

Critical Whiteness Studies

To better understand the intersecting points between CWS and CRT, I needed to understand whiteness as theorized within the field of CRT. CRT operates under the belief that racism is woven into the American fabric—that race is central to shaping our identity and that institutional racism exists. Within the field of CRT is the theory of whiteness. Matias et al. (2014) asked the important question, “What is critical whiteness doing in our nice field like CRT?” They defined CWS as being employed to “problematize the normality of hegemonic Whiteness,” arguing that in doing so, Whites “deflect, ignore, or dismiss their role, racialization, and privilege in race dynamics” (p. 291). Through this understanding of whiteness and the way it operates within teacher candidates, the researchers were able to isolate ways that students deflected the importance of their whiteness and how it might influence the way they teach once they graduate.

While my students are not all teacher candidates, I wanted them to understand how important their whiteness was and is, especially in education. To get there, I needed to build a sense of recognition for privilege without discounting the hard work that it took for them as students or their families to get to this point. Matias et al. (2014) found that white guilt, racial distancing, and the endorsing of hegemonic whiteness were central to students not being able to move past their whiteness. This collection of issues hindered the students’ development—which, therefore, led to a lack of comprehension of what it is like to have race be the first identity for most students of color. Similar themes appeared in this study.

When we discussed people’s experiences, I asked them to trust what people say—that their word is valid. By questioning the marginalized experience as something foreign

or not possible, the dominant group invalidates and makes non-existent, the lived realities of many people. The importance shifts from valuing lived experience to the poking and prodding of perceptions. Let us believe what people say until proven otherwise (B. Juarez, personal communication, 2013). As such, applying CWS “supports CRT in its analysis of race because, as CRT deconstructs how white supremacy is enacted and felt by people of color, critical Whiteness studies deconstructs how Whites are racialized as normal and, thus, participate in their own supremacy” (Matias et al., 2016, p. 4).

The use of counter-narratives was essential to this project. The voices of POC were highlighted and centered in the course work and by the teaching team throughout the semester. By using oral narratives and movies that focused on the other, such as a Black lesbian in *Pariah* (Rees, 2011) or the Chicana student leader in *Walkout* (Olmos, 2006), the use of CRT as a theoretical framework provided the necessary knowledge to explain, predict, understand, and challenge the preexisting knowledge of humanizing pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, racial literacy, and whiteness.

Whiteness has been well studied as far back as Douglass (1845/2005) and DuBois (1903/1995) (Anderson, 2003; Ansell, 2006; Frankenberg, 2001; Gallagher, 2003; Garner, 2006; Jacobson, 1998; Lipsitz, 1998; Nayak, 2002; Roediger, 2005; Saxton, 1990; Twine, 1996, 2004). In a distilled way, “DuBois details, and CWS expounds upon, how Whiteness operates as the normative cultural center that is for many Whites an invisible identity” (Twine & Gallagher, 2007, p. 9). A third wave of whiteness studies emerged with the work of Twine and Gallagher, which “incorporates and builds on existing scholarship on racial identity construction with a particular focus on emerging empirical accounts of how Whiteness is deployed, and the discursive strategies used to

maintain and destabilize White identity and privilege” (p. 6). This third wave of whiteness studies takes into consideration the intersectionality of class, political identity, and “gendered social locations that inhabit local custom and national sentiments” (p. 6). Due to CRT’s inter-and transdisciplinary nature that crosses several silos, CWS accompanies CRT in this project. The aspects of CWS that were relevant for this study are the acts of white resistance (Matias, 2013; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Matias et al., 2016), white guilt, and white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011). These facets of whiteness showed themselves in the data as White students moved toward understanding how omnipresent racism is in the United States.

Given the current progression of whiteness studies, Matias and Mackey (2016) stated:

CWS uses a transdisciplinary approach to investigate the phenomenon of Whiteness, how it is manifested, exerted, defined, recycled, transmitted, and maintained, and how it ultimately impacts the state of race relations [and] provides a framework to deconstruct how Whites accumulate racial privilege (p. 34).

Therefore, racial literacy helps White people to decode the infrastructure that grants them privileges while disadvantages others based solely on race.

White Fragility

DiAngelo (2011) defined white fragility as a lack of stamina to “sustain conscious and explicit engagement with race” (p. 66). This insufficiency of stamina triggers a host of defensive moves by Whites that distances themselves from being racialized. These defensive moves include “outward display[s] of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation” (p. 57). Because whiteness is normalized as *the* experience, a lot of White people have

not had to actively and critically engage with issues and the centrality of race as a dominating factor in their life. Therefore, and generally speaking, White people have not become accustomed to residing in a place of racial discomfort when discussing the systemic nature of racism. As such, “when racial discomfort arises, Whites typically respond as if something is ‘wrong,’ and blame the person or event that triggered the discomfort” (p. 60). As a POC and the students’ instructor who focused on teaching racial literacy, these emotions and defensive mechanisms are commonplace in my classroom. This is where my biraciality, white cultural currency, and albeit guest-pass into whiteness are beneficial by granting me the space to help White students unpack their discomfort without becoming a target of their emotions.

White Resistance

Matias (2017), a leading scholar on CWS, discussed the responses of emotionality that White students employ as acts of resistance. These “oft-cited trope(s)...on the emotionality of race is how Whites resist” (p. 10). This resistance in the form of emotionally distancing “reinforce[s] rather than question[s] inequitable social norms” (Winans, 2012, p. 152). When trying to learn racial literacy, this emotional resistance hindered students’ ability to fully comprehend the totality that race plays in POC’s lives, while also normalizing whiteness as the standard experience. The structural harm that race provides is whisked away through tears (Frankenberg, 1993), acts of hysteria (Rodriguez, 2009), “and/or get angry, all of which are explicated within the transdisciplinary nature of CSW” (Matias, 2017, p. 10).

White Guilt

Building a sense of racial literacy often incites a sense of white guilt derived from White privilege. Finding a way to discuss privilege without minimizing one's effort to achieve their goals was a difficult balance. I was troubled on how to approach the idea of white guilt after the recognition of privilege in my class. "What do you want me to do with this? Did you just want me to feel bad? Am I supposed to use this guilt checklist as a tool for my students?" were the words uttered to me by an undergraduate who racially identified as a New Yorker once she completed the Peggy Macintosh privilege checklist. At that point in my career, I was ill-prepared to deal with such a situation, and I just froze. It was uncomfortable because half of me had sympathy for her and the other half, guilt; sympathy that she was just now coming to this realization and guilt for having caused such consternation and not able to mend or sooth her discomfort. Now, however, I am steeped in humanizing pedagogy. By modeling the privileges, I have, by interrupting invisibility, I permit my students to do the same. I free my students from the constraints of the meritocracy bootstrap mentality myth and American Dream—that if one works hard enough, despite any identity, they can succeed and thrive.

White guilt generally manifests when White people come to the realization that there is a system in place that was created, sustained, and perpetuated that advantages whiteness based solely on skin tone from which they personally benefit. This insight causes anxiety and the need to find a reason. Often, a sense of guilt washes over Whites and is expressed through strong emotions. As DiAngelo (2016) pointed out, guilt itself is not bad. It is what is done with this sense of guilt that matters. In my experience, white guilt portrayed itself as a way of distancing oneself away from any culpability and

complicity, “avoid[ing] further engagement, becoming resentful, or becom[ing] incapacitated” (p. 224).

Recognition of privilege does not come easily. Through humanizing pedagogy, I hoped to achieve the ability to not only recognize privilege but how to leverage one’s privilege through varying acts. McKenzie (2014) lays out some clear ways in which those new to the concepts of privilege can work through their new historical understanding of race. The techniques she suggests are:

1. Relinquish your power.
2. Just don’t go.
3. Shut up.
4. Be careful of what identities you claim.

Through these four steps that I shared with the class under study, those with power can become more self-aware when confronted with their (often white) privilege.

The most profound instrument in my humanizing and culturally sustaining classroom was the ability to self-reflect. I taught my students to replay all kinds of memories and experiences through the new critical filter we built throughout the semester. Through this technique, students were able to connect the larger concepts we discussed to their own lives. That connection, the profound Ah-Ha moments, cemented macro concepts in a micro manner. When you self-reflect—true reflexion—is to understand and accept your role in oppression. Deciding to not make a choice or choose a side is still a choice. Silence, when in oppression’s house, implies a sense of acceptance. Moving forward, I asked my students to practice critical reflexion in real time by acting as though there is a drone floating above their head. I would ask them, “Are you happy

with that person and the decisions they are making? If not, change.” All of this was building racial literacy.

Simple identification of privilege and guilt is not enough. We must learn how to manipulate our privilege—leverage our privilege—for those who do not have any. That is not meant to say, take over their fight but realize the currency one holds. Rather than use the feelings of guilt as a poor-me tool that paralyzes, use that same feeling as fuel to not be there again. Further, use those memories or guilt to identify and connect with others who are where you were in order to walk more people across the privilege pasture.

Racial Literacy and Counter-storytelling

There have been several studies that both conceptualize racial literacy (Coleman & Stevenson, 2014; Horsford, 2014; Rusch & Horsford, 2009; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015) and use racial literacy as a tool of study (Rogers & Mosely, 2008; Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015; Skerrett, 2011; W. L. Smith, 2014; Winans, 2010). Given the early dates of these publications, we can see that the creation and theorizing of racial literacy is still infantile in the field of education. For this study, I focused on the literature of racial literacy that operationalized the concept within education.

In her deep unpacking of *Brown vs. Board of Ed*, Guinier (2004) defined racial literacy as “the capacity to decipher the durable racial grammar that structures racialized hierarchies and frames the narrative of our republic” (p. 100). This means a large structure exists bigger than the self, that institutional racism is systemic and woven into the fabric of our society, and the ability to comprehend coded racist norms is needed. Taking a more individual approach, in her study of White parents of biracial children, Twine (2004) stated that racial literacy is racial socialization and/or “conceptual training”

that children receive from their parents that include identifying “symbolic and systematic racism” in readings and visual images (p. 887). Twine also included in her definition of racial literacy the ability to “counter White supremacy” (p. 901). These definitions focused more on the individuality of racial literacy and less on understanding the structural nature of racism. Twine assumed that race and racism is omnipresent and studied ways to help defend as an individual, against other individual acts of racism.

Winans (2010) defined racial literacy as “critically examining and continually questioning how race and racism inform beliefs, interpretive frameworks, practices, cultures, and institutions” (p. 477). Winans’s definition focused more on the *how*, the *why*, and the *emotionality* of racial literacy but lacks a crucial final stage of literacy—the ability to take action and manipulate. Critically examining and questioning race is a good start for most White folks. But critically examining and questioning is short-sighted because knowledge is not enough. While being critical and problem-posing is the basis of humanizing pedagogy, the ability to become active agents in the world in which we live is the final actualization of being fully human.

Wetzel and Rogers (2015) saw racial literacy as being “a practice concerned with how language and power provide access to resources while others are excluded from gaining social, political, and economic advantage” (p. 28). Rogers and Mosley (2008) stated, “Racial literacy involves a set of tools (psychological, conceptual, discursive, material) which individuals (both people of color and White people) use to describe, interpret, explain and act on the constellation of practices” (p. 126). Rounding out these various definitions of racial literacy, Sealey-Ruiz and Greene (2015) defined racial literacy as a “skill and practice in which individuals are able to discuss the social

construction of race, probe the existence of racism and examine the harmful effects of racial stereotyping” (p. 60). The subtle shift from knowing to doing took place in Rogers and Mosley’s conception of racial literacy. They continued by listing what constituted actions: “discussing racial issues, reading and writing about racial issues, bringing critical literacy to texts about racism, interrupting racism in talk and action, and educating oneself about the economic realities of institutional racism” (p. 126). The progression of racial literacy evolved and there becomes more of an emphasis for action, be it discussing or writing about race in relation to the self. In this study, I have landed on this definition to identify whether the participants achieved the final leg of racial literacy of manipulating the racial structure.

King (2016) furthered our understanding of racial literacy by stating three main principles: first, race and racism are not stagnant—they are constantly morphing and changing based on “local and global contexts through time and space” (p. 1304). Second, the focus of our attention should be on institutions that (re)produce inequity and oppression; that it is “structures that impede racial progress” (p. 1304). And lastly, intersectionality matters.

The work of Gee (1989) and Discourses with a big D become pertinent and tie into the theory of literacy. Big D Discourses are “ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities” (p. 7). Primary discourses are *acquired* through our primary socialization and in our homes early on in life. Secondary Discourses are secondary to our primary Discourse and are *learned* through different “social institutions” for the purposes of “bring[ing] with it the potential acquisition of social ‘goods’” (Gee, 1989, p. 8). This relates to literacy, and

more specifically to racial literacy, because literacy as defined by Gee is the “mastery of or fluent control over a secondary [big D] Discourse” (p. 9). In this case and important to this study, racial literacy for White students constituted as their secondary and learned discourse. The classroom was a space that the students were able to gain exposure with overt instruction and the ability to try on their new discourse—things Gee (2001) said are needed for newcomers to acquire fluency in a new discourse. As White folks, most do not acquire racial literacy—they learn it.

There is a distinct difference between acquiring and learning. Acquisition is a process of gaining “something subconsciously by exposure” and without a “process of formal teaching” (Gee, 1989, p. 20). Learning is a process involving conscious knowledge gained through teaching” (p. 20). Therefore, the primary discourse of most White students does not allow them to embody the realities of structural racism as an everyday concept that all but dictates the future of so many POC’s lives. As such, racial literacy must be *taught* to them as meta-level knowledge. This somewhat minimalizes the importance of individuality and individual acts of racism and focuses more on the institutional and structural nature of racism. By limiting the importance of individual racism—most of which the White student-participants said they have not committed acts of individual racism and are not complicit with individual acts—allowed White students to better understand, articulate, and take action through various means against the ways they are complicit with and help perpetuate institutional racism. Racial literacy becomes something that is not only seen as knowledge but knowledge that helps White students become active agents in creating history rather than letting it happen.

For the purposes of this study, and moving forward, I defined racial literacy as containing three parts: the ability for (White) students to identify that a racial structure exists, that they as White students located their placement within this omnipresent racialized structure that brings them benefits and privileges at the expense of POC, and ways they took action to ensure they are not perpetuating and complicit in white supremacy structure. This action could come in the form of reading, writing, and discussing the ways they as members of the White race have been complicit within and around the normalization of whiteness.

There are many ways to teach White students a secondary Discourse. The course under study focused more on separating the individual from the systemic forms of racism. Dismantling the myth of meritocracy with facts and figures and highlighting the several and various historical ways in which POC are not afforded the same benefits and privileges as Whites, was foundational for the students to build racial literacy. However, facts and figures were not the only way. Statistics alone have a very cold and sterile feeling. By introducing counter-narratives, White students were able to see how institutional forms of racism manifested in the everyday lives of POC. These stories, poems, and real-life counter-narratives proved to be the connection among humanizing pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and CRT that helped solidify a more comprehensive understanding of racism in America and where each student stood within that web of racism.

Understanding the importance of counter-narratives as a pushback against dominant forms of oppression through CRT is foundational to humanizing pedagogy. Stevenson (2014) pointed out through storytelling, we are better prepared and able to

identify patterns of inequity, social injustices, and the nature of systemic oppression. Through the stories of my lived experiences of being threatened to death by a girlfriend's father for simply being Black and dating his White daughter or admitting my misstep of thought by referring to a Bryan Adams song as *gay*, I permitted my students to do the same. I asked my students to be critically reflexive with their own thoughts and actions so that we can change our behavior. Stories allow people to connect, to reflect while deconstructing their own troubled labels. When practicing this in my own classes in the past, I fielded responses from my students, such as:

Being in Education 210 has really opened my eyes and has taught me about social issues present in our society. Taking this class has made me more aware of my surroundings. This class has better prepared me to relate my life and events, like STUDENTx, to these issues. (Erica, personal communication, Fall, 2015)

I just wanted [to] thank you for not only today's class but for all the classes thus far. The videos we watched today were very real and uncomfortable but needed to understand the heavy topics we talk about in class. The classroom environment you have allowed us to create is perfect because we are all allowed to become so vulnerable. I don't think I would ever be able to open up and reflect on my experiences, if I had not taken the class with you. Thank you again for allowing me to bring my whole self and for being real with us, it is appreciated. (Sarah, personal communication, Fall, 2015)

Counter-narratives break down the self-created binary of right and wrong that places truth and knowledge on a spectrum in which there are varied accesses to multiple truths, different domains of knowledge, and a variety of lived realities that can be analyzed. Through CRT and humanizing pedagogy by utilizing counter-narratives, I was able to humanize myself, my student-teachers, and student-participants.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEWING THE RESEARCH

Our work to examine success among the students who had been least successful was likely to reveal important pedagogical principles for achieving success for *all* students. (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 76)

The third chapter is a review of the main concepts embedded within this study: humanizing pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, which evolves to culturally sustaining pedagogy.

I began my literature search by using Freire and Ladson-Billings because their theoretical frameworks of a humanizing pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy were the theories I wanted to engage on a deeper level. I also located additional scholarship through the database of Ebscohost by searching the terms: Humanizing pedagogy with 44 entries; culturally relevant pedagogy with 738 entries.

Due to this large number of random references that seemingly might or might not be tied directly to my research agenda, I decided to do an inside/out search; essentially a snowball sampling technique (Goodman, 1961). I started with the literature I did know and then circled outward by chasing down references from those papers and/or books. I did this until I reached a point of saturation in which I continued to see the same repeating references. In doing so, I did leave myself open to the issues that might follow a non-systematic type of review. I am identifying these blind spots in an attempt to validate my reasoning for the literature I chose.

In some ways I have been crafting this literature review most of my life. As mentioned above in my positionality section, I have been trying to build my ideal classroom by incorporating all the pedagogical strategies that worked in my education

while discarding the parts that are not congruent with my vision. Because Freire's concepts were not widely circulated in the United States until the translation of his pivotal book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in English in 1970, this literature review begins there. Woven throughout the literature was a strong emphasis on counter-narrative. The concept of counter-narratives in education is studied under CRT and is included in this review.

I have excluded literature that did not speak directly to my research questions. I did not include literature that strayed too far from the theoretical underpinnings of CRT, humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies, and racial literacy. Studies that simply referenced these concepts in an ancillary manner were not included. I focused on theoretical and empirical studies that were specifically addressing my foci of interests.

Historically, humanizing pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy have been studied for their affects with and on marginalized identities. Famous educational theorists, such as Paulo Freire (2011) and Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), have focused on how these types of pedagogies can help minority and marginalized students. This has been done by validating their existence as humans, validating their experience as knowledge, and providing agency. Given my biraciality, which afforded me white cultural currency that allowed me to understand the unwritten codes and social norms of whiteness, I was able to connect with young White students and permitted a certain level of trust. This trust was the foundation of beginning a relationship and seeing each other as humans—the start to humanizing pedagogy. My white cultural currency was also the doorway to culturally sustaining pedagogy.

The central research questions informing this literature review are: What specific tools of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were used by the teaching team in order to potentially facilitate the development of racial literacy? And What effects if any, do humanizing pedagogy and CSP have on undergraduate White students' racial literacy at a PWI? This literature review argues that these pedagogies, when coupled with theoretical framework of CRT and the use of counter-narratives, can help all students, but in particular, White students come to a new awareness of race, privilege, power, and the ways they intersect. These are students who will be future policymakers, shareholders of large corporations, and wield the ultimate power: whiteness. If we want structural change, we must find ways to influence the white power holders on their ascension to privileged legacy jobs.

Humanizing Pedagogy

A pedagogy which must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity...the pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization. (Freire, 2011, p. 48)

The humanizing pedagogy that Freire championed was a blend of Christian humanism coupled with a Marxist understanding. From Marxism, Freire understood the need to concentrate our attention on the institutional inequalities that hinder our ability to become fully human. The Christian understanding of humanism that Freire references placed an emphasis on the need for humans to be more fully human through unity with others, “despite impediments to humanization such as injustice, exploitation, and oppression” (Salazar, 2013, p. 125).

The concept of humanization and how this process can lead students to a critical literacy of race and privilege was vital to this study. The process of becoming “fully human as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons who participate in and with the world” (Salazar, 2013, p. 126) should be the end goal of all educators. Humans who are contained within oppressive forms of education are not able to bring their whole selves into both the educational and their lived reality realms—both student and teacher. The traditional banking style of education in which knowledge is bequeathed to the students, places the teacher as the sole bearer of knowledge and does not allow either person in the relationship to be fully human (Freire, 2011). The notion that knowledge is a commodity that is owned by certain powerful elites, only stifles the creation of knowledge. The criteria that limit access to and different forms of knowledge need to be questioned. Moreover, most of the literature found that centers humanizing pedagogy was focused on the advantages these concepts bring to marginalized identities. Humanizing pedagogy allows disposed children access to a humanizing education that allows them to radically heal (Ginwright, 2010). But how does humanizing pedagogy affect White students?

The banking style of education is not beneficial to any group, marginalized or not. To reach our capacity as full humans, we must break away from binary power relations that place the teacher as the sole bearer of knowledge, which sees students as a *tabula rasa* to be inscribed. This is a system meant to perpetuate power that excludes those in the dominant class from becoming completely realized also. We must view education as a means to humanize individuals in an attempt to continually evolve, all benefit, marginalized or not.

For example, Huerta's (2011) study of four bilingual elementary teachers in California, showed the commonalities of what the community defined as effective teachers. These effective teachers all made content meaningful and relevant, created a stimulating learning environment, and upheld high expectations and academic rigor. The connection to Ladson-Billings' culturally relevant pedagogy are obvious. The common thread that informed these four teachers' pedagogy was personal life experiences, which served as counter-narratives that unveiled the nature of systemic oppression. This was something that cannot be taught through books—but it can clearly be tapped into. How do we educators identify the veins in which we can draw from our students' and our own personal lives to foster the type of criticality from their past experiences to uncover the institutional web of oppression embedded in our national fabric? How can we use counter-narratives to affect those who hold onto power?

Summarized by Davis (1981), Freire postulated, “if we are conscious or not as educators, our praxis is either for the liberation of the people—their humanization—or for their domestication, their domination” (p. 57). If we pedagogues do not fully understand that teaching is inherently a political act, we will not know if we are perpetuating existing structures or preparing our students with the ability to identify inequities against themselves and others and to take action. To do this, we need to foster an environment that allows an awakening in our students—*conscientizacao*. This notion coined by Freire (2011), includes an organic formation of an “intimate relationship” among “consciousness, human action, and the world we seek to reinvent” (Darder, 2015, p. 85). *Conscientizacao* is realizing that there are actors other than yourself with far greater power, pulling your strings, like a puppet, and then YOU decide to take action.

This concept of *conscientizacao* is the manifestation of becoming an active agent that creates history rather than a passive entity that simply allows history to happen.

Dialogue and problem-posing are at the heart of humanizing pedagogy. Learning is a social process (Vygotsky, 1986). We do not learn alone; it is only through critical dialogue with others and the world that we reflect and grow (Freire, 1983). Dialogue is both communicating and learning (Darder, 2015) through the process of problematization. Problem-posing is criticality in its rawest form. It is to “critically question, deconstruct, and recreate knowledge” (Darder, 2015, p. 89). In doing so, we permit students to move from passive objects of the world to active subjects who “engage in relationships with others and the world” (Freire, 1983, p. 3) and realize their potential as full and active beings.

What does humanizing pedagogy look like in action? Seeing your students as individuals comprised of several intersectional identities, with various backgrounds and experiences that, while all different, landed them in front of you at a specific moment and context. Understanding the complexities and layers of individual students is a lot of work. This means having a deep understanding of historical systems of oppression, systems of hate and privilege, and how they have, and continually, operate. With this, students begin to understand themselves as full subjects of history, not just entities being manipulated, prearranged, and subjugated, or part of a story (Darder, 2015). Allowing students to dialogue, to critically engage with the issues surrounding their lives and by providing access to speak, to make connections between what they know and their way of being to knowledge they do not have—constructed through the critical reflexion and dialogue. This is humanizing pedagogy.

For students to understand their world, we educators must find ways, pathways, or avenues to and from what Freire (1983) called “mandatory knowledge.” It is our responsibility as critical and humanizing pedagogues to make sure we provide organic and genuine opportunities for students to grapple with the essence and centers of knowledge so that we do not provide useless information or lose our students with deep theories in languages they do not understand along the arduous pass to knowledge. That is to say, we critical pedagogues have the *responsibility* to bring material that is not only relevant but also sustaining to our students’ world/s and ways of being/s. Material that might not have been seen as academic in the old structures of the banking style of education—that includes slam poetry that uses different vernaculars or fiction that includes dystopian novels that displays youth as the active creators of change and, most important, open dialogue—are all viable tools for the humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogue.

The first goal in my class was to have my students see me as a human who is capable of messing things up, being imperfect, and not always polished. By doing so, I modeled that we are all works in progress—that our identities are always evolving and so are we as humans. For me to stand in front of my class and act as though I had it all figured out would be a fallacy I was not interested in perpetuating. What good would it be for me to fake who I am, only for those same students to become adults and realize I had been telling them nothing but lies of perfection? Rather, I modeled critical reflexion and encouraged my students to point out my flaws, missteps, and biases, so that I can improve. In doing so, I displayed what I want them to become: a fully realized human in constant progress who is not above being run through the gauntlet of criticality. By

showing students I was critical of myself and open to their critique, I legitimized them to be critical of themselves and open to being critiqued.

This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. (Freire, 2011, p. 44)

To enact humanizing pedagogy is to liberate the students from overarching agendas and frees both student and teacher from prescribed and predetermined roles. Liberation, in this sense, allowed students to question the untouchable: the powerful teacher, knowledge, curriculum, and everything in between. The powerful cannot release their stranglehold on power without conceiving of a way to regain what had been lost (James, 1989). Losing power for this group would mean the end of time. To be freed from a predestined reality that is untrue can only come by hearing voices that are silenced by the current paradigm.

Culturally Relevant/Sustaining Pedagogy

The school in which I would place our children will kill in them what today we love and rightly conserve with care. Perhaps the very memory of us will die in them. When they return from the school, there may be those who will not recognize us. What I am proposing is that we should agree to die in our children's heart and that the foreigners who have defeated us should fill the place wholly, which we shall have left free...Folk of the Diallobe, with the arrival of the foreigners has come the tornado which announces the great hibernation of our people. (Cheikh Hamidou Kane, 1961)

The link between schooling and culture is well established (Au & Jordan, 1981; Erikson & Mohatt, 1982; Pewewardy, 1993). More recent but still older, Ladson-Billings (1995) coined the concept of culturally relevant pedagogy that she defines as a pedagogy of opposition, "specifically committed to collective, not merely individual,

empowerment” (p. 160). As listed above, the three pillars upon which culturally relevant pedagogy rests are academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

Ladson-Billings’ (1995) laid out the basis of culturally relevant pedagogy that later got taken up with her permission and reformulated as culturally sustaining pedagogy by Paris (2012). Ladson-Billings identified three tenets of culturally relevant teaching: “students must experience academic success, students must develop and or maintain cultural competence,” and lastly “students must develop a criticality of the world around them in order to challenge the inequitable status quo” (p. 160). Through these three tenets, Ladson-Billings made the claim that critical teachers and pedagogues must hold their marginalized students to higher standards than the hegemonic curriculum allowed. Critical pedagogues who are sensitive to and aware of their students as whole beings and individuals with knowledge to share permits learning on a deeper level. Culturally relevant pedagogues use the knowledge that students already possess as an entrance and connection for new understanding.

Through culturally relevant pedagogy, the teacher’s role is to meet their students where they are while acquiring knowledge from their students by seeing them as peers or co-creators of new knowledge. Through this process, the students become student-teachers and the teacher, teacher-student. Both are learning and teaching each other—from current expressions of language to new perspectives based on modern context. Ladson-Billings (2014), after seeing her concept being mishandled and redefined mostly by well-intended White teachers teaching POC populations, wrote a follow up acknowledging that people interpret concepts differently based on their own personal experiences. Ladson-Billings paid homage to hip-hop culture by referencing the word

remix in an attempt to say that what is good can always be remade better. However, because there is a remix does not take away the significance of the original. Things evolve; scholarship is dynamic. As Ladson-Billings said, do not be fooled by scholars who feel they have arrived—that their work is complete as they “[do] not understand the nature and meaning of scholarship” (p. 82). These are the foundations of humanizing pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and literacy.

As Ladson-Billings (1995) said so simply, “culturally relevant teachers use students’ culture as a vehicle for learning” (p. 161). Culturally relevant teachers do not wish away where their students are by starting where they hoped their students would be. Culturally relevant teachers also never forget the water in which we are all steeped, because context matters. Through interactive lesson plans and activities that allow students to showcase their abilities, students teach other students through sharing experiences and create a community. However, using culture as a tool falls short of ensuring to foster an environment that goes deeper than relevant. There was a need for something that was not only relevant to this moment but evolves along with and fosters an environment that constant validates student’s different funds of knowledge.

Paris (2012) outlined the history of culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy and proposed an innovative evolution: culturally sustaining pedagogy. While similar in their foundations, the change in terminology Paris suggested requires us as culturally sustaining pedagogues to reconsider our work as something that can live on its own, have our students reflect on, and ultimately be reproduced through action. This allows students to become fully realized humans who are active in creating a world, rather than objects

having the world created for them—a strong connection to humanizing pedagogy. CSP is to sustain, to endure, to withstand and to nourish.

The idea of perpetuating a structure of cultural relevancy through culturally sustaining pedagogy allows for something that lives past us, something that lives on its own—the same way (white) hegemony has for so long. No one directly teaches white supremacy in schools (or so we hope). However, uncritical actors play their parts without ever having received a script. Paris (2012) stated, “culturally sustaining pedagogies seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (p. 95). Ladson-Billings (2014) responded to Paris by writing the introduction to a collection of essays. In her reply titled, Ladson-Billings explained the fluidity of scholarship and the need for concepts to grow, evolve, and create anew. With this in consideration, Paris and Alim (2017) believed that CSP “positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits” (p. 2). The shift from relevant, which by definition is to consider or have contemporary interest, to sustaining that continues beyond the here and now, should be seen as a natural evolution in the attempt to keep up with the shifting demographics and multiplicity of pluralisms that are upon us.

These new pedagogies are asset pedagogies, which directly counters deficit concepts of education that focus on what students are missing, not what they bring. Asset pedagogies allow students’ linguistic, literate, and cultural ways of being to be seen as resources to be studied, understood, and valued. CSP is an example of asset pedagogy

(Paris, 2012). Other examples include culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive pedagogies (Gay, 2000), and funds of knowledge (Moll et al. 1992). Paris (2016) pointed out, CSP continues ongoing “crucial asset-based pedagogical research” that counters “White superiority and the systemic racism” to “prove that our practices and ways of being as students and communities of color are legitimate” (p. 6). In this light, CSP is sustaining students’ humanness and ability to become active agents, not passive beings.

However, even asset pedagogies should not be outside the purview of criticality. Paris and Alim (2014) begged teachers for critical reflexivity that turns the gaze inward to ask ourselves how our own cultural practices are oppressive to students. The ability to critically reflect inward must be accompanied with a historical and contextual understanding of the larger systems of oppression that affect race, gender, dis/ability.

Being the creator of the term CSP, Paris (2016) crafted a list of qualities a CSP educator must embody:

- 1) An understanding of the systemic nature of racialized and intersectional inequalities and their own relative privileged or marginalized position within those systems.
- 2) An understanding that education participates in and often perpetuates such inequalities, though it can also disrupt them.
- 3) An understanding of the ways deficit approaches have historically and continue to perpetuate racialized inequalities, and an understanding of asset approaches and how to curricularize them.
- 4) An understanding that critical asset approaches do improve academic achievement, but that current measures of achievement are narrow and assimilative and so not the sole goal. (p. 8)

Using CSP as a way to encourage racial literacy within White students was clear. The myth of meritocracy is a main aspect of the perpetuation of whiteness and one of our

students' biggest fallacy they have been sold. Their lives have been fueled by myths that if one works hard enough, they will achieve success. Conversely, if one is not successful, it is due to their own laziness and lack of hard work. Our culture is littered with individual and exceptional achievements by POC. However, focusing on individual exceptions only negates the many and various systemic and institutional barriers that exist and leave many POC behind. This focus on the individual hinders White students' ability to fully comprehend the white supremacist structure that exists. It perpetuates what Bonilla-Silva (2014) called "racism without racists" (p. xiii). By showcasing the true and devastating effects of structural racism to students through CSP, they gained a better perspective that the individual is in far less control than previously assumed and that there are existing structures that preordain one's fate, with few exceptions. CSP helped push White students to this reality.

Foundations of and Connections Among Humanizing Pedagogy, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, and Literacy

I agree with Freire (2011) that the traditional banking style of education and pedagogy in which teachers are the sole bearers of knowledge to which they bestow their students is dehumanizing to marginalized students. I push this thinking further and believe that the banking style of education is also dehumanizing to the dominant group by not allowing them to become fully human and fully realized critical beings. If humanizing is fulfilling one's full human potential to express, critically think, examine all facets and make decisions based on honest and true information (Darder, 2015), the dominant group's growth has been hindered by misinformation under the guise of harmony by hegemony. This hegemony continues to perpetuate and serve the dominant

class's grip on all of our institutions: government, housing, media, finance, education, and religion.

I have uncovered ways that humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies are as beneficial to the majority as is to the marginalized. Culturally relevant pedagogy evolves into culturally sustaining pedagogy for reasons explained above; these terms are close but not interchangeable. In doing so, you have found that I am modeling my pedagogical style within the confines of this critical ethnography by weaving bits of my personal story and teaching experience into this academic work to show the porous boundaries between scholarship and the lived experience.

Freire (1987, 2011) reconceptualized the views of literacy and pedagogy. His understanding of reading the word and reading the world allowed students to understand and believe in the knowledge they already have and apply said knowledge to new problems. Teaching and learning are interwoven in such a way that one does not come without the other. Freire troubled the relationship between the teaching and learning, showing that they are not separate from but reliant on each other in a symbiotic relationship that requires flexibility from both sides; both people teach/learn and learn/teach. Freire's (2011) understanding for the need to place significant value on the experiential knowledge of both student and teacher allows for each to use the other's strong abilities and knowhow as they walk toward a new understanding that would not be possible without the fluid power dynamics.

This understanding of teaching and learning is predicated on the teacher modeling what they want from their students, which means being vulnerable and having a critical understanding of their own positionality. This fosters an environment that permits your

group to feel comfortable in the discomfort—to know that all things start as and remain imperfect and “continually ready to rethink what has been thought and to revise their positions” (Freire, 2005, p. 32). This added dimension of teacher-as-learner to a traditional classroom relationship troubles classical notion of power in the ordinary teacher/student binary.

Disrupting this common understanding allows the teacher-student to be seen as human. By being vulnerable and modeling how to be a critical human who is never above being subjected to criticality, the teacher-student is enacting a humanizing pedagogy. An example, I told students of a moment I had to myself. I was walking in the local grocery store and heard one of Bryan Adam’s hit songs. In my head I said, “Man, this song is gay.” Then, instantly, I questioned myself on why I would say that. What was implied by saying something was gay? And why did *I* think that? Of all people, ME? I shared these thoughts with my class to model to them that even after years of schooling on these subjects, I have questionable thoughts. And that it is not about the thought—its modeling the ability to question and be critical of yourself and thoughts. The students chuckled during the story. But I want them to understand that there was and is no pinnacle, no mountain top, and that I still have to be self-reflexive for and in my own thoughts. This permitted and invited them to do the same.

Another aspect of Freire’s work is the concept of reading the world and reading the word, which he describes as literacy. As children, we learn to read the world far before we learn to read the word. Reading in this sense is broader than the traditional conception and definition of reading and literacy that includes decoding a set of written symbols. To read is to “look at and comprehend the meaning of by mentally interpreting

the characters or symbols of which it is composed” (Freire 2005, p. 33). Freire operated under the notion that as children, we become very good at reading our context—that we can learn how to, when told, “No” by father, to ask mother for what we want. In this sense, reading becomes the ability to decipher codes that are all around our world that do not necessarily require letters or words and then to manipulate—take action. Therefore, one can be literate without the ability to read the written word.

Conclusion

The fundamental goal of dialogical teaching is to create a process of learning and knowing that invariably involves theorizing about the experiences shared in the dialogue process. (Freire, 2011, p. 17)

This chapter included the researcher’s positionality, the theoretical framework of CRT that guided this project, and highlighted what theoretical lens used in forming the research questions and the ways the data were collected and analyzed. This chapter concluded with a review of the main concepts of the study that include humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies, critical whiteness studies, racial literacy, and counter-narratives.

In the review of the literature, I was guided by the research question: Do humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies promote racial literacy? With this, the literature suggested that seeing students as whole beings will break the traditional power boundaries usually found in a classroom. Students often brought up difficult conversations they had with family members or close friends in which they were stuck or too frustrated to make coherent arguments surrounding the concepts we covered in class. The students also had a space to share stories of their karaoke performances, recent birthday parties, or daunting calculus tests. Through this identification as a full human,

through CSP that include anything from playing slam poetry videos on YouTube to allowing students to express themselves with any language they deemed appropriate, the doors were wide open for learning. It was through humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies that fostered the learning environment. I had, *we had*, created something but had not known the name. This literature review helped me put words and labels to styles of pedagogy that were coming naturally.

To create an environment that was both humanizing and culturally sustaining and promote racial literacy, we had to operate from a solid base of working assumptions. I must state this: my lived understanding of teaching and learning is that they cannot be divorced from each other. That is to say, when I teach, I am also learning from my students by the questions they pose, the lines of inquiry they follow—all of which is different for every group. Through the process of dialogue, I am both learning and teaching. Without dialogue, learning and teaching would not exist.

Another basic working assumption is that true learning and literacy, learning with the ability to manipulate and enact said knowledge in the real world, required the ability to make connections between what one was theorizing, and its reality implications. If one can sit in a class and learn something but then not know how to apply the newly acquired knowledge outside of the classroom, is this new knowledge truly learned, or simply observed? If not learned, what is our definition of learning and literacy, to understand or to both understand and enact/employ with said new principles in place?

Working from these starting points allows us to realize the full potential of troubling the dynamic and fluid power relationship between teacher and student. It allows us to question the end point and work backwards rather than to perpetuate the existing

power structures that produce the results we already have. For me, the first step is to be human and build community. All young people face oppression (DeJong, personal communication, October 2015). Traditional teaching is laden with oppressive means to young people by dehumanizing students in a way that lets them feel they know nothing, have nothing to offer, and must receive their education like good students—a tabula rasa. This outdated form of education stifles creativity, relationships, and breeds an environment in which students do not feel empowered over their own education and subsequently their own lives. Doing this leads to a general feeling of no agency to control or influence external forces that are real in our lives. I identified with my students because I am a student. The feeling of helplessness and hopelessness only hinders students' development in becoming active, engaged, and transformational citizens of the world. By dismissing and devaluing the knowledge that students already bring to the classroom, teachers erase an already solid framework that can be utilized to critically analyze systemic issues within the educational system, including power relations between teacher/student. In a grad school student evaluation, I was told by a professor that “this student makes too many connections between his life and the scholarship.” Imagine that.

CHAPTER 4
DESIGNING THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore if and how humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies elicit racial literacy in White students at a predominately white institution (PWI). And if so, what tools of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were used by the teaching team to elicit this move toward racial literacy. A better understanding of how to use these pedagogies in white spaces will provide educators more tools to help dismantle white supremacy and help students form a new awareness of whiteness. This includes shifting the deficit gaze away from POC students can advance White students' understanding of their own whiteness. In seeking to better understand how these pedagogies operate within white spaces and their impact on White students, the study addressed two research questions, (RQ1): What specific tools of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were used by the teaching team in order to potentially facilitate the development of racial literacy? And RQ2: What effects if any, do humanizing pedagogy and CSP have on undergraduate White students' racial literacy at a PWI? To answer these research questions, a qualitative methodology along with ethnography methods was employed to gather and analyze data to capture rich descriptions and enter the research participants' world (Charmaz, 2006). By doing this, I, the researcher, was able to tell the story of the participants in an authentic manner that shows progress toward or away from racial literacy. With this and seeing how I was an active participant of the study by being a voice of authority as the senior Teacher Assistant (TA), critical ethnography was employed to ensure that I was aware of the

layers of power that operate within and around the classroom. This incorporates considering how my understanding of the material and my participants affects the overall outcome of the interpretations and the ability to disrupt the status quo of traditional objective ethnography in which the researcher is but a passive bystander collecting data through observation. In this study, I was an active participant being that, through constant reflexivity, was changing my approach in real time and trying to better understand how my identity and presence in and out of the room impacted the overall study and “test[ed] the assumptions about the world we study” in order to “not unwittingly reproduce these assumptions” (p. 19).

Due to the structure of the class and being an active participant as researcher, ethnography was chosen. Not just ethnography but a critical and reflexive ethnography—one in which the “boundaries between subject and object disappear” (C. A. Davies, 2008, p. 5). Because I as the researcher was an active participant trying to dismantle traditional concepts of the teacher/student relationship through humanizing pedagogy by approaching my students in a way that negates normalized power relations in the classroom, understanding how my presence in the space, the decisions I made, and the interactions we had in the classroom affected the budding new performances of their emerging identities was vital. This called for a deep sense of reflexivity, one that was “full[y] and uncompromising self-reference” during which I became “self-conscious even of the reflexive process of knowing” (p. 7). This constant reflexivity (self-referencing) was performed because I know that, as an active participant researcher, my actions, thoughts, perceptions, assumptions, all have lasting effects on the research and data that follows. A reflexive and critical ethnographic methodology permitted me as the

researcher to be held responsible for the process of social interaction that occurred within the spaces I operate.

To understand if and how humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies helped elicit racial literacy in White students, simply asking students if they feel changed/woke/racially changed directly would be standing on weak ground. The data that were needed were best collected through varied ethnographic methods. A good amount of data were garnered through two semi-structured interviews, one at the start of the course and one after the completion. These interviews helped set a baseline of understanding from the student-participants' arrival and departure of the classroom experience. Solely relying on these interviews would be a mistake also and could serve as a misinterpretation and misrepresentation. Therefore, making sure to include the smaller sites where students were actively creating and performing their new selves was important to see the micro-progress toward (or away from) racial literacy. To capture these small building blocks, ones in which students began to try on/perform their new understandings of their whiteness, the assigned papers and journals for class were included. These sets of data were informative and allowed me to observe the student-participants as they began to challenge, essentially, all that they have known or been told, or not told, about whiteness, how they have operated in and around whiteness, and how they can manipulate/mitigate the effects of whiteness.

The content of the class was broken down into three units. During each section, students were assigned roughly two journals, and the culmination of each unit was a paper that covered the material for said unit. The main topics for each unit were meritocracy, representation in media, and inequity in urban education, respectively.

During these three units, the development of a new understanding for the students emerged as each of the subjects covered started to introduce different concepts that stood in direct opposition to the students' comprehension of the American Dream, the way race is portrayed in historical and current media and Hollywood, along with the way society views underfunded and (therefore) underperforming schools in urban America. Challenging these main concepts were at times jarring for the students. After living a life of being sold the American Dream of social mobility and the concept of pulling oneself up by the bootstraps, hearing that it might all be a lie came with confusion for some. This was evident by the questions I fielded when discussing the fallacy of the American Dream, to which many still subscribe. A qualitative methodology and further, ethnographic methods, were best suited to capture these shifts and transformations.

This chapter describes the study's methodology and includes discussions and explanations around the following areas: (a) critical ethnography (b) research design, (c) context, (d) participants, (e) gaining access, (f) data collection, and (g) phase one, two, and three of data analysis. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Critical Ethnography

I chose critical ethnography as the logical choice for this project because critical theory is central to the focus of this study; "critical ethnography is the doing or the performance of critical theory" (Silverman, 2013, p. 9). Critical ethnography is a critique of society and traditional understandings because critical ethnographers "disrupt the status quo and unsettles both neutrality and taken for granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control" (p. 9). For this project, this disruption included the relationship between student and teacher; the way the teaching

team views, shares, and constructs knowledge; and the way the student-participants viewed themselves in and around whiteness.

At the heart of critical ethnography is the sense of responsibility to changing the status quo through praxis — “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 2011, p. 51). More specifically, and a focal point of this study, was the changing of status quo in the relationship between student and teacher through humanizing pedagogy. Changing the dominant narrative also occurred through the material by implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy—a break from traditional education for the student. To elicit racial literacy in White students through humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogy, the transformation came in the way White students read the world and the way their whiteness impacted people and things around them. Critical whiteness studies were important lenses to better understand the ways White students arrived to a new understanding of their whiteness—and ways White students displayed performances of resistance (Kinloch, 2017) and White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) that showed themselves in ways, such as using colorblind language, distancing themselves from being subjected to racial bias, and deflecting when asked pointed questions about the ways race had affected them in the past.

Research Design

How

This study utilized the methodology of critical ethnography to challenge preexisting norms and taken for granted understandings of what constituted academic-ness. That is, what methods and materials were seen as valid and acceptable for and within classroom spaces to understand and explain how humanizing and culturally

sustaining pedagogies had the potential to interrupt and/or transform students' own understanding of their whiteness. Traditionally, methods such as a teacher being open and vulnerable with their students had been and is seen as not appropriate. Teachers are garnered for their ability to be arbiters of objectivity. Acceptable materials to share with students had been limited to textbooks and other forms of material that perpetuate the banking style of education. This placed the teacher as the ultimate knowledge-holder rather than acknowledging that students come to class as humans with a plethora of experiences. Seeing students as humans affords the teacher the ability to build upon the knowledge and ways of being that reside in the classroom. Choosing material that better speaks to the students in the room has not been completely accepted as academic. As such, culturally sustaining and humanizing pedagogies not only implore the students to examine what they have known about race (more specifically their whiteness) thus far – an ontological shift. They also serve as a vehicle to disrupt what they knew to be knowledge and different ways that knowledge can be shared—their epistemological change.

Humanizing pedagogy is seen as nontraditional because it abandons the banking style of education. This style of educational theory assumes that students are empty receptacles that need to be filled by the almighty teacher who is the sole bearer of knowledge. Humanizing pedagogy co-creates knowledge where the teacher is student and the students are teachers. The teacher also validates different “funds of knowledge” while learning from the students because culture shifts, and youth sub/cultures shift frequently (Moll et al., 1992). Humanizing pedagogy sees the student and teacher as unabridged beings, as foible humans who need to be attended to as whole individuals. Humanizing

pedagogy allows space for the teacher to make connections beyond the material. It is with these open lines of connection that a deeper understanding of the human experience is cultivated. This rich soil of mutual trust and understanding beyond the course material is then fertile and ripe for the sowing of new ideas, new understandings, and possibly ontological shifts that are usually resisted due to their deep nature. It is difficult to change the way you have always seen the world. This new lens comes with fear and unsteadiness as one is questioning the self and everything they have ever known. Therefore, humanizing pedagogy is already doing the critique of the way society views the relationships among student, teacher, curriculum, and knowledge. This very dynamic is the performance and doing of critical theory.

While there are some similarities between humanizing pedagogy and CSP, culturally sustaining pedagogy disrupts traditional classrooms by valuing different funds of knowledge, utilizing pre-established funds of knowledge, and sustaining cultural, literate, and linguistic pluralisms that allow people to be validated in who they are and knowledges they possess (Paris, 2012). Relating to this project—and in mostly white spaces—finding ways to bring in the voices, bodies, and world understandings that *were not* represented in the classroom was pivotal to this study. How do we educators, more specifically, how do I as a biracial man in white spaces sustain cultural pluralisms when the spaces I operate within are monolithically white?

Why

This project had two goals: better understand if implementing CSP and humanizing pedagogy in a classroom setting with a majority of White students help prompt a move toward racial literacy in White students. And if so, identify and define the

concepts and tools of humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy that were used. To do this, I must observe the teaching team during an undergraduate general education courses, which are a requirement for receiving their degree. Students get to choose from a list of courses to fill these requirements. This included the activities used during lectures and discussion sections that did or did not define said pedagogies and the ways the teaching team interact in relation and around the students, which helped define humanizing pedagogy. Having been a TA in this setting for four semesters prior to the start of this study, a key reason this specific site and class were chosen was due to its past success in challenging the way White students, in particular, view race.

Research Questions

- RQ1: What specific practices of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were used by the teaching team in order to potentially facilitate the development of racial literacy?
- RQ2: What effects if any, do humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies have on White undergraduates' racial literacy language practices at a PWI?

Context

The setting for this project was a PWI in the northeast. The sprawling land-granting public university encompasses 1450 acres. As of enrollment for fall 2018, there were 21,969 undergraduates. The admittance rate of 2018 entering undergraduates was 59% with an average GPA of accepted students being 3.90 (Diversity Matters, 2018). This was important information because most of the students in the classroom were at the top of their class in high school. The sense of high achievement and needing to get good grades mattered. Of this undergraduate population, 77% were in-state students, 73% are White, 12% Asian, and 7% are Hispanic/Latino (Diversity Matters, 2018). Black students make up 5% of the undergraduate population and is represented as such in the makeup of

the class. Given these statistics, the smaller discussion classes from which this study is largely based, there were only a few students of color in the room.

Being the flagship of a major university system, a majority of the students come from mostly White, middle, or upper-middle class spaces in the northeast with a Protestant work ethic background. And while the university is a predominately white institution (PWI), the diversity on campus represents the most diverse spaces a fair number of these White students had ever operated within. The data this out. The average percentage of whiteness in the towns where the student-participants are from is 93% White. The percent of White undergraduate students on campus is 77%. This living reality, coupled with counternarratives and a critical examination of media and the world around them—which is to question everything they have ever known/see—while taking this class invited White students to question their own, along with the institutional normalization of, whiteness. It also made them question what larger structures of oppression are present and how they fit into the larger institution of systemic racism.

Site

The entry level general education requirement class under study fulfilled the Social and Cultural Diversity graduation requirement and essentially teaches critical media literacy. Critical media literacy is the ability to analyze media codes, “criticize stereotypes, dominate values and ideologies, and competencies (*sic*) to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372). Learning how to decode the subliminal and often overt messages that media employ is not it. The final step of critical media literacy is to create media that allow for a full and comprehensive understanding of both the process and content. The culmination of the

class was for the students to create a multimodal project (MMP) that showcased their ability to interpret media on a more complete level. The final project was the manifestation of the critical media skills they had learned in class because “critical media literacy helps people to use media intelligently, to discriminate and evaluate media content, to critically dissect media forms, to investigate effects and uses, and to construct alternative media” (Kellner & Share, 2005, p. 372). This class covered the themes of meritocracy, expressive and utilitarian individualism, white saviorism, and the systemic racism that plagues urban schools. These concepts were explored through a variety of accessible articles, commercials, videos, and movies that really allowed the students to grapple with the main themes while relating the topics to everyday life. Students were exposed to and engage in diverse perspectives and ways of thinking about the world and how we interact with others.

Understanding the site context embedded within the general education and social and cultural diversity requirements is to grasp that these courses, and this course specifically, were primed to be a site where critical reflection is required to understand where the self is located in relation to others, how power operates, and how the institutional structures that surround and influence our daily lives function. Below is the list of the learning outcomes for the Social and Cultural Diversity requirement for the university that serve as important corners for this study:

- Students will learn disciplinary or interdisciplinary theories and knowledge necessary to comprehend diverse social, cultural, and political perspectives.
- Students will develop the ability to understand, articulate, and critically analyze diverse social, cultural, and political perspective

- Students will gain knowledge of structural and cultural forces that shape or have shaped discrimination based on factors such as race, ethnicity, language, religion, class, ability, nationality, sexuality, or gender.
- Students will gain knowledge of structural and cultural forces that shape or have shaped discrimination based on factors such as race, ethnicity, language, religion, class, ability, nationality, sexuality, or gender.
- Students will demonstrate the capacity to listen and communicate respectfully with others of diverse perspectives
- Students will explore and address questions that reflect multiple perspectives to develop a complex understanding of the world. (Gen Ed@[University named], n.d., Objectives and Designations)

The connections between the requirements above and the core pedagogies under study are evident. Humanizing pedagogy allows for the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and self-truths to co-create knowledge while being seen, and seeing others, as whole humans. Culturally sustaining pedagogy fosters an environment in which different truths can breathe, be nurtured, and valued in order to sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms.

For students to understand their world, we educators must find ways, pathways, or avenues to and from what Freire (1983) calls “mandatory knowledge.” It is our responsibility as critical and humanizing pedagogues to make sure we provide organic and genuine opportunities for students to grapple with the essence and centers of knowledge, so that we do not provide useless information or lose our students with deep theoretical language they do not understand. Providing a student with Foucault seems impressive—but how effective is it if they cannot complete the readings and have no comprehension of the meanings? Often, I relate this to reaching a city on the other side of mountains. There is the difficult mountain path that is twisting, steep, and arduous. That may not be the only way. While valiant in the want to travel the difficult road many

others have, we often lose lots of people on the way. There are more direct ways to the city. We as educators must find these better ways in which we lose fewer people in order to deal with and grapple the concepts at hand.

CSP is the environment, humanizing pedagogy is the interactions, but even that is too simplistic because there is overlap between the two pedagogies. CSP fosters the environment through interactions also. Humanizing pedagogy is being seen as a full human with a lifetime of experiences, being valued as someone who has something to contribute and being able to critically engage with those around you. This is made possible by a critique of the traditional teacher/student relationship and abandoning the banking style of education.

Dialogue is both communicating and learning through the process of problematization (Darder, 2015). Problem-posing is criticality in its rawest form; it is to “critically question, deconstruct, and recreate knowledge” (p. 89). In doing so, we permit students to move from passive objects of the world to active subjects who “engage in relationships with others and the world” and realize their potential as full and active beings (Freire, 1983, p. 3). The future become something that can be manipulated/changed/impacted by these full and active beings—not passive beings that blindly accept their fate at the behest of the future. It is within this context that this study lives, one that seeks to create active beings in the world.

To fulfill the Social and Cultural diversity requirement with this class, CRT is coupled with humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies. CRT, in the context of this class, is linked to culturally sustaining pedagogy because “CRT scholars use parables, fiction, and revisionist histories to illustrate the false necessity and irony” of the

current status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 13). While CSP seeks to sustain cultural pluralisms within the classroom space, in mostly white spaces, there is a dearth of other voices. Methods of CRT fill this void. CSP, which fosters and sustains cultural, linguistic, and literate pluralisms, draws from different knowledges and ways of being to disrupt the majoritarian story and master narrative. In the space of this undergraduate class, the tools used to disrupt the status quo of traditional academic settings were slam poems by othered and marginalized identities, current and old movies, advertisement commercials, and the use of personal narratives of people of color (POC), while allowing the students to speak and express themselves in their authentic voice in discussions (cursing is allowed). The students had several different avenues to express their ideas through reflection journals, academic papers, and open-ended multimodal media projects.

The use of different tools and materials (culturally sustaining pedagogy) that are not directly aligned with traditional academic pedagogies (humanizing pedagogy), like “stories by people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious racism” push (White) students to think anew (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 14). These were the concepts and theories under study: What are the effects of these pedagogies on White students? What were the tools used to trouble their comprehension of race and racism? And not just race, in general, but their relationship to their White race and its historical and future importance.

Participants

There are both two sets of participants and sites. While all of the data were collected at one school, there were two separate spaces that inform each other. The teaching team and participants were observed in the larger classroom along with the

smaller discussion class held on Fridays. These two settings are physically different—one being a large theater style classroom with a desk at the bottom of a large wall of whiteboards and two drop-down screens located in the center of campus. The discussion class was held in a newly renovated building at the far end of campus with natural sunlight and rolling chair desks configured into smaller group circles of six. This room was a ground level floor with a wall of windows, two walls of dry erase boards, and a flat screen hanging in the front of the classroom.

The discussion class was comprised of 29 students. I had a total of three student-participants in this study, two of whom were in my section. I chose this number to ensure that there were enough participants to allow some variety but not too many as to be drowning in data. With that said, opinions and statements from other members of the class were represented in this study. These other opinions and statements were obtained through students' anonymous replies to mid-term and final surveys throughout the course and/or exchanges in the classroom spaces. Specific attention was used to keep full anonymity for all participants by allowing them the ability to pick pseudonyms or be represented as unnamed participants.

The teaching team was comprised of one untenured professor of record and four doctoral students who served as Teaching Assistants (TA). The hierarchy of the TAs was clearly defined: one senior TA who had taught the course for six semesters. I, as a TA, had four semesters' experience. And two TAs were teaching for their first semester. All of the TAs were students in the college and working toward their PhD. The individual programs the TAs came from varied. The large lectures of 150 people are held Mondays and Wednesdays for 50 minutes and facilitated by the lead professor, with the TAs

covering for emergencies (sick, conference, etc.). The TAs had full autonomy of facilitating the discussion sections once a week. Below are two tables that give relevant data about the participants. The first is the teaching team, and the second one lists the student-participants.

Table 1

Teaching Team Participants

Participants	Role & Program of Study	Semesters teaching class	Race
Tonya	Professor of record-Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies	1 st	Black
Nora	TA-Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies	6 th	White
Jamaal	TA-Language, Literacy and Culture in Education	4 th	Biracial-Black/White
Emelia	TA-Teacher Education and School Improvement	2 nd	White
Becky	TA-Teacher Education and School Improvement	2 nd	White

Table 2

Student Participants

Name	Year & Program of Study	Gender/Race	Demo-graphics of Home town	Median Income for a Household	Parental level of education
Ruby	Freshman	Woman/White	96.6% White; 1.7% Native American; .4% Black	\$87,437	BA; PhD
Meghan	Sophomore	Woman/White	95.4% White; 1.7% Black; 1.1% Asian	\$81,395	High school; High school
Kassandra	Freshman	Woman/White	87.1% White; 9.3% Asian; 1% Black	\$125,952	BA; BA

The discussion section of class was used to further break down the themes covered in the larger class. This smaller space was used to create a tighter community in order to foster an environment in which students could feel safe to engage in critical dialogue. Humanizing pedagogy allowed students to dialogue, to critically engage with the issues surrounding them and their lives, and to make connections by providing access to speak/perform/try on their new perceptions that were facilitated by the class material and the way it was delivered. With this, students began to understand themselves as full active subjects of history, not just entities being manipulated, prearranged, and subjugated, or simply passive parts of a story they have no control over—that they have choice, and can use it, to create the world they want to live in (Darder, 2015).

Above, Table 2 helps point out the complexities in order not to think that the White student-participants are monolithic. Upper-middle-class White people will experience whiteness differently than working-class White people. However, given that

the research is being conducted at a major university, the level of their parents' education and where they live play a significant role in the way they experience whiteness. Not only do different class White people experience whiteness differently, their bodies are read differently by others. In the case of Ruby, both parents are college graduates; Meghan's parents did not attend college. Where they live and the household expectations have the potential to be vastly different. While class is not the only signifier that distinguishes the way White people experience whiteness, it plays a significant factor.

I, as the facilitator, helped create a container in my discussion section and let the students drive the conversation. The first few weeks were spent on icebreakers and activities that help promote the concepts of engaged listening, intersectionalities, breaking of traditional teacher-student power relations, and most importantly, building community. Time was dedicated at the beginning of every discussion class for students to check-in with the facilitator and each other, current events, and things that might be happening in their lives unrelated to school—titled WTF (What the f*ck). This was a space where current political, educational, familial, and other topics had a chance to breathe that served to further humanize the group as a whole and contextualize the learning that was occurring in the classroom to the larger outside world. This time was used as a buffer to wash ourselves of the goings on *out there* before embarking on a journey in the classroom to dive deep into the concepts at hand. I also took this time as an opportunity to humanize myself by sharing my thoughts on said current events or revealing things in my personal life I was struggling with. At one point, I video-called my mom and son to make the real connection between Jamaal, the human, the parent, and the educator. My son's name is Lionél Walker Downey Rey.

After WTF, we spent roughly five minutes doing mindfulness. At the beginning of the semester, I performed an activity of chiming a bell and asking students to raise their hand when they could not hear the sound anymore. What was fascinating about this exercise was its ability to be almost a pallet-cleanser. The feeling in the room post-chime was different from before. This activity allowed us to move forward in our difficult and vulnerable conversations. As the semester progressed, we moved onto a guided 3-minute meditation. The YouTube (My Life, 2016) tutorial started by having us all sit up straight, placing our hands on our knees, and relaxing everything from our foreheads to feet. I chose to ease into this exercise so that I could get the class comfortable with mindfulness at first, before diving right into a guided meditation. Again, this activity had a cleansing effect and allowed us to move forward and leave our outside minds, outside. These mindfulness practices elicited comments in evaluations, such as:

My TA is doing an amazing job, they make the effort to take a few minutes out of class to do meditation which is so helpful in so many ways, “it's extremely refreshing an I'm very happy they do that.” (Anonymous, March 21, 2019)

I'm learning the material in a relaxing environment, being a student with a learning disability finding that kind of classroom is difficult, and I really appreciate how my TA sets it up to make it less stressful. It helps me understand the material in a more focused setting. (Anonymous, March 21, 2019)

The WTF and mindful activities helped foster an environment built on community that allowed deep conversations about socially taboo topics that we cover in class.

The criteria for participation in this study for the students were: the students were enrolled in the undergraduate class in Spring of 2019; they identify as White; and they needed to agree to participate in two audio-recorded interviews and sharing their course assignments (see Appendix A). All members of the teaching team agreed to and were

included as participants for this study. All participants signed informed consents (see Appendices B and C).

There were two lines of inquiry to answer the research questions: the student-participants and their acquisition of racial literacy (or not), and the moves/tools that the teaching team did to facilitate this shift. The teaching team's communication and meeting notes were collected as data and analyzed.

Each TA facilitated at least one discussion section of 30 students on Fridays—the senior TA facilitated two classes, and I took on the responsibility of administrative assistant to the professor through a period of transition among a rotation of three professors. All four TAs were responsible for grading the coursework of the students in their section/s. This included attendance, weekly journals, three papers, and a final multimodal group or individual project.

Procedures

Gaining Access and Consent

There was a need to gain access and consent in two ways—the class itself through the professor of record and access/consent from student-participants. Gaining access to the student-participants involved an explanation of my position. I am a doctoral student who has been a TA in the undergraduate course under study for five semesters. I took special interest in the way the course was designed due to its use of critical media literacy as an avenue to expose larger systems of institutional structures. I also appreciated how the course naturally facilitated students to interrogate and question their social position in relation to race.

The pedagogical philosophies and tools used in this class to facilitate a shift in White students to a new understanding of race resided in humanizing pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and CRT. The professor of record led by example by humanizing her experience, the students, and the teaching team as much as possible through sharing personal stories. She continued this humanization through listening to each student who asked for time, allowing different ways of expression and participation among the students, and by valuing different funds of knowledge within and outside the classroom. The avenues by which the main themes of the class were transmitted, coupled with the multiple ways that students were allowed to express their understanding of the material were a natural fit for CSP. Knowing that the vulnerability and transparency of humanizing pedagogy paired with fostering pluralisms were in line with my own research interests, I asked the professor of record for access and consent to observe and research these pedagogies in action toward and in relation to racial literacy. Due to my position as a TA who was responsible for facilitating discussion sections and access to the class as a whole, I was able to gain access to my specific discussion section as a research site.

Seeing that I needed to recruit student-participants early in the semester without the advantages of already having established a relationship, the lack of trust due to time constraints made this a stressful endeavor. The beginning of the semester is always so hectic for students and teachers alike. Asking students to sign up for a study along with carve out time for a pre-interview among all the busy-ness was a large burden to ask. At the beginning of my first discussion class, I took 5 minutes to explain the proposed research in detail (see Appendix D). I reiterated that the study was more focused on educational practices and how different pedagogies helped or hindered their racial

literacy and not the students themselves. I made these statements as a way to ease their fears and that they were not being graded and judged by their “progress” toward racial literacy.

After my first discussion section, I had two people ask to join. I quickly scheduled our first interviews. By the second week of class, I had not secured a third student-participant. I asked the professor of record for permission to give my recruitment speech to the class on the third lecture. After my recruitment speech to the larger class, a student emailed me while I was giving the talk and asked to join. I had secured three participants.

Data

Data Collection

I collected data over the course of one 14-week semester in the larger class lectures. This included field notes taken from observation of both the professor and/or teaching team for signs of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies coupled with the interactions of the selected participants (see Appendix E). There were also observation and field notes taken in the smaller discussion section. To account for the researcher’s positionality, critical reflexive notes in the form of a reflexive journal were taken following each large and small class interaction. These critically reflexive notes were not merely observations but more of a constant self-reflective dialogue. The notes extended and expounded on the happenings in the classroom and regularly asked questions about the process and content that were being covered. Often, the reflexive notes served as a place to further think about the contradictions and tensions that existed within and around the process of teaching and how to better facilitate a shift within/for the students. Generally starting with a summary of whatever took place in the classroom

space or the implications of the interactions in the class, these reflexive notes often turned into asking *how* and *what* pedagogical decision/s and tools drove a change toward racial literacy and our role as a teaching team. These notes served as a way for me to engage the *why* of whatever occurred in or outside of class. Anonymous midterm and final surveys conducted online by the teaching team and filled out by the student body of the class that were preestablished prior to this study were collected and analyzed as data to help (re)define and (re)theorize humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies within white spaces.

Participant Observations

I observed both the student-participants and the teaching team. This method was most appropriate for the student-participants to capture the student-participants' verbal and bodily responses to the material and discussions. For the teaching team, this method was best fit to capture the activities the teaching team was implementing at any given time. The vital information of body language and the overall tone of the discussion in the classroom gathered by participant observation produced and contributed to the context for learning while providing specific episodes of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogy with details that possibly show the facilitation of racial literacy.

Participant observation for the teaching team helped identify and define the activities, material, and discussions that acted as tools for implementing humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy while troubling the working definition of these pedagogies in predominately white spaces. By observing what the teaching team was doing in real time, the data collected interrogated the historical literary and contemporary understanding of CSP.

Class Papers

The assigned papers were important to the students' grade (worth 45% of their overall grade). These papers served as a space for students to challenge their prior knowledge of things they have always known to be true while providing a space for them to work through the tensions and contradictions they experienced in class. By using material that was accessible to students, such as movies, slam poems, viral informational videos, and oral histories, the class paper assignments, served as the stages in which students can try on/deploy/practice different and new racial discourses. Each paper built upon the previous concept to create a fuller understanding of the systemic nature of oppression, such as racism and sexism. Evaluating the papers in a manner that allowed the space for students to be vulnerable, while holding students accountable to be critical, was and is always a pedagogical exercise.

Journal Entries

Students were assigned five bi-weekly journals that were reflective in nature. The journal prompts asked the students to reflect on the material covered, how the material/subjects made them feel, and what it made them think about. The prompts also asked students to include a quote from the readings that stuck out to them and why. Lastly, the students are asked to write one thing they learned during that section of the class—a new term, concept, or idea. They could answer this last question by explaining something they previously knew but now understand on a different level. The space of the journals, which other students can read, all but begged students to make connections between the content, their own self, and the world around them. These journals acted as

small building blocks for the larger papers. In discussion sections, the TAs often asked students to review their journals before writing the papers.

Multimodal Media Project

The final project for the class allowed the students to pick a form of expression they felt comfortable with to show us the knowledge they had gained while in the class. Students were asked to produce a video blog (vlog), podcast, public service announcement, or any other form of live media representation. The purpose of the final project was to develop the students' media analysis skills and engage in a sustained inquiry about the essential questions and themes of the course. In this course, essential questions are *unanswerable* questions that probe for deeper meaning, speak to the core of an academic discipline, and invite further inquiry, all of which advanced the goals of the cultural and social diversity requirement goals. The final project acted as a manifestation of the students' comprehension of the topics we covered. For this project, the MMP served as a cumulative piece of data that puts thought into action—the ultimate form of praxis (see Appendix F).

Walking and Talking Interviews

There were two semi-structured walking and talking recorded interviews with each participant. The purpose of the spaced out semi-structured interviews was for comparison between the start and completion of the class. This helped better understand if the participants began to detect the larger structure of race and racism, understand where they fit within this racialized structure, and if they can manipulate the structure by using their racial literacy in ways that benefits others. The language used from the first

interview was compared to the language used in the second. The comparisons were to their own interviews—not compared to each other across the spectrum.

To help reduce the power imbalance that occurs during face-to-face interviews, walking interviews have emerged as a new method because “walking alongside a participant is regarded as an inclusive process compared with the traditional sit-down interview because it is viewed more as a partnership, thus reducing the power imbalances” (Kinney, 2017, p. 3). Walking and talking interviews help facilitate dialogue and encourage turn-taking—the awkward silences that happen in traditional interviews are exchanged for the natural flow and pauses of a walk. One can expect to pause when entering buildings, walking upstairs or hills, and the like (Clark & Emmel, 2010; Evans & Jones, 2011; Jones et al., 2008). These pauses are spaces for thought and reflection.

The first walking and talking interview occurred with relatively no relationship established between me and the student-participants. Walking and talking served as a good way to combat the awkward newness of each other. The second walking and talking interview was conducted at the end of the semester. The same themes brought up in the first interview were revisited to get a comparison of progress, or lack thereof. By then, there was a natural rapport between me and the student-participants. The process of meeting someone, face to face, then walking side by side, together, toward a mutual destination—or at least a mutually picked direction—was a transforming endeavor. I have experienced this while driving in cars and talking to my own mom. There’s something about both parties facing the same direction that, through physical manipulation, creates a kinship, a bond, and information sharing ensues. Sitting across

from someone incites a need and feeling of against—of challenging. Facing the same way brings a feeling of mutuality. Body position and environment mattered.

Logistically, walking and talking interviews are just that. The participants were able to pick a starting point and a direction to walk (De Leon, 2005). I met and handed them a recorder that was already on. I also held a recorder while I had my iPhone recording in my jacket/shirt pocket in order to be through. I began the informal and semi-structured interviews by taking a few minutes to check-in and see how things were going in general. Then I moved to discussing the themes and agenda of the interviews while showing them the questions. Afterwards, I wrote observations and overall impressions in my reflexive journal to capture field notes and thoughts about the walk—general reflection of the experience as interpreted by me, the places chosen, and other variables that I had not accounted for that could have indicated, dictated, or influenced the participants' responses. There were periods during each interview in both rounds that we found a seat and took a break, keeping in mind to sit next to each other on a bench or at a table, and not directly across from one another.

The purpose of the spaced-out interviews was to first, get a baseline of the participants' larger comprehension of race and also identify where they were within that structure of race, the impact of their own race, and their ability to utilize any tools to manipulate the structure of racism. I also asked the student-participants to reflect on their past experiences in which they felt race may have been a factor—their race or someone else's. The second interview was conducted the last week of the semester. The same themes brought up in the first interview were revisited in order to compare. The first interview was a baseline of prior knowledge. The second one was to capture any progress

toward racial literacy after the completion of the course. Themes of the interview are included in the appendices (see Appendix G).

Midterm and Final Class Anonymous Survey

In the middle and at the end of the semester, there was a set of very open-ended evaluation questions. In short, they served as check-ins for the teaching team on various points of connection for the class. A few questions asked about the lectures, a few on the facilitated movie nights, and a few on the discussion sections. Both of these evaluations were anonymous. These evaluations served as treasure troves of data when analyzing the ways the content was being delivered and received.

Personal Communication Among the Teaching Team

Although each member of the teaching team had full and total autonomy in their own discussions, the communication between the members through the form of a group text messages was collected for data. These data were analyzed to identify, define, and see how the team was utilizing humanizing pedagogy and CSP. The texts were compiled and used to compare the definitions of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies to the literature. Within these communications, the teaching team was deciding how to grade students in certain situations, what material might be covered in discussions, what larger themes needed to be further discussed from lecture, how to handle different forms of student expression, and ventured into areas of intellectualizing and reflecting on the core principles of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies. These communications served the purpose of cohesion between and among the teaching team to provide some educational consistency for the students in such a large class. For the

purposes of this study, these communications helped further the *how* and *what* of CSP and humanizing pedagogy in white spaces.

Personal Reflexion Journal

The personal reflexion journal served as an ongoing running dialogue between myself and my thoughts—a place to engage with myself about the *why* of each decision and choice made. Knowing that the positionality of the researcher has a significant impact on any study, the reflexive journal allowed for a place to consider my relationship with the world, the class, and my/our impact as facilitators in the learning outcomes of our students. The journal was a vital space to untangle the web of thoughts and actions.

Participant Observations of Teaching Team

Participants, although not required, were encouraged to take observations of the teaching team. The information that participants were considered to collect about the teaching team included, but was not limited to, material that had an impact during lecture and/or home assignments, moments in lecture or discussion that stood out to the participant or were memorable, and any other information about the lead professor and/or teaching team they deemed worthy of mention and had an impact. These notes were to serve as a feedback loop, which is consistent with critical pedagogy. More specifically for this project, these observations were to be used to compare and identify consistency between what the researcher and student-participant finds as either humanizing pedagogy or culturally sustaining pedagogy. None of the participants turned in observations of the teaching team.

Member Checks

The participants were provided transcripts of the interviews for this project for member checks. In the consistency of critical theory that requires reflexion, I was concerned with representing the participants properly. Member checks served “to check for accuracy and resonance with their experiences” (Birt et al., 2016). Given that this project aimed to better understand students’ experiences in this classroom through the lens of racial literacy, member checks served an important role in telling the most genuine story. Participants were provided transcripts of their interviews.

Summary of Data Collection

The multilayered approach to data collection for this critical ethnography by way of ethnographic observation, classroom assignments, and pre/post individual interviews, allowed the student-participants many avenues to engage with the course material to deepen their understandings and make connections between the content and their own lives—embodied engagement. With that, the central themes focused on how humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies did or did not develop racial literacy among White students at a PWI. Crucial to receiving viable data that is complex, dense, and honest was the establishment of community and a sense of vulnerability in both the small classroom space of the discussion sections and the larger lecture.

Table 3

Types of Data Collected and Their Sources

Types of data collected	From whom
Participant observations	Student-participants
Class papers	Student-participants
Journal entries	Student-participants
Multimodal media projects	Student-participants
Walking and talking interviews	Student-participants
Participant observations of teaching team	Student-participants
Member checks	Student-participants
Midterm & final class survey	Whole class-anonymous
Personal communications	Teaching team participants
Personal reflexion journal	Researcher

Data Analysis

Phase One: Critical Gaze Inward

Through the theoretical lens of CRT in education, the first phase of data analysis was to turn the critical reflexive gaze inward to define and identify/make connections between how the literature defines humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies and the tools and practices being implemented in the classroom by the teaching team. After establishing what the literature referred to as humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy, I examined the teaching team’s practices based on the anonymous mid-term and final student evaluations and the student-participants’ data to establish and uncover any humanizing and culturally sustaining practices before I began analyzing whether humanizing pedagogy/culturally sustaining pedagogy help inform racial literacy. There needed to be congruence, or point out the tension, between the understanding of these concepts in the literature and the current pedagogical practices that were occurring in the classroom.

Showcasing the lead professor and teaching team in this first phase of analysis helped paint a fuller, more colorful picture of the classroom, the epistemology of the teaching team, and how we as a team engaged the students. Diving one layer deeper, there was an analysis of the environment established by me in the smaller discussion section that housed two of the three student-participants. This gave both a macro and micro understanding of the fostered environments in which the students operated. Establishing a baseline of what humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy looked like and how they were used in our specific context by highlighting episodes that drive home the connections between what the literature calls humanizing and culturally sustaining and what is happening in real time was important so that the findings of the study can be attributed to said pedagogies. Identifying the points of contention between the literature and current best practices that were identified as humanizing and culturally sustaining were important when reconceptualizing what these pedagogies—originally created for POC students—looked like in white spaces for White students. This was the reasoning for turning the gaze inward during the first phase of the study.

The details of phase one analysis consisted of entering the observational field notes of the teaching team, the communication between the teaching team by various means consisting of email, text, notes from personal communication, and the mid-term and final evaluations into the software program Nvivo (QRS International, 2018). I began with a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990,1994). By combing over the observations and letting the patterns of pedagogical practices of the teaching team emerge, I was better prepared to make connections between the definitions of humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy and their manifestation in the classroom. A

set of tools was identified to show how the teaching team performed humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

Once larger patterns emerged from the grounded theory approach in the form of nodes and specific episodes and tools were found as evidence of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies, a second round of coding helped break down the larger categories of each pedagogy into decipherable axial codes (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). All humanizing pedagogy is not the same. Some aspects of humanizing pedagogy asked us to be reflexive and aware of power relations while other aspects dealt with the humanity of our students as whole people, with real lives and lived experiences. As an example, the first round of coding created 216 references to humanizing pedagogy. Upon the second round, humanizing pedagogy was broken up into 20 subsections. Categorizing all aspects of each pedagogy under the overarching umbrella does a disservice to the finer intricacies of each pedagogy. It was within these smaller subsections of each pedagogy that I was able to identify specific tools and episodes that were exemplary of the pedagogies.

The second round of coding brought forth a set of real-world tools that the teaching team employed in the classroom. These served as the backbone of what constituted humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies in our classroom. There were points of connection and overlap between the two pedagogies that is further discussed in the results/discussion portions.

By nature of critical ethnography, I designed this project to begin with critical reflexivity. It was within this reflexivity that a more comprehensive understanding of cause and effect was demanded. Because this study researched whether certain

pedagogies elicited movement toward and/or away from racial literacy, knowing how the self (the self in this instance being the teaching team) was implicit when performing these interactions was vital to properly attributing said pedagogies as the cause for the final effect relating to racial literacy. It was a circular relationship and by not looking inward, the circle would not close.

This first phase was the *what* are humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy and the *how* were they were implemented in the lectures and discussions in predominately white spaces. The gaze inward first helped me better understand the students' experiences to be analyzed in the second phase by having a grounding of what humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were and how they were being implemented.

Phase Two: Gaze Toward Focal Students

Building on phase one of analysis, I turned the gaze from the teaching team onto the student participants—the main objective of phase two. This phase was more focused on the effects of these pedagogies and their learning outcomes for the participants. After entering the students' collected coursework and roughly transcribed outlines of their pre- and post-interviews into Nvivo (QRS International, 2018), a grounded theory approach to data analysis began and identified specific moments that needed further analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was introduced and executed. The use of CDA as a tool of analysis of the various text data collected was appropriate because “texts are often sites of struggle in that they show traces of differing discourses and ideologies contending and struggling for dominance” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001 p. 10). These sites of struggle that appeared in the chosen episodes lend themselves to serve as evidence to the identified

tools utilized by the teaching team along with their subsequent results showcased by the student-participants. CDA was employed to better understand the use of language and how subtle shifts in language use either did or did not indicate a movement toward racial literacy. Nvivo (2018) also helped better understand the context by which these themes occur.

The first part of phase two was to create profiles for each student-participant. I entered all of their work and interview outlines in an individual profile so that I could get a linear view of their experience in the class. This was important when trying to better comprehend where each student started and ended in relation to their concept of race and whiteness, how they fit into racialized structures, and how they might/have manipulated the racial web.

For the semi-structured walking and talking interviews, I did a rough transcription that captured some of the words of the participants and/or summaries of their responses to the themes presented, including time stamps for future reference. With that, I coded the interviews and identified specific moments of exchange that highlighted the participants' shift/change of language. That is, each participant was being analyzed against I, not each other. Having this information in Nvivo (QSR International, 2018) was particularly helpful to see the info laid out like a timeline. After identifying specific moments, I went back to the interview recordings to transcribe these micro-interactions in detail to get a precise handle on the language they used and how they used it and to inform the CDA that was to come.

“CDA researchers are interested in the way discourse [re]produces social domination, that is, the power abuse of one group over the other” (Wodak & Meyer,

2001, p. 9). Therefore, the use of CDA in this phase of analysis allowed for the relationship between student and teacher to be examined, the way power is exchanged in relation to humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogy, and the way subtle shifts in language use by the student-participants highlighted their ontological transformation.

With the research methodology being critical ethnography and grounded theory as the primary analysis tool, this phase of data analysis was used to determine the moments where the student-participants resided in understanding their whiteness and/or the impacts their whiteness had on others. Open coding took place to find the emerging themes and specific episodes that emphasized the ways the student-participants were working toward or away from racial literacy. CDA helped identify the specific moments that showed the student-participants identifying the existence of a racialized structure that benefits White people, their position within the racial frame, and reflecting on the ways their race had affected past experiences, and/or the ways the participants are looking toward the future and the ways they can manipulate the racial structure. Charting these moments not only showed where the student-participants started but their progress toward or away from racial literacy throughout the semester.

Pivotal to understanding the progression of the student-participants was the comparison of the pre- and post-walking and talking interviews. Grounded theory identified particular themes and moments of the interviews for a more precise transcription so that CDA could be implemented. The strength of these data was most effective when understanding if the student-participants had a racial awakening and ontological shift over the course of the semester. At the end of this phase, I identified specific episodes or phrases that were most impactful to the student-participants. This

phase also provided an understanding of the progress made by the student-, which answered the first research question.

Phase Three: Making Connections and Identifying Tools Used

Phase three of data analysis consisted of making connections between specific episodes in the class that exemplified humanizing pedagogy and/or culturally sustaining pedagogy by the teaching team, the effects and consequences that occurred, and affected racial literacy to the participant. The episodes were identified by the student-participants when asked directly for experiences and moments in the classroom that had the most impact. Also considered in this phase of analysis were the mid-term and final class evaluations in which students identified things that did and did not work in the classroom. This phase directly answered question two: What tools do humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies utilize and how are they used, to help White students become racially literate?

The main objective of this phase was to make solid connections between humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy and their direct influence on the student-participants and larger class as a whole. This final phase was the moment to juxtaposition who the students were upon entering the class, the moments/episodes in class, pedagogies and pedagogical tools that moved them toward or away from racial literacy, and where they moved along the spectrum of racial literacy. By the end of this phase, I identified the connections between the ways humanizing pedagogy as defined by combining the literature definitions coupled with the working reality of these concepts in the classroom as seen by the students and the effects these pedagogies had moving toward or away from racial literacy. Phase three produced the tools we pedagogues were

using, and how, in order to answer both research questions. Below is a table that clearly states the research questions, the data needed to answer said research questions, and the tools used to analyze the data.

Table 4

Research Summary

Research Questions	Methodology & Data	Theory & Analysis
<p>1. What specific tools of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were used by the teaching team in order to potentially facilitate the development of racial literacy?</p>	<p>Methodology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical ethnography <p>Data needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field notes • Mid-term and final class surveys • Participant observations • Personal reflexion journal • Teaching team texts/notes • Personal communication with colleagues about the class/students 	<p>Theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Race Theory <p>Data analysis tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded theory • Critical discourse analysis
<p>2. What effects if any, do humanizing pedagogy and CSP have on undergraduate White students' racial literacy at a PWI?</p>	<p>Methodology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical ethnography <p>Data needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field notes • Personal reflexion journal • Bi-weekly journals • 3 class papers • 2 informal interviews • Final multimodal media projects 	<p>Theory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Race Theory <p>Data analysis tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounded theory • Critical discourse analysis • Content analysis of the multimodal media project

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter provided a detailed description of the study's methodology, which included the research design, the different types and ways that the data were collected, and the ways the data were analyzed. Qualitative ethnographic methods were employed to provide a rich and thick description so that a fuller, more colorful picture was captured when describing *how* and *why* humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies did or did not elicit racial literacy in White students. The student-participant sample was made up of three undergraduate students enrolled in the class under study. Data were collected through a variety of methods, including pre- and post-class interviews, the students' coursework, whole class anonymous evaluations, and communication among the teaching team. The student-participant data were analyzed in a linear manner to show the changes in use of language that served as indicators of movement toward or away from racial literacy. The data of the teaching team were reviewed in comparison to the contemporary literature to identify the contradictions/tensions between the ways humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were employed within a predominately white classroom space versus their original intention of being geared toward POC students.

CHAPTER 5
**TEACHING HUMANIZING
AND CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES**

Introduction

The tools that were identified in this humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogical classroom were identified in relation to the ways they moved students toward racial literacy. Therefore, what follows are the findings for RQ1: What specific tools of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were used by the teaching team in order to potentially facilitate the development of racial literacy? There were 17, and 12 tools of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogy identified respectively. However, of those tools, four had overlapping qualities. It is these four tools that will be addressed below. This choice was made to recognize the effects of these pedagogies when combined.

In this chapter, I begin with a reintroduction of humanizing pedagogy and culturally sustaining pedagogy to reorient and theoretically frame the findings. I then introduce the findings of RQ2, which identified the four tools of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies that were operationalized in the classroom and their effects on students through data that were collected. After the introduction of the RQ2 findings, each finding is discussed in detail and broken down into subcategories that are supported with evidence found in the data. Following the findings is a conclusion and a discussion of future implications.

Humanizing Pedagogy

At the core of humanizing pedagogy is the want and need to abandon the banking style of education in which the teacher is seen as the sole possessor of knowledge in the

room and bestows it upon their underlings. This outdated, archaic, and authoritative style of education undermines the wealth of knowledge that students have upon entering the room. The banking style of education (Freire, 2011) in which students are seen as empty receptacles looking to be filled with knowledge by the teacher also does not allow for the co-creation of knowledge between student/student nor teacher/student that occurs through criticality and dialogue. For this study, three pillars of humanizing pedagogy are important: mutual vulnerability, praxis, and reflexivity. The base of reflexivity is critical pedagogy.

Freire's (2011) conception of humanizing pedagogy relies on the mutual humanization of both teacher and student. For this to occur, there must be a mutual vulnerability that exists within the classroom, one in which the teacher leads by example and is willing to show the students a piece of their humanity—of their existence that is not solely based on a teacher-identity. Also included in this mutual vulnerability is the teacher's need to let their opinions, concerns, and flaws become well known as to thwart the appearance of objectivity. This permits the students to do the same—to share aspects of themselves that might not be traditionally accepted within a banking style of education. A humanizing space and classroom are not based on one-way interactions. It is about “giving and sharing from both parties” (Zinn et al., 2016, p. 82). This reciprocal vulnerability encourages reflexivity within both teacher and more importantly, student.

Prompting students to engage with the *why* they think the way they do, *how* it is different from the way they have thought before, and how to *critically think* about the future are hallmarks of reflexivity. Within the practice of reflexivity, one is not merely reflecting back on past times or seeing distant memories as passive entities that cannot be

changed. Rather, reflexivity encourages “engage[ing] in explicit self-aware-meta-analysis” (Finlay, 2002, p. 209). A self-awareness that endorses “introspection, intersubjective reflection, mutual collaboration, social critique, and discursive deconstruction” that “requires individuals to embrace their own humanness as the basis for psychological understanding” (p. 213). For this to occur, teachers must be willing to model vulnerability to allow their students to engage in opening themselves up to reflexion and self-critique.

A final aspect of humanizing pedagogy that is important to this study is praxis—“reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed” (Friere, 2011, p. 126). Humanizing pedagogy is for the purpose of making students who wait to receive knowledge as proposed in the banking style of education, to become active agents of change as they seek out new knowledge, and to make connections to their own life experiences. Humanizing pedagogy allows students not to let history happen but, rather, to become agents of revolutionizing the structures that have (re)produced the same levels of oppression that has always existed. Therefore, humanizing pedagogy involves both reflexion and action, which equals praxis. Praxis is based on action and not merely reflecting for the purpose of intellectualizing and theoretical inquiry. Without the follow-through of action, be it in the small forms of thinking and being critical of the privileges one’s identity brings, pushing back against the individual, or creating systemic and institutional change, criticality and reflexivity is a fruitless endeavor.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

The main goal of CSP is to “perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms as part of the democratic process of schooling” (Paris, 2012, p.

93). For this to occur, valuing different funds of knowledge is vital to sustaining pluralisms. CSP, as previously stated, comes from the evolution of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995). In her original conception of CRP, Ladson-Billings was looking for ways to help people of color (POC) students thrive through ensuring new and old teachers required of their students: academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Teachers affect students' academic success by ensuring that their classroom and learning experiences promote intellectual growth. Cultural competence refers to helping students appreciate their own cultures of origin while gaining knowledge and fluency in other cultures. "Sociopolitical consciousness is the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75). Important for this study are the ideas of cultural competence and sociopolitical consciousness. Knowing that CRP is in direct response to helping POC students that are saturated in a white world with (mostly) White teachers and white norms, and that CSP derived from this same knowledge tree, how do we help *White* students in mostly *all white* spaces? A reconceptualization or at the least and identification of the tools employed must be undertaken. This study identifies some of the tools used.

In the case of the class under study, finding non-traditional and seemingly non-academic ways to be the voices that *are not* present in the room was one way. If we relied solely on the voices in the room, there would still be a lack of plurality. Celebrating the cultures in the room full of White students would only reproduce and replicate the current

status of perpetuating white supremacist ways. Having students view slam poems and oral histories from POC was one way to foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms.

Of pivotal importance to both CRP and CSP is the steering away from a deficit-model of thinking that asks the questions: What is wrong with other cultures (and for this study, other races), and Why are other races that are not White, not up to the standards held within the classroom? Instead, CSP thinks in a more asset-based manner that questions the structures that produce inequity, while asking, What do POC students bring “that works to recognize, honor, and sustain the cultures of students” (Buffington & Day, 2018, p. 4). CSP demands a “critical emancipatory vision of schooling that reframes the object of critique from our (POC) children to oppressive systems” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 3). Asking White students to change their view or perception of what they once deemed as problem-students and asking them to see the issues more bound to the institutions that (re)produce inequities is a vital ontological shift to move students toward racial literacy.

Findings

Finding #1

Finding #1: Four tools of CSP and humanizing pedagogy were identified as means toward helping usher White students toward racial literacy. Given the line between humanizing pedagogy and CSP is blurry at best, four tools fell under both CSP and humanizing pedagogy umbrella.

Recall RQ1&2: What specific tools of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were used by the teaching team in order to potentially facilitate the development of racial literacy? And what effects if any, do humanizing pedagogy and CSP have on undergraduate white students’ racial literacy at a PWI? Furthermore, given that the definitions and implementation of humanizing pedagogy and CSP tend to blend, I found

that of the tools used, four specific tools could be labeled under both CSP and humanizing pedagogy. We will focus on these four to gain a better understanding of their combined effect on White students.

As previously stated, humanizing pedagogy is the critique of a traditional teacher/student relationship by fostering spaces in which it is understood that *both* are teacher and student and abandoning the banking style of education by fostering a space that promotes more accessible ways to discuss and grapple with core principles of being human (Freire, 2011). CSP values different funds of knowledge and “perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic process of schooling” (Paris, 2012, p. 93). As such, CSP is seen as the manifestation of humanizing pedagogy (Doucet, 2017). Below is the list of nodes related to humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies created during coding:

Table 5

Thematic Nodes of Humanizing and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies

Humanizing pedagogy nodes:	CSP nodes:	Mutual nodes:
1. Dialogue (48)	1. Fostering pluralisms (43)	1. Reflexions/reflexivity/ a. vulnerability
2. Reflexivity (44)	2. Reflexions (33)	2. Connections a. Theory/content/life (24)
3. Vulnerability (41)	3. Framework (22)	b. Theory/life (13)
4. Environment (24)	4. Beyond surface (21)	3. Ways of expression/non-traditional/staying current/grading strategy
5. Non-traditional (23)	5. Ways of expression (20)	4. Fostering pluralisms through dialogue/counternarratives
6. Connections (19)—see above	6. Validating (17)	
7. Grading strategy (13)	7. Whiteness (15)	
8. Accountability (11)	8. Valuing (9)	
9. Individual (11)	9. Flexible/staying current (7)	
10. Engaging (10)	10. Connections (5)	
11. Feelings (10)	11. Grading (5)	
12. Pushback (7)	12. Friction (3)	
13. Counternarrative (6)		
14. Encouraging (6)		
15. Validation (6)		
16. Appreciation (3)		
17. Real (2)		

Through an analysis of anonymous midterm and final student evaluations along with data from the three student-participants, specific tools were identified that helped foster an environment for and facilitated the perpetuation of linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism through humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies. These four tools were found throughout the data as important elements to both humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies. The distinctions are further examined in the discussion section below. They include:

1. Reflexions/reflexivity/vulnerability
2. Making connections between theory, life, and class content
3. Non-traditional styles of pedagogy, including material and grading strategy
4. Fostering pluralisms through dialogue/counternarratives

What follows is the most profound evidence located in the collected data to support the four tools that were identified as both humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies.

Reflexions/Reflexivity/Vulnerability

Practicing reflexivity and vulnerability were key tools to foster a space for cultural pluralisms and challenge the traditional student/teacher relationship—aspects of both humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies. This vulnerability/reflexivity took many forms—the teaching team being vulnerable and reflexive to each other and to the students along with the students being reflexive in their assignments and vulnerable in class by speaking up during dialogues.

Self-reflexion and Vulnerability by the Researcher

The reflexive journal entry below by the researcher on the first day of the discussion section shows how open and vulnerable I was willing to be to foster an environment for students to open up and share. Also, I wanted to show the student-teachers that we are all works in progress:

By the time 11:15am rolled up, I introduced myself and welcomed to this section of Friday discussion. I showed them a video of my son, Lionél, and explained that he was sick so if I looked at my phone, that was the reason. I was raw about my love for my son and almost started to cry. I told them I was a real human with issues and problems. I explained me and Linda, my son's mother, have since split and explained to them the situation. I was trying to make myself as vulnerable as possible, as soon as possible. I wanted them to let down their defenses and see me as just someone trying to struggle and get by. (January 25, 2019)

It was imperative to start the semester by modeling the type of vulnerability and reflexivity I expected in return. Too often, we as teachers feel that we need not show our flaws to our students—that we have arrived on some mountain top of perfection. However, by showing students that we are all incomplete human projects, that we all have issues, that we all struggle in certain situations, permits our students to be more self-reflexive. Performing perfection to our students might create and foster a space that says *only perfection* is allowed. In this case, while perfection and mastery of racial literacy is the goal, permitting students to make mistakes along the way is more productive. To facilitate the humanizing space required for an ontological shift within White students toward racial literacy, we as educators must be vulnerable ourselves. By telling students my non-dominant story—and given the dearth of POC voices in the space—my counternarrative oral history began to provide different funds of knowledge to a monolithically white area. Entering my voice into the space modeled the type of

reflexivity and vulnerability that both humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies require.

Teaching Team Reflexivity and Vulnerability

In this section, the theoretical tool of CWS was imperative to employ to better understand the resistance by White students that might occur. By focusing on how to model vulnerability, the teaching team permitted the students to be vulnerable. In the dialogue that follows, one teaching team member is asking what to do with a very vulnerable journal post by a student, Becky. The openness, vulnerability, and self-reflexion that occurs between the team members allowed for growth of both members and the ability to serve their students in a way that fosters a space to be vulnerable without fear of penalty or repercussions.

Jamaal: And in this case, being a reflection journal in which we DO ask them to make connection (read here: be emotional), I think that Becky opened up is spectacular. That takes some vulnerability. And she should know how gutsy it was/is to do that. Encourage students to share their authentic self.

Emelia: Didn't think at all about the strengths of Becky's reflection in the way that you highlighted, so I really, really appreciate that.

Jamaal: Becky says in it that she usually keeps her opinions to herself. Cause remember, it's only an opinion to her. If she was a loudmouth about it, I'd agree. But that shit takes some courage.

Haha. If I'm tempted to be sour, I take time. Goes back to that day in lecture when we talked about bias in grading. I definitely know that my biases are coming into the field of vision right now and are probably compounded by my experience this week with my professor and her throwing out all of these opinions that disparage others. So, I'm going to reflect on everything that you've written and that I've written and tonight compose a thoughtful response that will hopefully generate growth rather than stifle it. (February 15, 2019)

The above interaction between the teaching team showed how the process of being humanizing and culturally sustaining is, and should be, reflexive for all involved. In this

commentary, Emelia is open to changing her view of what she perceived to be a wrong or bad journal post, one in which the student—albeit in the form of a diatribe tirade—confessed some very unpopular opinions. The student was unhappy over the nature and topics of the course. What was important for this discussion is not the student’s view but that they were able to speak their mind without fear of repercussion in the form of a bad grade for being open, honest, and vulnerable. If we, as humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogues, had reprimanded the student for their opinion, we can be sure that said student, and others, would be hesitant to speak their mind. We can assume the precedence we would have set is that either you tell us what we want to hear or get a bad grade. That is not what we wanted. What we wanted was for students to feel comfortable enough in their discomfort to speak their own truths, no matter if we agreed or not. From this place of authenticity, we provided information and dialogue that might help students in their journey of becoming fully realized humans. If we scolded students for their differing opinions, we would not create any substantive change. This was a good example of reflexivity and vulnerability by the teaching team.

Self-reflexivity and Vulnerability by the Students

By modeling vulnerability and reflexivity, students were able to share their authentic selves. By not fearing consequences in the form of bad grades for not agreeing with the teachers, students were more apt to speak their minds. Here, students were writing in their biweekly journals. The prompts are fairly open and allow space for students to dig into their thoughts in relation to the material we have covered. We saw the students pushing back against their primary and home discourse and having mixed feelings about the difference between who first entered the room and the people they

were becoming. This vulnerability and reflexivity were and are integral for students to work through/try out their new thoughts, discourses, and perspectives as they move toward racial literacy, and more importantly, toward their human development:

This section of the class has really made me think about some of the films that I love most. There are a lot of white savior films that I really enjoy watching and as a White middle class girl I never noticed the effects they can have on how people see themselves and their options in life. (Anonymous, March 21, 2019)

This week's readings, lectures, and film made me angry and upset. Watching all the videos about police brutality and various oppression made my blood boil. I have no idea how so many people in that situation are able to stay calm and collected. I feel helpless and like there will never be any way to truly solve all of these problems. In 2016 when Trump won the election, I had a lot of these same feelings. (Anonymous, March 21, 2019)

The key words in both of these passages was "made me," which conjures the idea of the self in relation to other things. In this instance, the class and material provided "made me think" and "made me angry." This was a deep self-reflexive understanding of the self in real time. Being able to slow down and understand how the material and class had differently positioned themselves from the same person that began the class shows the impact of reflexivity. Being able to express it in the form of a journal showed their vulnerability. This might not have happened if they were in a space in which they felt they could not be vulnerable for fear of retribution.

Student-to-Student Reflexivity and Vulnerability

Vulnerability and reflexivity are not only good for the connection between student/teacher and student to themselves. Vulnerability and reflexivity allowed students to learn from each other defined as situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Students in real time were reflexive in nature by understanding themselves in relation to the material being covered. Fostering an environment that was both humanizing and culturally

sustaining allowed students to be vulnerable with each other so that all could learn. Due to the teaching team fostering a space that promoted pluralism by modeling reflexivity and vulnerability, the students were able to share some valuable insight during their dialogues. Often, these insights left the students in a very reflexive state:

Discussion with my classmates during this time is really important because it encourages more of that critical thinking and expanding our ideas. (Anonymous. March 21, 2019)

These discussions are a lot more meaningful and often times sensitive, but it certainly makes you leave the class with some new food for thought. (Anonymous. March 21, 2019)

Vulnerability and reflexivity were not only helpful in class but allowed the students to continue (re)thinking about the topics we covered. The recursive process of reflexivity was and is constant and ongoing. The tools of reflexivity and vulnerability proved a fundamental and sound base for the development of and toward racial literacy.

Making Connections Between the Theory, Their Own Lives, and the Class Content

As humanizing pedagogues, we as the teaching team understood that students are not blank slates. Students, and all people, have preexisting knowledge of the world. As educators who abandoned the banking style of education while trying to sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms, providing examples of and space to make connections between the material presented in class, the theories being discussed, and their own lives was vital to their human and racial development. With this, students reported finally being able to understand how the concepts covered in class affected their lives. When trying to achieve racial literacy, understanding how the web of racism is operationalized in everyone's daily life was imperative. Below are comments left on the final anonymous evaluations:

My favorite part was being able to connect to my own life. Too many classes force us to lose our identity in the classroom and I appreciated that this class allowed us to be ourselves. (Class Evaluation. May 3, 2019)

As I said, this class has made me look differently at the way that I analyze texts. I have focused in more on using multiple lenses in order to properly draw conclusions. Although I already knew how to analyze through different lenses, I never thought of doing it when it comes to film. I also never viewed films as “text” before. It is interesting to see how this carries over to other classes and in life. When looking at current issues it is important to view them from gender, class, race and many other point of views. (Anonymous. May 3, 2019)

Yea. I thought the class was super interesting. I like classes like these cause I feel like you can take it with you. This class was like, meaningful, it like, has some meaning. Then you educate all those people and have them educate others. Go forth. (Anonymous. May 3, 2019)

So far, this class has made me think more about how almost every movie we know (at least in the high school, coming-of-age genre) has the same core. The idea that someone can rise above through their hard work or their own self-discovery, which is the idea of individualism. I feel like my eyes have been opened a little bit more, and I can see a bit clearer into how movies really change our culture and perspective by both playing into and breaking stereotypes. (Anonymous. May 3, 2019)

The remnants of teaching should not remain in academic spaces, and the principles and concepts that are learned should be applicable across several aspects of your life. Here, students commented on just that—the ability to take the lessons they have learned in class with them. This was possible by building a relationship between student and teacher that far exceeded the walls of the classroom through humanizing pedagogy. As humanizing pedagogues, we also fostered a critical dialogue between and among the students so that their different funds of knowledge were able to be heard.

This one concept, fostering critical dialogue and valuing different funds of knowledge, was the tie between culturally sustaining pedagogy and humanizing pedagogy. If we as the teaching team had not brought in different voices that were absent from the room through contradictory information to that of which they have known, the

use of oral histories, and counternarratives of POC, if we had only relied on the voices present in the room, we might not have allowed the students to understand the importance of linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms due to the monolithic whiteness within the classroom.

Counternarratives were not the only pluralisms that were showcased in the class. Being critical of foundational concepts that most but, more specifically, White students had been taught, such as meritocracy and individualism, helped foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms. By allowing students to comprehend that whiteness has only normalized due to the power of institutional inequities that perpetuate whiteness as the standard provided students with an opposing reality. The opposing reality is the reality for a large proportion of POC and fosters an environment for linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism. This is CSP in action.

It came as no surprise that many students, particular to this study, White students, believed in the concept of meritocracy. They had been told most of their lives that if they just worked hard enough, they can overcome any of life's challenges. However, having shown students the fallacy and foible ways of social mobility for POC, by asking *who* gets to showcase their expressive individualism without fear of reprisal and continue to find ways to interrupt the white way.

**Avenues/Ways of Expression; Non-traditional
Styles of Pedagogy/Content; Staying Current; Grading Strategy**

This bundle of findings could be confusing and begged the question: Why are these all linked together? As a humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogue and understanding that youth culture was and is constantly shifting, finding ways to maintain academic consistency while providing avenues for student-teachers to express themselves

and their new knowledge was challenging. While the syllabus laid out clear and concrete ways that students must exemplify their work, we critical pedagogues wanted to provide several entry and access points for students to show their learning. We also wanted not to punish students for being and thinking creatively. How could we have called ourselves culturally sustaining pedagogues if we limit linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms? However, we were operating within the limitations of our positions as Tas, not being the professor of record, nor are we the people who created this class. We found ourselves in a very sensitive position.

As a teaching team, we strove to create a classroom that championed the ideals of valuing different funds of knowledge and ensuring that we perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms as part of the democratic process of schooling (Paris, 2012). To accomplish this mission, it was important to provide space for students to express themselves; however, they deemed fit and encouraged students to bring outside material/media they were consuming for us to analyze in class. This was challenging to the teaching team. There were rules and procedures in the classroom that were clearly laid out in the syllabus and for a reason. As CSP and humanizing pedagogues—Teaching Assistants and not seen as or have the power of faculty. How did we allow for different avenues to express student comprehension while remaining fair, equitable, and adhering to the protocols?

For a 750-900-word paper that required two references, a student turned in an altered-universe parity in which they had conceived the idea to utilize the concept of meritocracy by writing a 159-word short story that contained no references. It was clear that the student understood the concepts we were covering, the same way poets

understand and play with language, but the requirements were clearly stated in the syllabus. The focus here is how we as a teaching team practiced reflexivity, were open to non-traditional means of expressing and learning, and how to think about grading strategy. We did not instantly discount the paper. Once the TA received the paper, they reached out to the rest of the team, and we discussed potential ways to navigate this situation. Below is a dialogue between the researcher to the TA who showed being open to different avenues of expression and non-traditional ways of testing comprehension:

Jamaal: If he had woven in a few quotes, and even with it being 129 words, I might have given him credit. Think about it. He's showing a different level of understanding these concepts. He's understood them, processed them, and created a whole story to emphasize how well he understands. (almost) brilliant. I'd much rather have this level of understanding than the wrote "Bulman says..." "I think..." I feel like this is a test for me/us. Do we practice what we preach? I might grade it accordingly but take off for directions, all based on how well you think he pulled it off/understood the concepts. Sorry. This is such a great moment. Imagine if a black kid didn't turn in a paper but stood up and said a slam poem that blew away the rest of the students and their understanding.

: Right. I agree – He gets concepts of meritocracy and individualism but isn't applying them to how concepts show up in film. Which is like the heart of the class right?

Jamaal: Here's another good pedagogical question: are the movies to act as avenues for them to understand? Or if they understand, do they need to always tie back as long as they understand on a complex level? This guy is WORKIN us!!... Fostering linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms ain't as easy as it sounds when thinking about standards and norms. It questions the standards and norms in the first place. So juicy.

: Yes to all of that. AND/BUT I don't establish the norms and standards for this class that isn't really mine – if it were my syllabus, I might create space for other ways of showing knowing, if that makes sense?... My syllabus might ask for different ways of presenting knowledge but this one doesn't, and the directions are painfully clear. I'm stumped. (February 27, 2019)

The teaching team members were trying to balance practicing CSP and humanizing pedagogy while remaining within the confines of their job descriptions and providing an

equitable and fair experience for all students. This was a very difficult balance for Tas. The focus, though, was on the teaching team's ability to consider and value different ways and forms of expression and how to grade appropriately—even with such tight standards and procedures set forth in the syllabus for all. Fostering an environment that permitted students the ability to illustrate their understanding of complex issues through a variety of means and ways without the fear of being penalized was difficult. However, strategy permitted the students to try on their new understandings of the world with minimal consequence. Knowing that youth culture constantly shifts—and in an attempt to stay current with whatever way students are learning material—humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogues must begin to challenge even their own stringent grading styles and what they deem acceptable as a means to express their comprehension of the materials/concepts covered.

Fostering Pluralisms Through Dialogue/Counternarratives

To facilitate the development of racial literacy but more generally to line up with the best social justice educational practices, fostering a space in which students could be exposed to and connect with different perspectives, either present in the classroom or through the use of counternarratives was humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogy. Allowing a space for students to be both presented with new material and with the opportunity to try out this new information by engaging in dialogue was crucial for new independent and collective knowledges that were being uncovered in class. In these talks, these dialogues and engagements, students were encouraged to bring their authentic selves and not just say what sounded good or what they thought was expected. There were often times of tense conversations and awkward comments. However, by building

community in the larger lecture, smaller discussion sections, and smaller subunits within the discussion section, new and challenging material coupled with real dialogue presented students with the ability to teach, learn, and try on their new literacies and understanding of the world.

Counternarratives were not only in the form of voices not present in the room. Counternarratives also came in the form of presenting contradictory information that students had to wrestle with. Sometimes this information challenged what they had been taught about themselves, about the rewards of hard work, and the way our nation was conceived and eventually realized. As an example, after having been told their whole life about the American Dream—that hard work pays off and that no matter who you are or what you do, your hard work will equal success—students were provided information that matter-of-factly showed that, due to the systemic prioritization of certain identities, some reap unequal benefits of hard work. This information, itself, is a counternarrative and stood in direct contradiction to what they have always been told.

To understand such new concepts as the myth of meritocracy and the institutional and government-approved reasons for urban school failure, it is important to not only look at the statics and hard facts but also to hear real stories about real people. Statistics are soulless and relying only on numbers lacks a human connection and feeling that stories incite. An example of how we did this in class was by presenting the story of Melanie in the podcast *Three Miles* (Joffe-Walt, 2015), an assigned podcast the students had to listen to. This was an example of a piece of media that tells a true story of struggle, success, and disappointment in the South Bronx. In this podcast, the disparities of resources between a public and private school in the Bronx, which are only separated by

three miles, was highlighted. Not only are the disparities in resources shown, they also followed the students from the economically deprived public school to show how these inequalities manifested in the rest of their future.

Ruby and the other students had been presented with statistics that showed how schools are funded and their failure was tied directly to redlining. Ruby had watched two movies that portrayed the issues of urban school failure as an individual problem and something that the individuals themselves must solve, *Finding Forrester* (Van Sant, 2000) and *Dangerous Minds*, (J. Smith, 1995). However, once Ruby heard the counternarrative from *Three Miles* (Joffe-Walt, 2015), the pieces began to fit together. Below, Ruby is using the counternarrative of Melanie (from *Three Miles*) to contradict the dominant narrative shown to us through white savior movie genres, such as *Finding Forrester* (2000), in which a Black or POC urban kid makes it out of their bad situation through hard work and the help of white saviorism:

The solution to inequality in America is not another movie about a black kid from a bad neighborhood getting into a great private school and going to an amazing college. The solution is to promote movies that show more stories like Melanie's. They may not feel as heart-warming as Jamal's, but they are real and important. The solution is to enact positive laws that will help to reverse the effects of institutionalized racism and classism. Just as it has been important to have minorities represented in movies and media, we must now realize there needs to be a change in how upward social mobility is represented. As a society, we keep engraving the same message into children's heads that where you are born does not determine where you end up. We must stop portraying this message in order to help make change in our world. (Ruby, paper 1. March 4, 2019)

Ruby saw the distance between what she had been told and fed through dominant narrative movies and the current reality for so many students of color. She realized that success stories of students making it out of urban schools to ultimately be successful are rare exceptions and those who do not make it out are deemed (individual) failures that are

representative of the group's perceived failure as a whole. Learning the numbers is one thing. Following the story of a class valedictorian (Melanie) in her public school who then does not receive the needed support to supplement the current educational inequities between schools just three miles apart gave the students a real and concrete understanding of how these systems fail certain and targeted populations and their devastating lasting effects.

Another counternarrative that struck a particular chord with a lot of students was the HBO film *Walkout* (Olmos, 2006), which is based on the real story of the East L.A. student riots also known as the Chicano Blowouts in 1968. The movie showed us that the success of minority students does not have to depend on a White savior; that Black and Brown people do not *need* a White, middle-class person to come along and *save* them. Here, Ruby is grappling with understanding how to place urban school failure more on the institutions that (re)produce these inequities and less on the individual.

Movies and media can reflect the framed views of society, but they can also pull back the curtain and show the injustices in our school system. Movies like *Walkout* are crucial to the understanding of the intricacies of our school system. It is easy to look at low performing school districts or low performing portions of society and blame the failure on them. It is more difficult and frankly more important to look at what is causing these students to fail. (Ruby, paper 3. April 28, 2019)

This is why counternarratives were extremely important and helped further the in-class dialogue, which also adds to fostering an environment that sustains linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms. These stories allowed White students to “feel the pain of racism” (Matias, 2016, p. 130). Counternarratives added extensive knowledge and perspective that dominant narratives leave out; they complete the misgivings of a single story.

Building on the tenets of reflexivity and vulnerability and engaging in dialogues that were prompted by counternarratives, the student-teacher below turned the critical gaze toward themselves and their whiteness as reflected in this anonymous evaluation response:

This section of the course has made me think a lot about white privilege in the United States. I definitely have seen this privilege play out in many instances in my life, especially coming from a town that is mostly made up of white people. But, I have never really thought about it as deeply as we have discussed in class and in discussion. (March 21, 2019)

While this critical gaze upon the self is only one aspect of racial literacy, what was displayed is a different type of self-awareness that the student did not admittingly have upon entering the class. In this short comment, the above student was both identifying a system of privileges based on race and also where they stand within that infrastructure.

Of crucial importance to fostering pluralism through dialogue and counternarratives was the ability to engage in discussions that seemed taboo or too controversial to discuss in public or private settings. Let me be clear and point out that being able to discuss these socially taboo topics did not start on the first day. To foster an environment for healthy dialogues about deeply emotional subjects, there must be a community built on trust. By investing into what others would deem unneeded and a wasteful use of class time by completing community-building activities, we as a class were able to wrestle with topics you cannot bring up at the dinner table. However, the front-loaded investment of community-building payed back in the end when we as a group were able to be open and have honest discussions. Below, a couple of student-teachers understand the importance of being able to have real dialogues about these topics:

In class, the discussions are based on several controversial topics, some including race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Being able to have open conversation about subjects that many people tip toe around is very important because avoiding the discussion does not dismiss the fact that there are problems that exist within each one. (Anonymous. May 3, 2019)

But the class was very fulfilling. We talked about a lot of topics most teachers are afraid to talk about. For change, we need to talk about it, be knowledgeable. (Anonymous May 3, 2019)

Discussion with my classmates during this time is really important because it encourages more of that critical thinking and expanding our ideas. (Anonymous. May 3, 2019)

Having occupied spaces in which students, if not actively discouraged to engage in these conversations were at least not encouraged to think about societal issues that have real ramifications for large populations was and is troubling. This only perpetuates the ongoing patterns that currently exist. These students are more than aware that by *not* talking about issues, such as race, gender roles, and socioeconomic disparities, these problems will continue to exist. Being in a place that is humanizing, one that sees the student as more than simply a student, a humanizing space that critiques the traditional teacher/student relationship and a class that values different funds of knowledge to sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms as part of the democratic process of schooling through culturally sustaining pedagogy was indeed valued and has an impact on those involved.

Conclusion

Making sure to introduce counternarratives in these mostly White settings through humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies was vital to fostering an environment of pluralisms. As critical, humanizing, and culturally sustaining pedagogues at PWIs, there was a need to ensure we were providing our students with material that supplements what

had been absent from their previous curriculum. In this humanizing and culturally sustaining classroom, finding non-traditional and what may be seen as non-academic avenues to use in classrooms was imperative. This meant looking beyond the traditional peer-reviewed academic papers and scholarly books that are typically provided to college students to utilizing preexisting avenues with which students already consume along with investing in community-building and laying a foundation of trust. Providing a space for students to be reflexive and vulnerable without fear of retribution was pivotal in the students' racial literacy development.

Fostering a space for pluralisms through the use of counternarratives allowed students to see the connections between the content of the class/the theory/and their own lives. Community-building and showing students that they would not be penalized for being their authentic selves was crucial for their development. By being critical and reflexive of the grading structure as a teaching team and allowing several different avenues for students to express their understanding of the concepts discussed fostered an environment that allowed students to dialogue freely permitted students to turn the critical gaze inward. This openness and vulnerability were to the benefit of not just themselves but to the class as a whole.

CHAPTER 6

PRACTICING RACIAL LITERACY

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I identified the tools used in a humanizing and culturally sustaining classroom. In this chapter, I will be discussing the findings from RQ2: What effects if any, do humanizing pedagogy and CSP have on undergraduate White students' racial literacy at a PWI? The initial finding is that when CSP and humanizing pedagogies were implemented, all three student-participants showcased different levels of achievement toward racial literacy. Also found through this research question, was the importance of developing an environment for situated learning to help facilitate growth toward racial literacy. The consequences of not building a community in which students feel they can freely express themselves, be it in discussion or within their papers, is that of students reciting what the teacher wants to hear rather than how they, the students, truly feel. This paper tiger of topical response does not allow growth for the students and/or community.

What follows is a summary of racial literacy. I then continue by taking each of the 3 stages of racial literacy (locating the existence of a racial structure, identifying where one stands within the racial structure, and how to manipulate the racial structure) and describe, with data provided by the student-participants, how each participant either obtained or resisted each stage. To better understand that these moves toward racial literacy were to be attributed to the class, I have included a section that directly addresses what this class and this space did for the students titled: What This Class Did for Me.

Finally, I conclude with a summary of the findings and the future implications from the stated findings.

Racial Literacy

To acquire literacy is more than to psychologically and mechanically dominate reading and writing techniques. It is to dominate those techniques in terms of consciousness; to understand what one reads and to write what one understands: It is to communicate graphically. Acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words or syllables, lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe, but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance of intervention in one's context. (Freire, 2013, p. 45)

Racial literacy, as previously discussed, is made of three parts: (1) that race is an everyday part of life that benefits some and disadvantages others and the ability to identify that a racial structure exists; (2) the ability to locate the self within this racialized structure; and (3) the ability to manipulate the racial structure—be it in the form of leveraging your privilege and/or the ability to decode racist messages, both overt and covert, by “discussing racial issues, reading and writing about racial issues, bringing critical literacy to texts about racism, interrupting racism in talk and action, and educating oneself about the economic realities of institutional racism” (Rogers & Mosley, 2008, p. 126). There are some contradictions. People can be aware of their position within a racialized structure but still perpetuate said structure through the use of colorblind language that mitigates the real-world implications and ramifications that racism brings for POC. People can also know where they stand within this racialized structure while being oblivious that this structure privileges some while hurting others, that is, simply knowing one is White *does not* indicate a racially literate individual. Individuals can be racially literate but have traits of, or residual language that, indicates they are still working through the process as new information conflicts with their previous knowledge.

The process of becoming racially literate is not linear. Nor is racial literacy a mountaintop from which, once you summit, you have obtained forever glory. For one to be considered racially literate, the individual must exemplify all of the three characteristics, particularly the ability to manipulate and take action in some of the various forms listed above, and constantly strive to repeat.

Situated Learning

A key finding that came while doing this study suggested that something was happening within the classroom—something not initially recognized by the researcher after the first round of coding. In an attempt to dismantle power relations between the student and teacher through humanizing pedagogy, along with fostering an environment for students to learn and practice their new discursive tools, what ended up emerging was the importance of situated learning.

The concept of situated learning derives from Lave and Wenger's (1991) book titled, "Situated learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation." From their understanding, they locate "learning squarely in the processes of coparticipation, not in the heads of individuals" (p. 13). This is to say that learning is not a process that solely resides in individuals—that learning is contextual and depends on a space to practice what we are learning. While being introduced to a new concept might happen alone, the ability to try out and practice the new concepts one has been introduced to is what drives home a deeper comprehension because "learning is not the acquisition of ...but...the increased access of learners to participating roles in performance" (p. 17).

The way in which we constructed a space for situated learning was based on community-building activities, fostering an environment in which students would not be

penalized for having differing opinions and also promoting dialogue. In class, as the leading authority and grader of their assignments, I emphasized to the class the importance of being honest and forthright with their opinions and feelings. In the first class, I told the students of a paper I received that I did not agree with. I felt the final claim the student made was weak—that social media was helping to alleviate racism. However, the student, a computer science major, brought forth some compelling arguments backed with evidence from his field of study. While I did not agree with his conclusions based on my anecdotal evidence, the arguments he made were strong, and his evidence was sound. I told the students that he received a 94 (fieldnotes, January 25, 2019). These stories permitted the students to express their opinions without fear of reprisal. As a class, we spent the first three discussions doing “meet and greet” activities and ice breakers (fieldnotes, January 25, February 1, February 8, 2019).

Since students entered the space with different levels of understanding race and discrimination, and through the trust that was built through community-building activities, such as working in the same smaller groups throughout the semester of which they connected and checked in with weekly, students felt more comfortable to share their previous knowledge coupled with their new understandings of the world given whatever new information might have been presented. Due to this environment, students were able to apply these new discursive practices in real time, which pushed their learning while allowing them to be critically reflexive.

The smaller discussion sections were essentially sites of situated learning. Where the class was in relation to understanding the material was always considered in lesson planning. Educators must meet students where they are, not where we wish them to be.

This meant being able to be flexible in our approach for planning classes but also while in class. There were often times in which students' questions drove changes to the agenda in real time.

When speaking about urban education and the segregation of schools, I brought up redlining. The class went silent. Most of the students hadn't heard of the term, much less the lasting legacy that we still face due to this systematic racist policy. This drove the lesson to a different end than planned in order to ensure all students had a basis of understanding the underpinning of what got our educational system to be so segregated. We then watched John Oliver's segment on school segregation. (Reflexive journal, February 8, 2019)

The discussion and subsequent knowledge garnered due to remaining flexible and understanding the intricacies of personal learning gave the students building blocks to better comprehend institutional and systemic racism that drives, in large part, the failure of urban schools.

In a humanizing classroom that fosters situated learning, understanding that students are not empty receptacles that are ready to be filled with knowledge is fundamental. Learning is a social process that involves not only that the students be willing to learn but that the teacher understand that they, too, must be open to new ideas and concepts. This allowed students to "learn... from more knowledgeable others, but also had the opportunity to share their expertise" (Trust & Horrocks, 2019, p. 115). The reciprocal learning environment both allows for more discursive practice and imbues trust from the student-to-teacher in an organic manner. These environments foster and permit students to feel comfortable enough to share their prior experiences along with questioning new knowledge as it comes.

As mentioned, while our purpose as a group might have been different upon entering the class, our agendas merged toward the same end goal—that of creating or

being critical consumers of information, growth, innovation, and evolving as whole humans within and outside of the classroom. Humanizing pedagogy means attending to the student as a whole being, not simply a student looking to receive a good grade. Once a mutual and reciprocal trust was established—that they as students could experiment and push their boundaries of learning without fear of reprisal in the form of a bad grade or reprimanding—students were willing to participate in situated learning whether explicit or not, either in writing form or in discussing sensitive experiences with their colleagues.

New information was presented to the students in the form of informational videos, slam poems, and oral histories—information that challenged the student-participants' and other colleagues' previous knowledge of race, racism, and whiteness. Given that building a community within the classroom was an aspect that the researcher encouraged through various group exercises, students were able to try on/perform their new identities/understandings of the way race works, their own position within a racial structure, and how to leverage their privilege to manipulate how and when racism manifests itself. The assignments created for the class and the community that was built proved to be spaces where students were able to perform these new understandings. Given the different levels of racial experience in the class (from seniors who had a more in-depth sociological understanding of race, to those who were colorblind upon entering), what emerged was a space and environment in which students were learning through social interactions and performance with others (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The social interactions included not only their colleagues, but also with me, their TA and researcher. Being a biracial man who has lived in white spaces most of my life, I had a plethora of experience to draw from.

However, it was the interactions with and around their colleagues that allowed the students, and more specifically pertaining to this study the student-participants, the ability to turn the critical gaze inward to better understand their own whiteness within the framework of racial literacy. Engaging with colleagues, the teaching team, and me allowed students to dive deeper inside themselves in order to be self-reflexive of the impact that their whiteness has as they moved toward racial literacy. The community environment fueled by humanizing pedagogy proved to foster an apprentice-style of education for students as they learned, reflected inward, and performed their new understanding of race within the confines of the walls of the class and assignments. Due to the depth of conversations within the class and the implications of the weighty topics covered, a bond emerged within and outside of the classroom space. As their TA, I have since written several letters of recommendation for students in this discussion section.

Finding #2

When CSP and humanizing pedagogies were implemented, all three participants showcased different levels of achievement toward racial literacy.

I have discussed the main pillars of racial literacy along with a key finding that was produced due to the humanizing and culturally sustaining environment that was created within the classroom. I will go through each participant and show their story arc relating to each of the three criteria for racial literacy while providing data to support the finding. I will then briefly discuss of each piece of evidence, and a conclusion that clearly states where each student-participant has landed on the spectrum of racial literacy with the understanding that racial literacy is nothing that can be mastered—it is a constant process of working toward and at times falling away from the life work of being racially

literate. Even I fall out of, and back into being racially literate. I often am presented material from racial scholars that makes me reevaluate my understanding of what is and is not racialized.

Ruby

Locating the Existence of a Racial Structure

From the beginning of our first interview, Ruby indicated a knowledge, awareness, and understanding that was refreshing. During our pre-interview, Ruby stated that she started to notice all the people around her were White in upper-middle school. And while that may seem young to some, she informed me that the “POC in my area came to know that earlier.” This kind of not only brutal honesty but reflexivity in the same sentence was striking.

Um, I think that [in] upper-middle school I started to realize all the people around me were White. I know the POC in my area came to know that earlier. I’ve never had a POC teacher. And while that might not have affected me, I know it did for the POC (Pre-interview, February 6, 2019).

Further, Ruby identifies that she had never had a POC teacher and “while that might not have affected me” (read here: explicitly) “I know it did for the POC.” Ruby’s placement and use of identifying the self (me) and them (POC) as having different lived experiences was just the beginning. Ruby is identifying the existence of a racial web. She is also acknowledging her position within that web—not by her own pitfalls of a lack of diversity but what it means to POC. This living through the lens of the other is something that Ruby expressed often.

Ruby’s awareness cannot solely be explained through this class experience. It was clear that Ruby came to the class more primed than the other two participants. Ruby had begun the thinking process of what it means to be White and how that has affected and

shaped her everyday lived experience. During the section in which the class dispels the myth of meritocracy, in her first paper, Ruby stated:

The “American dream”: a goal we should all strive for as citizens of this great nation, an outdated idea, something that is different for each individual, achievable by all, the name for an unfair system that values lineage over merit.

Ruby takes it one step further by getting outside of herself and asking, what does the system that gives me advantages do to those it disadvantages? Here, Ruby is layering her previous experiences with her new understanding of meritocracy and how that has built an unrealistic vision for those not white; that the American Dream is a myth that values individuals rather than hard work. Based on her previous experiences, positioning of me/them, and understanding that others have different lived experiences, Ruby had successfully identified that a racial structure existed.

In her third and final paper, Ruby was really able to locate the existence of a racial structure and systemic racism.

Movies and media can reflect the framed views of society, but they can also pull back the curtain and show the injustices in our school system. Movies like *Walkout* are crucial to the understanding of the intricacies of our school system. It is easy to look at low performing school districts or low performing portions of society and blame the failure on them. It is more difficult and frankly more important to look at what is causing these students to fail. (Paper 3, April 28, 2019)

Here, Ruby is speaking directly to the insidious nature of systemic and institutional racism and the ways systems and institutions shape and mold *who* is successful, which is a detachment from a meritocratic notion of individual success. Understanding that there are forces larger than the individual, Ruby, in the third and final paper for the class, better understands that the system and racism have a much stronger influence on the success of individuals than individuals themselves.

Identifying Where One Stands Within the Racial Structure

In our first interview at the beginning of the semester, Ruby began to discuss knowing that “all the people around me were White.” It is as if Ruby was feeling emotions but did not have specific language to unpack and to better understand what she was observing. When describing that she had never had a POC teacher (in our first interview), Ruby stated, “and while that might not have affected me, I know it did for the POC.” Here, Ruby is swirling with observations but lacked the evidence and language to describe *who* racism affects and *how*, including herself. Ruby highlighted her stamina to engage in “sustain[ed] conscious and explicit engagement with race” (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 66).

Ruby came from a predominately White town but, due to a class she took in high school (formerly Black Literature but had since changed to Race, Literature, and Culture), she was more primed than most of her colleagues to fit within the three components of racial literacy. During our post-interview, Ruby spoke of an award ceremony in which a coach praised the students and athletes but also told them that the reasons they got where they had was due to their parents’ privileged lives. The school principal had to send out an apology email in order to “clean up” the “mess” the coach had made with the parents by pointing out the privileges that living in this White, affluent town brought. This moment had an impact on Ruby and made her realize it was not simply her own hard work that had gotten her where she was. During our interview, Ruby was looking back on this experience with a new critical lens and the language to identify what was happening, which is *very* reflexive. It is as if Ruby had a bunch of puzzle pieces of racial literacy, but this class and experience allowed her to put them all together to

form a comprehensive picture of the way racism operates and its devastating effects for all.

Ruby also spoke of an example that arose around the time of the high school prom:

Some of her classmates brought a few guys, POC, from New Haven, CT. If you know the area and socioeconomic status of the towns in CT, you understand that this is coded language. It is common knowledge to understand that when people from affluent areas refer to New Haven and other towns, such as Bridgeport, they are speaking about towns with a higher population of POC and a lower SES. A sense of *those people* separates *them* from *us* that live in costal and more affluent towns in CT. Ruby was not oblivious to this reality and mentioned these dynamics as she told this story. Ruby said that White people from the surrounding towns label people that come from New Haven as bad and “ghetto.” (Reflexive journal, February 6, 2019)

When Ruby’s classmates brought these POC men from New Haven to the prom, they were labeled and talked about as “drug dealers and thugs.” However, Ruby spoke to and found them to be “genuinely nice people” and it made her “upset” that these kids were being stereotyped as bad people who only do drugs. Ruby then went a step further by stating:

The girls that took them, do drugs. But so don’t a lot of girls we know, do drugs. Just ‘cause they come from a lower income town and different skin color, they were judging them for their behavior. (Pre-interview, February 6, 2019)

As the above was taken from Ruby’s history before entering the class, we can see that she is swirling with observations, feelings, and uneasiness but not quite able to explain it.

While she is able to elucidate what her classmates are doing by stereotyping, she lacked the clear language to explain the *why* and where *she/they* fit into a racialized framework.

Ruby conflates race and class as though they are interchangeable, which is not truly decoding racist language.

In the example below, Ruby became quite reflexive and began to understand that a racial structure exists and the implications that her whiteness had on the way she has viewed the world thus far:

This week's readings, lecture, and movie have made me think deeper about how my perspective is different than others. I always try my best to be introspective and take a step back in order to look at things from another perspective. [This] class has recently caused me to be even more analytical of my point of view. (Journal 3, March 25, 2019)

The shift in language is subtle but begins to show that Ruby was becoming more aware of not only the existence of a racial structure but *her* place in a racialized structure. The sentence “and movies have made me think deeper about how my perspective is different than others” secures the line between *my* experience and *those* not like me. Then, toward the end of the journal post, she continues this deep reflexive gaze that locates herself within the racial structure by explicitly stating how the class has made her “more analytical of *my* viewpoint.” Ruby shifted from her primary discourse to her new and budding learned discourse as she discovers more about the totality of racism. By being in an environment in which she has been presented new material with varying viewpoints, a space that fosters the co-creation of knowledge through dialogue that allows students to perform their new understandings of the world, Ruby has turned the gaze inward, away from her acquired discourse to her newly learned discourse. Looking down, Ruby realized where her (White) feet stood in a racialized structure.

How to Manipulate the Racial Structure

When it came to the final leg of racial literacy—the ability to manipulate the web, or as Dr. Barbara Love says, how to “leverage your privilege,” Ruby was very comfortable discussing ways that either she could directly affect the racial web by

speaking back/challenging her peers or ways that we as a collective society could change the racial structure as evidenced below:

I don't think I have enough tools for institutional [change]. I feel individual is easier. I can stand up to them [friends]. I feel like I have more of the information. I like to debate. I had one with my boyfriend about racism. I won. My family is like that too. We all talk about politics. (Post-interview, April 26, 2019)

Ruby is identifying her discomfort and seemingly lack of power to affect the larger institutional structure of racism. However, the way she *does* identify that she can push back is by challenging the racial discourse that perpetuates itself through her peers and the silence of people with different information and/or opinions due to fear of losing or distancing oneself from said friend. In class, Ruby did not only learn information; she was in a space that promoted linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralisms through CSP along with a humanizing environment that fostered dialogue and allowed her to learn a dominant discourse. Learning how to think, speak, and write against racism to loved ones and friends is not an easy task. And while Ruby mentioned how she does not have the tools for institutional change *as an individual*, she is very astute, whereas we as a nation need to be heading in order to dismantle White supremacy. Below, even by her first paper, Ruby took her reflexions one step further and advocated for change that we as a nation can take:

The solution to inequality in America is not another movie about a black kid from a bad neighborhood getting into a great private school and going to an amazing college. The solution is to promote movies that show more stories like Melanie's (*Three Mile Podcast, This American Life*). They may not feel as heart-warming as Jamal's (*Finding Forrester*, movie), but they are real and important. The solution is to enact positive laws that will help to reverse the effects of institutionalized racism and classism. Just as it has been important to have minorities represented in movies and media, we must now realize there needs to be a change in how upward social mobility is represented. As a society, we keep engraving the same message into children's heads that where you are born does not determine where

you end up. We must stop portraying this message in order to help make change in our world. (Paper 1, March 4, 2019)

While having feelings of not being able to make systemic changes on her own, Ruby identified ways in which we as a nation can change the narratives in order to see things for how they are: uneven, disproportionate, and privileging some over others. The ability to engage with and write about these topics are itself, action. Although we had yet to specifically address in the course the theme of White saviorism, which comes much further after the first paper is due, Ruby began to focus on the ways that Hollywood and media present POC as people needing to be saved.

The theme of White saviorism was very impactful for Ruby as she continued to write about it throughout the class. Below, Ruby began her final paper titled *White Guilt* with a scathing redress of the reasons why Hollywood continues to perpetuate the ideology that minorities *need* White saviors—and it is not POC she addressed. She tied the modern day need for White saviorism in a historical context. Ruby placed the need for saviorism solely on the need to ease the feelings of White people and America's greatest sin, slavery. Ruby's final paper opened by stating:

At the birth of this great nation all men were created equal, Americans were finally free from oppressive British rule. Black people were slaves for a long time then a great white man freed them, and all their problems went away. Sometime later Barack Obama was elected president, so racism was definitely over. Or at least that is what our schooling simplistically teaches us. At the birth of this unequal nation, white property-owning men were created somewhat equal; black men, women, and children were slaves, while white wealthy men were freed from the British and became the main oppressors. White guilt and white saviorism is rooted so deeply in our nation it sometimes goes unnoticed. People's lives are turned into movies just to be shown as a black person in distress that a white person saves. Hollywood's dominant movies, combined with framing, shape a world where white savior narratives are the cure for white guilt. (April 28, 2019)

In this cutting introduction passage, Ruby identified that racism was engrained from the inception of this country and the ways White saviorism in media cures a sense of White guilt. The critical admission that White saviorism is the cure-all pill for White guilt has never been more clearly articulated by a student in any of my classes thus far. Connecting slavery, President Lincoln, and contemporary notions of POC needing to be saved highlights Ruby's more developed racial literacy. She understands that racism exists, where she stands as a White woman, and how this framework is perpetuated in a coded manner. Ruby had put on her racial literacy glasses and can see clearly the ways racism operates in America, where she stands, and what she can do about it. Ruby displayed no signs of White fragility, White resistance, or White guilt when learning her new dominant discourse of racial literacy.

Meghan

Locating the Existence of a Racial Structure

From the start of her first journal, Meghan began to identify that there were other perspectives besides her own. In class, we try to build upon students' prior knowledge, understanding that students are not blank slates or empty receptacles to be filled with knowledge. With that, Megan's mother had bought her dolls that were not white and books without only white protagonists. However, it seems as though those attempts to showcase differences were topical at best:

Within the short few weeks of the start to this class, I feel as if my mind has been stretched to think about the different perspectives on varying situations; many in which I have never thought about before. (Journal, February 15, 2019)

Here, Meghan is letting us know that while she understood the world as more than herself but that context matters by stating, "Different perspectives on varying situations."

Meghan's understanding of different perspectives had bridged past simple perceptions/views and now took into account varying situations and/or contexts. Our first few weeks in class were spent on media analysis in which we saw how the medium affects the way we view things and people, specifically around the concept of meritocracy. We began to question if where people reside in the social stratosphere is of their own doing. Did some people get where they got because they are more deserving? Did others not get ahead due to their own shortcomings? This was to allow students to better understanding the structural nature of systemic racism. Prompted by her above journal post, it is as if we took Megan's flat and two-dimensional world and made it 3D, real, tactile. This allowed Meghan to see the intricacy of the web and of puppeteers' pulling strings become clearer. Meghan needed to consider not only "different perspectives" but taking a step back, "varying situations."

In Meghan's first paper, she begins to describe the intricacies of a system built upon race that indicate she is understanding and seeing the racial structure that surrounds us all. Through the lens of education, Meghan states:

Although I would love to believe that our education system is based on the idea of meritocracy, that our improvement and growth is based on ability and hard work, I see time and time again that this is not the case. Having money, connections, and white skin are clear advantages in today's society. In each of the three media pieces this idea that being white and having money automatically means that the quality of education that student will receive is greater than a student of color. And what does this say to the country that was built on the idea that with hard work comes rewards and a better life? It proves that the idea of meritocracy is a myth in multiple instances. (Paper 1, March 4, 2019)

The hopeful Meghan was beginning to see through the veil of meritocracy and the idea that your position in this unveiled web is, if not fully predetermined, at least has less to do with individual effort and more to do with your skin color, place of birth, and the

social connections you and your people have. Meghan began to understand that the web of racism and racial privilege goes deeper than simply providing and seeing multiple perspectives. Gaining new, more holistic understanding of our social structure in a historical context through a variety of media allowed Meghan the ability to see a macro-view of race, privilege, and how they perpetuate the ongoing inequity structures. She ends the thought with asking thought-provoking questions that get to the core of the American Dream—the idea that if you work hard enough, you will succeed. What if it is all a lie? What if we are selling something that is untrue?

Meghan, in the final paper for the semester, seemingly takes a step back and better understands how education, what is sold as the single and greatest equalizer for success in America, is struck by endemic institutional racism:

Prior to enrolling in this course and learning about the many different topics in which are discussed, I did not fully comprehend or understand how unequal the education system truly is. It is heartbreaking, but at the same time, aggravating to actually see how these inequalities are affecting the lives of many students in minority groups. (Paper 3, April 29, 2019)

Meghan identified that, while she previously did not “fully comprehend” the power of institutional racism and, due to the class, she was better able to see how systemic racism privileges some and oppresses others. Meghan also begins to show her emotions by emphasizing her “heartbreak(ing)” and “aggravation” at how the system *has always* operated unbeknownst to her previous understanding. The use of these emotional descriptors indicates a deeper connection—one that is not topical. Meghan is leaning on her emotional intelligence to identify that a racialized structure is in place and treats different identities differently.

Locating Where One Stands Within the Racial Structure

In our pre-interview (February 6, 2019), Meghan used a lot of contradicting language. While she said she identifies as White, that she has seen a lot of whiteness around her (having grown up in mostly white spaces), and that she has always grown up with a “sense of privilege.” Meghan follows these acknowledgements with colorblind language that might have been thwarting her evolution toward racial literacy:

Umm, Yea, no, yea, I, yea, I’m, yep. My...My...Italian and Irish, I literally but I identify, personally as White (↑), ummmm (pause) I guess I, ummm, (crack in voice, pause) coming from where I have, you know, I’ve ... seen a lot of... White. Um... that color. And sooo, (clears throat, pause) in terms of like... I don’t know, I feel that especially a lot of like... peopllllle who I’ve grown up with are, um... have a sense of this like privilege. Like they’re somehow better (↑), and so, I guess in my mind I’ve always thought... um... you know like... who’s like, I don’t know, it’s just like a color. Your skin. And everybody... is, it, ut,err, everybody’s a human, we have DNA biologically we’re all the same... anddd, I just feel like it’s crazy to think that some people are like, well, I’m better because... I am White. Ummm... It’s just so weird to me, I don’t know, it just doesn’t make sense. It doesn’t feel right.

Meghan, when asked how she identifies, quickly goes on to describe her ethnicity, being that of Italian and Irish but then concludes by saying she identifies as White. Meghan simultaneously acknowledges some guilt with being White by showing her understanding that whiteness is problematic by exuding a sense of privilege. While she does this, though, she does it in a way that shows some distance between herself and “people who [she has] grown up with” as though whiteness did not affect her like it did her peers. What would this acknowledgement look like if she were taking responsibility and not distancing herself from being socialized within whiteness? Perhaps Meghan would have said she identifies as White. That while some of her ancestors were not perceived as White upon their arrival as immigrants, they became White with the arrival of others (because isn’t that what she was insinuating when she mentions FIRST that she is Irish

and Italian?). Perhaps Meghan would have said, as she did, that whiteness is a state of mind that is imbued with privileges and advantages. And that she, too, while not consciously aware of any outright racism she might harbor, has some blind spots to correct, to lean into so she can move beyond them. There tends to be this acknowledgement of racism and systemic racial inequities, but when speaking of how outside forces have their effect on us, the individual, there is a want and will to hold these forces at arm's length. As in, "YES! I see it, and I see how it can affect people. ALL KINDS of people. But those people. And not so much me."

Is this a dichotomy? Can both of these operate at once? Is the person who acknowledges racism as a structure but holds it at a distance from the self, any closer to understanding the responsibility that the individual has? Does this distancing from holding the self-responsible indicate a lack of complicit-ness that racism is everywhere and affects everyone? Does this distance indicate that a lack of manipulating the web will be what comes? As in, does acknowledging race and its uneven structure, but keeping distance from the self, mean there will be a feeling of overwhelmed-ness when thinking about manipulating the racial web?

This attempt to racially distance herself from acknowledging that race is endemic and knowing her spot in a racialized world seems to be an attempt to absolve herself of any guilt or responsibility that her whiteness brings. Meghan displays a small amount of white resistance, albeit not through acts of hysteria or anger. Like Ruby, Meghan had made some very astute observations about whiteness before entering the class but also lacked the language and full comprehension of *what* race does and to *whom*. It took a space that presented new material in the form of non-traditional means such as movies,

slam poems, and oral histories along with a humanizing environment that allowed her to try on and/or perform her new knowledge of the world. This provided Meghan the ability to turn the gaze inward toward herself to see where she is implicated in a world that racism is endemic and begin to learn a discourse separate from her acquired primary discourse.

Below, in our post-interview, Meghan takes a deep reflexive turn and perhaps, building on her new learned discourse of racism coupled with where she is as a White woman, begins to better understand where she fits within a racialized world:

It's sad. I feel like I just go about my days and I don't even understand how privileged I am. Because I. I (stumble) honestly, seeing the numbers made me realize I take a lot of things for granted. To be honest. Yea. (Post-interview, April 29, 2019)

This quote is important because it shows the process and byproduct of being in a space that promotes critical reflexion on a deeper level. Being in an environment that is guided by humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies that foster a space to be more critical of the self and the world around, allowed Meghan to ask herself questions to which she might not like the answers. Having established a relationship beyond mere student and teacher through humanizing pedagogy and the tools identified in the previous chapter, also permitted Meghan to be honest and vulnerable.

How to Manipulate the Racial Structure

Meghan was comfortable finding ways to manipulate the racial web on an individual level but felt helpless when thinking of ways to manipulate the institutional and systemic racial structure. From using colorblind language in our pre-interview in which she said race was “silly” and “didn't matter,” Meghan came to a more direct

understanding of the different ways that racism operates and ways she can push back beyond simply engaging with and writing about race issues:

Yea, I... It'ssssss, um, like, I feel like now I've started to make more like (giggles) when my friends will say something, and I'll be like, "that don't, don't talk about that, that's not even, that's not even correctttt. You actually just don't know what you're talking about. Educate yourself first before you speak." Ummm, sooo. I think that I've always thought before I've spoken... and soooo, IIIII, ummm, huh, but when other would say things that I'd be like (noise) I wouldn't necessarily say something to them probably when I was like, fresh--freshman in high school, cause I was like uh—(clap) whatever, but now I feel like I'm kind of like waaaaait... that just is like isnnn't, because I also feel like people don't even knowww what they're saying when it coming out of their mouth. I'm like. sometimes I like to repeat back to them what they say. Because I'm like, that, just... frankly doesn't (clap)... make sense, or it's morally just nottttt where is should be, like that's just nottttt, so I feel like I've started saying... more, being like no. And then like telling them why it's wrong. Like this is what it actually is. And I feel like they actually listen... sometimes. But when they dooooo, they're like, "Ok that makes sense." (Post-interview, April 29, 2019)

What's interesting about this passage is Meghan is beginning to display more confidence in her ability to speak back, to use, and exercise her racial literacy. Meghan is being strident in pointing out, if nothing else, wrongness and ignorance (used here as a lack of knowledge or misinformation, not dumb). She isn't just thinking that her friends are wrong and just now telling me how she feels or, as she admits of her younger years, not saying anything. She is, in real time, stopping certain trains of thought, or sub-discourses within whiteness. Meghan is doing this not always with facts and figures, that which changed her mind, but more as a tool she has picked up: simply repeating back what people have said. This act provides some clarity for the original speaker—to hear oneself from the outside is a powerful tool. Meghan proceeds to use people's moral sense of goodness to unpack what they might have said. By doing this, Meghan is pulling on harp strings that are directly attached to the heart, feelings, and emotions. To end the interactions, Meghan provides a sense of what is right and correct within her new

discourse/literacy by giving her interpretation based on her knowledge. Below, Meghan follows up her manipulation of racism by stating why she now interrupts and corrects her friends:

Frankly, it doesn't make sense or morally just not where it should be. So, I feel like I've started saying no, and telling them why it's wrong. And I feel that they listen cause when they do, they say they understand. (Post-interview, April 29, 2019)

Meghan displays her new dominant discourse and racial literacy by showing her ability to speak truth and power to friends when they might be perpetuating racist tropes. Meghan also identified a tool she uses to get her friends to better understand what they are saying: repeating back to them what they have said. Due to the new knowledge she acquired in class through culturally sustaining pedagogy and a variety of material and the skills she developed by being in a humanizing space that promoted dialogue, Meghan was able to bring change to her own world and spheres of influence.

Kassandra

Locating the Existence of a Racial Structure

Kassandra had more trouble identifying the racial framework that exists in the United States but was able to identify the privilege she has by being White, although not naming whiteness. There were no direct statements from Kassandra that identified the systemic nature of racism by itself without the implications of how lucky she is to be who she is, that is, White without saying the word white:

Racial self-identification, I haven't really. Big privilege in not thinking about it. Predominately White town. High-upper-middle class. (Pre-interview, February 4, 2019)

And how lucky and privileged I am. Coming from the family I've come from, the school I went to, the school I'm going. Technically a public university. Not everyone else gets this. Which is also sad. (Post-interview, May 6, 2019)

Kassandra was able to identify the privileges she receives from whiteness without directly naming whiteness, which is a form of white resistance (Matias, 2017). This occurs through distancing herself from race and its beneficiaries. She cloaked her advantages in overarching language that is sanitized from any racial privilege and places the responsibility of her privilege on the “family,” the “school” she went to, and the “school” she is currently attending. Not being able to name whiteness as her privilege hindered Kassandra’s ability to identify the racial structure of privileges and oppression that exists. This distancing might stem from white fragility and guilt (DiAngelo, 2011) when acknowledging all the ways that whiteness has provided her benefits while minorities are disadvantaged by their race.

In the passage below, Kassandra is directly identifying the web of racism and its existence by connecting to a concept that is commonly known, that of identifying a loss. With this, though, Kassandra is distancing herself from the ills that might come of a racial structure. “I can understand how *those* things affect *things that matter*.”

I think I’m, well, being more aware of what it is. Identifying that there is a thing. Like a loss, you need to identify it first. And now that I have a better understanding that it exists, I can better watch the news when people are talking about all these different things, I can understand how those things affect things that matter and their impacts. Awareness. And um, I feel like I had, I don’t know if I had specific speaking skills, but more of an awareness than an ability to be gun-ho. (Post-interview, May 6, 2019)

Identifying Where One Stands Within the Racial Structure

When it came to Kassandra, while she was able to locate herself in the racial structure that exists in America, she had difficulty naming it as such. Kassandra displayed several episodes of racial distancing and/or performances of white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011). Naming race and whiteness as the reasoning for her privileged life implicated

herself as a culpable participant who reaps benefits within a racialized hierarchy. In her pre-interview, Cassandra was able to identify her privileges without directly connecting it to her whiteness:

[I had] no need for part time job. [I had] 16 hours of dancing at a studio a week. Very lucky and totally understand. Thanked dad for supporting me. And giving me the knowledge that not everyone gets this. Parents got me an internship to Fidelity. Connected. I've never really had to think about my race. (Pre-Interview, February 4, 2019)

As we can see, Cassandra was able to expound on her privileges by identifying her ability to dance, a loving and supportive family, and connections that placed her steps ahead of her peers by getting an internship to Fidelity. What was troubling was her lack of ability to attribute *any* of these privileges to race—more specifically her whiteness and the benefits it has brought her and her family. White guilt might be a reason for her dearth of uttering the word White. Cassandra clearly did not have what DiAngelo (2011) refers to as “racial stamina” to engage in discussions of race. This might also be the reason that Cassandra only completed one paper of three and failed the class with a significantly low grade despite her superior grades that got her accepted to a semi-elite institution.

The last line “I’ve never really had to think about my race” almost suggests that she has been, and is still, oblivious to the many privileges that whiteness brings. However, by the third journal, Cassandra was able to directly name her privileges being connected to whiteness:

I had realized that representation was significant, but I didn’t truly realize how much I was taking it for granted as a White female. (Journal 3, March 25, 2019)

Here, Cassandra had a small reckoning and was able to look down at her own (White) feet and fully comprehend where they fit within a racialized structure and racism in the United States. If Cassandra had a difficult time understanding that there *was* a racial

structure that has ushered her ahead of her minority peers before journal three, she came to realize just how far ahead her whiteness has placed her.

How to Manipulate the Racial Structure

I had realized that representation was significant, but I didn't truly realize how much I was taking it for granted as a white female. I now realize that we all have to put our money where our mouths are and support stories that are more diverse in nature, in order to truly help expand representation. (Journal 4, April 8, 2019)

EUREKA! Cassandra had a moment in which it all smacks her at once. Cassandra went from the passive “I’m lucky” phase, to the active engager who knew her position in life was no accident—that there is a system in which her White identity affords her more freedom and space to exist. She even goes one step further and states that “we” (read here: White women) need to not only identify there is an issue (like she refers to identifying a loss), *we* need to go one step further and change the landscape by supporting art and media that supports diversity.

As we learned in class, there is an albeit self-induced and false dichotomized quandary that Hollywood only does what makes money—which produces and normalizes what we have—while at the same time excludes and disincentivizes true diversity and representation. If Hollywood produced Black films and other forms of art, they are inevitably marketed toward Black-only audiences, thus pigeonholing the movie from the start.

Kassandra’s comment seemed firm in her stance, that it is on the consumer to change and drive the market. This was the most intense/biggest way I found that Cassandra manipulated the web. There were no signs of Cassandra pushing back against friends, no inquiries to start initiatives that address any of the issues we covered. Nothing. The closest Cassandra got to speaking about changing habits of herself and/or others in

any way was when she identified that she was now more aware of race, that she “has a better understanding that it exists,” and “can understand how those things affect things that matter and their impacts” (Post-interview, May 6, 2019). Cassandra also admits a lack of the “ability to be gun-ho.”

While stating the need for White women to “put their money where their mouths are,” in her fourth journal, Cassandra displayed several performances of White resistance and racial distancing by taking full credit for any changes that might have occurred during the class. This gave the impression that while she may topically express a deeper level of understanding about race and the ways it manifests/operates, she did not showcase her racial stamina and comfortability in examining what she can do to manipulate the racial frame or take any responsibility in making changes:

I think that, I think it’s less about changing and now that I’m more aware of how I view things. Whether it race, or gender and other things. Just more aware of how I see them. ‘Cause I’m never gonna be able to change my unconscious bias. I’ve accepted that. (Post-interview, May 6, 2019)

Here, Cassandra is displaying a reluctance to feel the need for change. She is seemingly okay with the way society and media perpetuate racism and does not feel any responsibility to evolve or be critical of the self. If Cassandra displays the lack of ability to change personally in a critical way, the likelihood of her thinking about and engaging with topics of race and ways to change society are slim. What is also interesting about Cassandra’s statement is her understanding of unconscious bias. Stating that “I’m never gonna be able to change my unconscious bias” implied that not only for her, but for all of us, once we *do* have unconscious bias, it cannot be changed, which is another form of white fragility and white resistance.

What This Class Did for Me

The findings of this study suggest that CSP and humanizing pedagogy, when combined, DID have effects on students' development toward racial literacy, albeit different levels for each participant and understanding that racial literacy is in constant evolution—not a mountain top to be summited. While each student came to the class with different levels of understandings of racism based on their previous educational and familial experiences, each participant pointed out ways that this class and experience helped them go further in their understanding. Below, Ruby indicated how the class pushed her to be more reflexive in her understanding of the importance of representation in media:

This class has made me think deeper about what movies represent. Before this class I would try to analyze movies I watched to an extent, but I would never take a deeper look into what they could be showing people concerning social class, race, and gender. (Journal 4, April 8, 2019)

Having already entered the class displaying a more comprehensive understanding of racism and oppression, which was discussed in her pre- and post-interviews, Ruby left the class exemplifying full comprehension of the ways that racism works, what privileges she has received due to the racial structure, and how she can leverage her privilege to enact change. Her new form of racial literacy allows Ruby to see the ways media perpetuate an understanding of race that lessens the institutional and systemic realities for a more individualist concept of racism. Ruby is showcasing that racism *does* exist as a structure of oppression and that it has saturated many levels of our everyday life.

Meghan came to class with a very colorblind approach, “I don’t see color. It’s silly and stupid” she said in her pre-interview. Upon leaving class, Meghan was very astute at knowing that racism is systemic and the privileges she is afforded due to her

whiteness. She also discussed how to take small actions to push against racism on an individual level of challenging her friends in discussion. However, while Meghan spoke the language of understanding racism, she continued a thread of contradictory colorblind statements that obscured a true comprehension of the ways in which racism operates. In the quote below, Meghan identified that racism goes beyond the individual level:

So what this class did for me was help me understand there's more, and there are other things in the way, and no matter if they [POC] get a job, build a resume, there are still people who stereotype and are prejudice just 'cause they are in the minority. (Post-interview, April 29, 2019)

At this point, Meghan came to realize that even if POC do the right things by exemplifying and operating within a meritocratic society, they still have more obstacles to face—that pulling one up by their bootstraps *might not* be enough. At the end of her statement though, Meghan did imply that it is individuals who might stereotype/prejudice, not necessarily institutions.

Kassandra said several times “I’ve been privileged” throughout the class and was able to topically describe the way racism operates. But she also displayed troubling colorblind language and performances of white resistance in which she did not attribute her privileged life directly to race. Kassandra also absolved herself of the responsibility to take direct actions against the perpetuation of how racism hindered her ability to become racially literate and disguised the dearth of a deeper, more reflexive understanding of the lasting effects that racism has on everyone:

Cause I’m never gonna be able to change my unconscious bias. I’ve accepted that. I don’t like it, but I’ve accepted it ‘cause I’m past the age that most imprints are made. I think I was really lucky that nothing major really happened to me. (Post-interview, May 6, 2019)

Here, Cassandra is showcasing that one can racialize themselves but still not have a coherent understanding of how racism operates systemically. While acknowledging her own bias, Cassandra is not taking responsibility for her ability to change or challenge her own bias.

As shown and supported with evidence, each participant exemplified different aspects of racial literacy to different levels. Each participant discussed strengths and weaknesses they have that also showed their limitations. None of the participants felt an ability to enact systemic/institutional change to race. However, Ruby and Meghan engaged with the topics of race and whiteness while also discussing ways to push back against those around them.

Conclusion

The three main pillars of racial literacy as mentioned above, include the ability to detect a racial structure exists and gives advantages/privileges to certain social locations, where you as an individual exist within that structure, and how to manipulate the racial structure. Two participants were able to identify that a racial structure/framework exists with clear language, while one had difficulty laying the responsibility of her privileged life to racial privilege. Each participant was easily able to identify where they stood within the web of racism, despite whether they comprehended the full extent to which racism impacts the lives of both POC and White people in the United States. Two of the three participants spoke directly to feeling unsure and incapable of making institutional change—they seemed to feel powerless for the petrified racial structure that exists. However, these same student-participants *did* speak to ways they can—and do—create change and push back against their peers on an individual level along with displaying

their ability to think, write, and discuss issues of race. One student-participant admitted that her own subconscious impressions had already been imprinted, so what is the point in trying to change them (and subsequently anyone else's).

The findings suggest an importance of cultivating a space in which situated learning can emerge. Through the lens of humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogy, community-building activities, and forthright candor from me, students were able to feel less threatened, which led to their active engagement and ability to practice their new racial literacy discourse in and outside of the classroom. Students felt comfortable enough to share their thoughts on topics they had not previously discussed without the fear of judgement and reprisal. Due to this, honest discussions took place and helped foster a community that supported situated learning as we all strived to become critical consumers of information.

In this chapter, the narrative arc of each participant was presented along with whether they were or were not showing signs of having understood and showed signs of practicing the three legs of racial literacy. As indicated, two of the three participants were able to exemplify or speak to all three of the pillars of racial literacy. One student-participant was unable to speak directly to the existence of a racial frame and how to manipulate it but was able to identify that she was privileged, albeit without directly naming race as the reason.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

Both humanizing pedagogy and CSP were created for and focused on advancing POC humans and students. While these pedagogies have the ability to enhance all bodies, how does one use them in mostly White spaces without the feelings of cooptation. When thinking about humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies for White spaces, several questions emerge. How do we as critical pedagogues use these pedagogies in White spaces that helps advance White students but not at the expense of POCs? If “Culturally sustaining pedagogy exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2), then how do we conceive of a CSP in White-dominated spaces with a lack of POC representation? While CSP for minorities is to sustain and affirm their identity through exposing our erased history, knowledges, and ways of knowing through classroom material that decenters whiteness, CSP for White students cannot sustain and affirm their identity. This affirmation of a single identity, the perpetuation of whiteness as the one and only way of knowing by forcing assimilation policies to melt and become One American will only reproduce the same dehumanization that currently plagues the American educational system. Therefore, CSP for White students, while still centering on the experiences of the Other, forces a reconceptualization of the world around them. Are using these pedagogies a simple cut and paste activity from POC-dominate classrooms to White classrooms?

Specifically speaking to CSP, as stated by Alim and Paris (2017), “In fundamentally reimagining the purpose of education, CSP demands a critical, emancipatory vision of schooling that reframes the object of critique from our children to oppressive systems” (p. 3). In this way, CSP works the same for both White and POC students. By pointing out the systemic nature of oppression and how schools are used to promote and further the colonial project of melting cultures into their oppressor under the auspicious label of assimilation, the combination of CSP and humanizing pedagogies allows for the critique and critical examination to be solely focused on the systems and institutions of oppression, rather than on the students entrapped—both POC and White. Understanding that the problem of mono-knowing—that one way of thinking, interpreting the world, and way of knowing—is inherently correct and has been structurally designed should free White students from thinking they are the *direct* problem, to understanding they are a *product of* the problem. While this should absolve them of any direct guilt of creating, it should not absolve them from the responsibility of actively taking steps to undo what has been done.

I have come to see many "Aha!" moments in my short time teaching. The best ones are from the White male students who realize they have been misled their entire lives. They have been taught to believe that meritocracy is real, that hard work trumps any identity, individual, or institutional barriers, and that, for the most part, we deserve the positions we have in life due to our own efforts. When faced with the reality that they have a leg up, and they are afforded certain privileges others aren't, I have found, the pushback seems to come from a stance of defensiveness—a need to express, rationalize, explain, and defend their position in life and their hard work that got them where they

are. That somehow, identifying structural oppression and how life is tailored toward benefiting White people somehow undermines all of the effort they have given.

In my experience, the White students who understand the quickest and have solid points of connection are like the student-participants from this study: White women. Given the gender bias they have endured, through understanding what it feels like to be seen and labeled as a second-class citizen and standing on the shoulders of very important figures that fought for gender equality, White women, such as Ruby, Meghan, and Cassandra, come to realize the connections between gender and racial equity.

As Alim and Paris (2017) acknowledge, “CSP, then, is necessary to honor, value, and center the rich and varied practices of communities of color, and is a necessary pedagogy for helping shape access to power in a changing nation” (p. 6). CSP for White students makes sure to utilize the established avenues that are present in the current culture by presenting material in non-traditional ways (e.g., poems, movies, social media). With this, CSP acknowledges that the ways young people engage in race, ethnicity, language, and literacy is constantly shifting (Alim & Paris, 2017). This is why CSP is not a cut and paste activity. There is no one formula to perform CSP in *any* classroom. Culture, especially youth culture, is fluid. Understanding the fluidity of culture allows the humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogue the ability to find new pathways to core and foundational concepts of cultural, linguistic, and literate pluralism.

I remember the times when teaching meant to have students sit quietly and copy notes from an overhead projector, and this was considered good teaching practices due to the high-test scores that would follow. In those times, I felt something was wrong with me because I craved more. I yearned for more engagement and less imparting.

Humanizing pedagogy offers the space to see students as more than empty receptacles to be filled by the all-knowing teachers. CSP finds those already bare pathways to current culture and asks students to engage with the core topics.

As we seek to perpetuate and foster a pluralist present and future through our pedagogies, it is crucial that we understand that the ways in which young people are enacting race, ethnicity, language, literacy, and their engagement with culture is always shifting and dynamic. (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 7)

Culturally sustaining and humanizing pedagogies are quite literally alive. They morph. They change. The culture changes. And it is shifting from all angles. CSP teaches us to remain reflexive. To remain in a state of constant tension and movement. Not mono or static anything.

For White students, CSP still champions cultural dexterity as a necessary good by fracturing the collection of knowledge and experience they have acquired. CSP for White students should embrace understanding that there is more than the mono-standard, to understand that whiteness is the norm, and to question WHY. In doing this, in questioning the status quo and normalization of whiteness, students generally feel disorientated, confused, and internally deal with the cognitive dissonance that arises when they are faced with a set of facts that contradict their lived reality. CSP positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits. (Alim & Paris, 2017).

This is where humanizing pedagogy must act as a safety net to catch these students, hold them softly and lovingly, while also holding them accountable for their actions and thoughts moving forward. By modeling humanizing pedagogy, by showing the students that I, too, am fallible and still struggle and strive for better, I am permitting

my students to do the same. For White students, CSP might seem disruptive to the normalized ways to which they have become accustomed. However, we as educators must not forget the humanizing aspect. If we do, we fail our students and send forth in the world disgruntled White students who feel even more embolden in their stance of whiteness as the norm, that White people are victims, and that we must Make America Great Again. “This position resonates with the goal of CSPs to develop practices and policies that foster a pluralist future, moving beyond practices and policies that uphold and reproduce assimilationist, monolingual, monocultural, and antidemocratic futures” (Alim & Haupt, 2017, p. 168). Therefore, the following future implications have been listed below.

Future Implications for Finding #1

For CSP to be advanced and understood within White spaces, there must be an extended reconceptualization of culturally sustaining pedagogy that includes ways to ensure that teachers are not reproducing the same inequities that currently exist. Nor can we as critical and culturally sustaining pedagogues continue to evermore silence the plethora of voices not present in the room by neglecting to include literate, linguistic, and cultural pluralisms in our readings, sources, teachings, and ways of being. With that, we must better understand how CSP can be implemented in White spaces by identifying the main pillars that must be present for CSP to thrive. CSP for White students is not as easy as implementing it through a lesson plan. To foster an environment for healthy dialogues about socially taboo and deeply emotional subjects, there must be a community built on trust. By spending time on community-building activities, we as a class were able to grapple with topics that students had not been able to discuss openly.

Teachers need to go through a rigorous self-examination to ensure that they have done the work that they are asking of their students. This requires levels of self-work that allow the teacher to lead by example, which permits their students to do the same. Without a thorough self-reflexion, teachers will not produce the results they seek from their students. What this also contains are the assignments the teachers' grade, why they are grading it, and how they assess learning in the classroom. This might be a struggle for some teachers, as they believe all students should be assessed the same. However, grading strategy is a major part of CSP and humanizing pedagogy. Further qualitative research must be conducted that begins to better understand how CSP and humanizing pedagogy are effectively used in White spaces that identify the pedagogical moves and decisions made. This will help illuminate more concrete ways that teachers can implement CSP and humanizing pedagogy in their classroom spaces for the advantages of creating critical consumers and racially literate students.

Future Implications for Finding #2

Future implications for the findings in this chapter suggest the importance of community-building through humanizing pedagogy. By doing this front-loading work, teachers can nurture a space in which students feel comfort in discomfort. That is to say, by building relationships within the classroom space, students will feel safer to be vulnerable with the lead authority, and most important, feel comfortable enough with discomfort to discuss weighty topics with their peers, which builds racial stamina (DiAngelo, 2011). With this, an environment that fosters situated learning emerges—one in which students are helping other students learn through dialogue. While it may seem that a teacher has so much material to cover in a short time, by investing time to foster an

environment in which students feel safe in discomfort, the focus shifts from the quantity of material covered to the quality and depth that can be achieved.

Conclusion

On January 6, 2021, a violent mob overran the United States Capitol Building. As they defecated on the floor of the National Statuary Hall, they chanted “Stop the Steal!” and “Hang Mike Pence!” This was in response to the election of then-former Vice President Joe Biden. In 2019, the Pew Research Center (2019a) stated that 7-in-10 say race relations in the United States were getting worse. Two thirds of Americans polled said that it has become “more common” for their fellow Americans to “express racist or racially insensitive views since Donald Trump was elected” (p. 17). In another Pew Research Center (2019b) poll, 82% of Republicans felt that “too many people are offended over language,” while not as high but just as scary, about half of Democrats agreed. Given the sociopolitical context with which we are currently operating, it is clear that understanding ways to teach racial literacy is a must.

I acknowledge that racial literacy is not static practices, one that someone can master a set of skills and then pronounce themselves racially literate. Racial literacy is a process that requires one to constantly strive toward. With that, what has been outlined in this project are a set of skills that can help teachers begin the healing and correction by White students.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CRITERIA FOR STUDY

Criteria for Study

- White
- Undergrad
- Willingness to participate

EXPECTATIONS FOR THE STUDY

- Two walking/talking informal audio-recorded interviews. 30 min each. One at the beginning of the semester, one at the end. Dates to be determined.
- The ability to read drafts of the sections of research on you. This is to ensure your voice is properly represented in the project.
- NOT REQUIRED but suggested: write down observations of the teaching team. Either me in this space or the professor during lectures. The observations can be anything: things the person said that strike you; behaviors the person did that strike you; thoughts you're having about the class; what's working, what isn't.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT (STUDENT-PARTICIPANT)

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study
[name of University]

Researcher(s): Robert Jamaal Downey (researcher); Dr. K. C. Nat Turner (faculty sponsor)

Study Title: Toward Racial Literacy: An Exploration of Humanizing Pedagogy and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?

This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research.

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate and any known risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to take some time to think this over and ask questions now and at any other time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form, and you will be given a copy for your records.

2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

Subjects must be at least 18 years old to participate. Characteristics of the participants are: White undergraduate students enrolled in EDUC167 Education and Film.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This study will be trying to figure out how particular teaching styles affect the ideas of race and whiteness for White students at a Predominately White Institutions (PWI), which are places like UMass—anywhere that the student population is more than 50% White. More specifically, this project defines the teaching strategies of humanizing pedagogy, which is to teach in a way that allows students to be fully human as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, and creative people who participate in and with the world, and culturally sustaining pedagogy, which is to perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate cultural pluralisms, and how these styles of educational practices lead White students to a new understanding of whiteness of themselves and the world around them. This new awareness is racial consciousness and/or racial literacy.

4. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This study will last one year. The majority of this study will be conducted by observation and analysis of class assignments during one semester. There will be two roughly 30-minute, semi-structured interviews to be conducted either walking and talking or in a neutral and informal setting on campus once consent for participation has been granted.

The researcher will then share drafts of the results with the participants as a member check. Member checks allow for accuracy and proper representation. This back and forth co-creation of representation will last over the summer and the fall semester of 2019.

5. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

You may skip any question/s you feel uncomfortable answering. You can decline to be recorded by the researcher. You may ask the researcher to stop recording at any time.

You will be asked to be involved in two 30-minute informal walking/talking audio-recorded interviews. The themes of these interviews will be similar; one serving as a pre-reflection and one serving as a post-reflection of the same topics.

Themes during the first informal individual interview will be: expectations of the class—what you have heard about this class, and what you hope to take away; self-identification of one's own race—have you previously considered your own race in relation to the larger society?; past reflections on race—what, if any, racialized experiences do you have?; current state of race relations—where do you think we are as a nation on race relations?; future race relations—where do you think we are headed?; teacher-student relationship—explain your understanding of the traditional teacher-student relationship and teaching styles that work for you.

Themes during the second recorded individual interview will be similar in nature: expectations of the class—were they met or not and why?; self-identification of one's own race—given the course content and the styles of teaching, do you feel your understanding of your race has shifted over the course of the semester?; past reflections on race—due to the material and methods of teaching, do you view your past experience of/on race differently?; current race relations—do you feel you have more tools to decipher racialized language, including but not limited to text/images/media/cinema—having taken this class?; future race relations—do you feel you have the language skills to counter forms of individual and institutional racism after having taken this class?; teacher-student relationship—how was this student-teacher experience different than your others?

You might be contacted for clarification purposes during analysis. The researcher wants to make sure the participants' voices are correctly represented. The participant can decline to respond.

6. WHAT ARE MY BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

The potential benefits to this study are to gain a new literacy that allows the participants to better understand the world around them. Students should leave this study with the ability to be more self-reflexive and decode racist language and behavior. This knowledge is co-constructed with the researcher through the use of humanizing pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, critical ethnography, and a social justice orientation.

7. WHAT ARE MY RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

The risks associated with this study are minimal; however, there are some. Because the subject matter of race is one that sparks highly emotional responses in some people and the amount of critical reflexion that is urged during the implication of humanizing pedagogy, the participants might experience some stress and discomfort when analyzing their current and past beliefs on race, their race, and whiteness in general. All of the data will be given individually and kept confidential.

To minimize these risks, the researcher is making clear: the focus is on the teaching styles this class uses, not on YOU as students and where you were versus ended up. The focus is on the things we do as a teaching team, the atmosphere we create and foster, and what effects they have on the difference between when you entered and when you exited. You as the participant are serving as markers, not being individually judged.

You may skip any question/s you feel uncomfortable answering.

The researcher does not want you to feel pressured or uncomfortable participating in this study. Therefore, other members of the teaching team (not the researcher) will grade your assignments.

8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your study records, which include class assignments, recorded interviews, and observation notes. The researcher will keep all study records, including any codes to your data, in a secure location, which is a locked file cabinet at his home. Research records will be labeled with a code. Participants will have the ability to choose a pseudonym. A master key that links names and pseudonyms will be maintained in a separate and secure location. The master key and audiotapes will be destroyed three years after the close of the study. All electronic files, including assignments and interview transcripts containing identifiable information, will be password protected. Any computer hosting such files will also have password protection to prevent access by unauthorized users. Only the members of the research staff will have access to the passwords. At the conclusion of this study, the researcher may publish the findings. Information will be presented in summary format, and you will not be identified in any publications or presentations.

10. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. We will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher, (R. Jamaal Downey (area code)[phone number]; rdowney@[name of University].edu) or the faculty sponsor, (Dr. K. C. Nat Turner (area code) [phone number]; [nturner@educ.\[name of University\].edu](mailto:nturner@educ.[name of University].edu)). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the [name of University] Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (area code) [phone number] or [humansubjects@ora.\[name of University\].org](mailto:humansubjects@ora.[name of University].org)

11. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

12. WHAT IF I AM INJURED?

Although injury is highly unlikely, the [name of University] does not have a program for compensating subjects for injury or complications related to human subjects research, but the study personnel will assist you in getting treatment. The researcher will be in contact with gatekeepers so that student participants can get emotional, academic, and/or medical as needed.

13. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language that I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

You may skip any question/s you feel uncomfortable answering. You can decline to be recorded by the researcher. You may ask the researcher to stop recording at any time. Please place an “X” or “checkmark” next to each coursework assignment you consent to be collected as data, below. You can decline consent to include any data by leaving the space open.

- _____ I agree for the researcher to use my journal entries for this study.
- _____ I agree for the researcher to use my reflection papers for this study.
- _____ I agree for the researcher to use my multimedia projects for this study.

Participant Signature: Print Name: Date:

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of Person Print Name: Date:

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT (TEACHING TEAM PARTICIPANT)

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

[name of University]

Researcher(s): Robert Jamaal Downey (researcher); Dr. K. C. Nat Turner (faculty sponsor)

Study Title: Toward Racial Literacy: An Exploration of Humanizing Pedagogy and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

1. WHAT IS THIS FORM?

This form is called a Consent Form. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about participation in this research.

This consent form will give you the information you will need to understand why this study is being done and why you are being invited to participate. It will also describe what you will need to do to participate and any known risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that you may have while participating. We encourage you to take some time to think this over and ask questions now and at any other time. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form, and you will be given a copy for your records.

2. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE?

Subjects must be at least 18 years old to participate. Characteristics of the participants are: White undergraduate students enrolled in EDUC167 Education and Film, and the teaching team for EDUC167 Education and film.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This study will be trying to figure out how particular teaching styles affect the ideas of race and whiteness for White students at a Predominately White Institutions (PWI), which are places like UMass—anywhere that the student population is more than 50% White. More specifically, this project defines the teaching strategies of humanizing pedagogy, which is to teach in a way that allows students to be fully human as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, and creative people who participate in and with the world, and culturally sustaining pedagogy, which is to perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate cultural pluralisms, and how these styles of educational practices lead White students to a new understanding of whiteness of themselves and the world around them. This new awareness is racial consciousness and/or racial literacy.

4. WHERE WILL THE STUDY TAKE PLACE, AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

This study will last one year. The majority of this study will be conducted by observation and analysis of class assignments during one semester. For the student-participants, there will be two roughly 30-minute, semi-structured interviews to be conducted either walking and talking or in a neutral and informal setting on campus once consent for participation

has been granted. For the teaching team, no extra time will be required, and there will be no interviews conducted specifically for this study.

The researcher will then share drafts of the results with the participants as a member check. Member checks allow for accuracy and proper representation. This back and forth co-creation of representation will last over the summer and the fall semester of 2019.

5. WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

You may skip any question/s you feel uncomfortable answering. You can decline to be recorded by the researcher. You may ask the researcher to stop recording at any time.

Student-participants will be asked to be involved in two 30-minute informal walking/talking audio-recorded interviews. The themes of these interviews will be similar; one serving as a pre-reflection and one serving as a post-reflection of the same topics.

Themes during the first informal individual interview will be: expectations of the class—what have you heard about this class, and what do you hope to take away?; self-identification of one's own race—have you previously considered your own race in relation to the larger society?; past reflections on race—what, if any, racialized experiences do you have?; current state of race relations—where do you think we are as a nation on race relations?; future race relations—where do you think we are headed?; teacher-student relationship—explain your understanding of the traditional teacher-student relationship and teaching styles that work for you.

Themes during the second recorded individual interview will be similar in nature: expectations of the class—were they met or not and why?; self-identification of one's own race—given the course content and the styles of teaching, do you feel your understanding of your race has shifted over the course of the semester?; past reflections on race—due to the material and methods of teaching, do you view your past experience of/on race differently?; current race relations—do you feel you have more tools to decipher racialized language, including but not limited to text/images/media/cinema—having taken this class?; future race relations—do you feel you have the language skills to counter forms of individual and institutional racism after having taken this class?; teacher-student relationship—how was this student-teacher experience different than your others?

The teaching team is consenting to being observed by both the researcher and the student-participants. This includes any notes from teaching team meetings, syllabus changes, emails and texts shared with the teaching team regarding the class, and personal communication with the researcher about the class.

You might be contacted for clarification purposes during analysis. The researcher wants to make sure the participants' voices are correctly represented. The participant can decline to respond.

6. WHAT ARE MY BENEFITS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

The potential benefits to this study are to gain a new literacy that allows the participant to better understand the world around them. Students should leave this study with the ability to be more self-reflexive and decode racist language and behavior. This knowledge is co-constructed with the researcher through the use of humanizing pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogy, critical ethnography, and a social justice orientation. The teaching team should leave the study with clearly identified pedagogical tools that can help in the development of racial literacy in the future.

7. WHAT ARE MY RISKS OF BEING IN THIS STUDY?

The risks associated with this study are minimal; however, there are some. Because the subject matter of race is one that sparks highly emotional responses in some people and the amount of critical reflexion that is urged during the implication of humanizing pedagogy, the participants might experience some stress and discomfort when analyzing their current and past beliefs on race, their race, and whiteness in general. All of the data will be given individually and kept confidential.

To minimize these risks, the researcher is making clear: the focus is on the teaching styles this class uses, not on YOU as students or teaching team and where you were versus ended up or the tools you use. The focus is on the things we *do* as a teaching team, the atmosphere we create and foster, and what affects they have on the difference between when the students entered and when they exited. You as the student-participants and the individual members of the teaching team are serving as markers, not being individually judged.

You may skip any question/s you feel uncomfortable answering.

8. HOW WILL MY PERSONAL INFORMATION BE PROTECTED?

The following procedures will be used to protect the confidentiality of your study records, which include class assignments, recorded interviews, and observation notes. The researcher will keep all study records, including any codes to your data, in a secure location, which is a locked file cabinet at his home. Research records will be labeled with a code. Participants will have the ability to choose a pseudonym. A master key that links names and pseudonyms will be maintained in a separate and secure location. The master key and audiotapes will be destroyed three years after the close of the study. All electronic files, including assignments and interview transcripts containing identifiable information, will be password protected. Any computer hosting such files will also have password protection to prevent access by unauthorized users. Only the members of the research staff will have access to the passwords. At the conclusion of this study, the researchers may publish their findings. Information will be presented in summary format, and you will not be identified in any publications or presentations.

10. WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Take as long as you like before you make a decision. We will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact the researcher (R. Jamaal Downey

(area code)[phone number]; rdowney@[name of University].edu) or the faculty sponsor, (Dr. K. C. Nat Turner (area code) [phone number]; [nturner@educ.\[name of University\].edu](mailto:nturner@educ.[name of University].edu)). If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the [name of University] Human Research Protection Office (HRPO) at (area code) [phone number] or [humansubjects@ora.\[name of University\].org](mailto:humansubjects@ora.[name of University].org)

11. CAN I STOP BEING IN THE STUDY?

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

12. WHAT IF I AM INJURED?

Although injury is highly unlikely, the [name of University] does not have a program for compensating subjects for injury or complications related to human subjects research, but the study personnel will assist you in getting treatment. The researcher will be in contact with gatekeepers so that student participants can get emotional, academic, and/or medical as needed.

13. SUBJECT STATEMENT OF VOLUNTARY CONSENT

When signing this form, I am agreeing to voluntarily enter this study. I have had a chance to read this consent form, and it was explained to me in a language that I use and understand. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. A copy of this signed Informed Consent Form has been given to me.

You may skip any question/s you feel uncomfortable answering. You can decline to be recorded by the researcher. You may ask the researcher to stop recording at any time. Please place an “X” or “checkmark” next to each coursework assignment you consent to be collected as data, below. You can decline consent to include any data by leaving the space open.

_____ I agree for the researcher to use notes from teaching team meetings for this study.

_____ I agree for the researcher to use emails and texts shared with the teaching team for this study.

_____ I agree for the researcher to use personal communication with the researcher regarding the class for this study.

Participant Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

By signing below, I indicate that the participant has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

Signature of Person

Print Name:

Date:

APPENDIX D

SCRIPT FOR RECRUITMENT

Hey yall! As you know, I am your discussion section facilitator. I say facilitator because I believe in a nontraditional style of classroom in which we all learn from each other—that includes me learning from you.

I'm currently a doctoral student and embarking on my dissertation research. I'm also biracial. My mom is White, and I was raised in mostly white spaces. I wanted yall to know that off the bat.

I'm looking to study how humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies affect racial literacy. In easier words, how does the unconventional style of this class as a whole change your perception of your own race? From viewing movies and media to sharpen our critical lens, to the way the teaching team sees you as an individual, despite being part of a class that's 150 people, and through providing different ways for yall to express the old knowledge you already have combined with the new knowledge you're gaining. Does all this allow you to gain a new lens, a new way to view both the world and how you fit?

I have to say: a requirement for this study is to be White and here's why: Humanizing and culturally sustaining pedagogies were created and are intended for use on marginalized and oppressed communities. Therefore, a lot of researchers have studied the effects of these pedagogies on minorities. Not much work has been done on the ways these pedagogies change White folks. That's what I'm trying to study.

I have a list of what is expected for you here. Time requirements are: two 30-minute walking/talking interviews, one within the next 2 weeks, and the other at the end of the semester. Walking and talking interviews are designed to be less formal and try to ease the tension of traditional sit-down across from each other kind of interviews. You'll get to pick a few spots on campus, and we can make a route and start.

Although not required, I'd encourage you as participants to take observations of us, the teaching team. What kind of things should you notice as observations to write down? ANY material that had an impact during lecture and/or home assignments, moments in lecture or discussion that stood out or were memorable, and any other information about the lead professor and/or teaching team you deem worthy of mention.

Other than that, once the class is finished, I'd ask you to review the bits of my research that include you to ensure I'm representing your voice. The rest of the data I can collect through assignments and observation.

Thanks, and anyone interested please see me after class!

Jamaal

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE FIELD NOTES FORMAT

Observations

Interpretation

APPENDIX F

MULTIMODAL MEDIA PROJECT ANALYSIS RUBRIC

Image/slide:

--	--	--

Time:
(sec)

(0:00)

(0:00)

(0:00)

Background music:

--	--	--

Spoken content:

--	--	--

Specific theme/quotes from readings used:

--	--	--

Specific film clips used:

--	--	--

Reactions/interpretations

--	--	--

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS/THEMES

Questions/themes for first interview:

- What are your expectations of the class/ what do you hope to take away?
- Teacher-student relationship—explain your understanding of the traditional teacher-student relationship and teaching styles that work for you.
- In general, describe the ways past professors have engaged with you and how that made you feel.
- What have you heard about this class?
- Self-identification of one's own race—have you previously considered your own race in relation to the larger society?
- Past reflections on race—What, if any, racialized experiences do you have? That would be any situation in which you felt your race, or the race of someone else, mattered.
- Current state of race relations—Where do you think we are as a nation on race relations?
- Future race relations—Where do you think we are headed?

Questions/themes for second interview:

- Expectations of the class—Were they met or not and why?
- Teacher-student relationship—How was this student-teacher experience different than your others? Describe.
- Self-identification of one's own race—given the course content and the styles of teaching, do you feel your understanding of your race has shifted over the course of the semester? If so, how? If not, why do you think that is?
- Past reflections on race—Due to the material and methods of teaching, do you view any of your past experience of/on race differently?
- Current race relations—Do you feel you have more tools to decipher racialized language, including but not limited to text/images/media/cinema—having taken this class? If so, describe something that you didn't see/understand but now do. If not, what did you take away and why?

Future race relations—do you feel you have the language skills to counter forms of individual and institutional racism after having taken this class? If so, describe. If not, describe.

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