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How It Lives in Me Is the Work: A Mother and Daughter's Critical Collaborative Inquiry Navigating and Deconstructing White Fragility

Margaret Dantzler

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, HOW IT LIVES IN ME IS THE WORK: A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER'S CRITICAL COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY NAVIGATING AND DECONSTRUCTING WHITE FRAGILITY by MARGARET W. DANTZLER, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Education, in the College of Education & Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

_____
Teresa Fisher-Ari, Ph.D.
Committee Chair

_____
Stacey French-Lee, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Teri Holbrook, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Laura Meyers, Ph.D.
Committee Member

_____
Date

_____
Laura May, Ph.D.
Chairperson, Department of Early Childhood
and Elementary Education

_____
Paul A. Alberto, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education &
Human Development

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MARGARET W. DANTZLER

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Margaret W. Dantzler
Early Childhood and Elementary Education
College of Education & Human Development
Georgia State University

The director of this dissertation is:

Teresa Fisher-Ari
Early Childhood and Elementary Education
College of Education & Human Development
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA 30303

CURRICULUM VITAE

Margaret W. Dantzler

ADDRESS: 1638 Alder Court SE
Atlanta, GA 30317

EDUCATION:

Ed.D.	2020	Georgia State University Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Masters Degree	2014	Georgia State University Early Childhood and Elementary Education
Bachelors Degree	2012	University of Florida/Political Science

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

2018-present	Student Support Coordinator Slater Elementary/Atlanta Public Schools
2017-2018	Literacy Interventionist Slater Elementary/Atlanta Public Schools
2012-2017	Seaborn Lee Elementary Fulton County Schools

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS:

Fisher-Ari, T., Eaton, A., Dantzler, M. (2019). Mentor matching: Innovations in clinical practice across PDS networks. *School-University Partnerships, 12*(2), (pp. 94-100).

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

2019 National Association of Multicultural Education

HOW IT LIVES IN ME IS THE WORK: A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER'S CRITICAL COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY NAVIGATING AND DECONSTRUCTING WHITE FRAGILITY

by

MARGARET W. DANTZLER

Under the Direction of Teresa Fisher-Ari

ABSTRACT

Through this critical collaborative inquiry, we (Margaret and Julie) - an adult mother and daughter - worked to understand our white identities, strengthen our racial consciousness, and interrupt our white fragility (D'Angelo, 2011, 2018). Framed in critical whiteness studies (Bahattacharya, 2013; Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012), critical family histories (Sleeter, 2013), and racial socialization (Coard & Sellers, 2005; Hughes et al., 2006), we worked to understand how whiteness and systems perpetuating it shape our personal lives and vocations (teacher and counselor). Data sources included a) family-photograph elicited memory-based discussions about race, b) personal memos/individually written reflections related to our collective readings on whiteness, white fragility, and structural racism, and c) drafted racial autoethnographies. We analyzed data using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and In Vivo coding (Saldana, 2016). Through analysis, we discovered that systems and decisions centering and privileging whiteness shaped our racialized identities and unexamined racial biases that influenced our personal and professional lives. We were racially socialized and conditioned during our

childhoods through: a) experiences, traditions, and relationships that fostered and maintained racial isolation and white exceptionalism, b) misrepresentations of racism as individual acts of overt bigotry rather than systems of hegemony and privilege that we benefitted from, and c) the revision of history to create heroic family narratives of white beneficence. We uncovered manifestations of centering norms of white supremacy and white fragility which were and are perpetuated in our personal and professional lives and larger school and social contexts. Through this process, we encountered cognitive dissonances while uncovering the influence white supremacy on our personal relationships and professional practice such as our lack of understanding of how our white centering behaviors and biases influence how we engage alongside our students and clients of color. This inquiry adds to a growing body of research that supports white teacher identity development and how whiteness influences a teacher's practice. Implications for teachers, school systems, teacher preparation programs, and university faculty are offered. Additionally, we provide recommendations for white individuals committed to becoming co-conspirators (Love, 2019) and dismantling their own fragility and the structures that uphold and perpetuate white supremacy.

INDEX WORDS: white identity development, white fragility, teaching, critical collaborative inquiry, critical family histories, helping professions

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MARGARET W. DANTZLER

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother, Julie Anna Pope-Dantzler. You decided to live a life on your terms and raised AB and me to do the same. You also have chosen to walk alongside me throughout all of my endeavors, be it musical theatre, Panhellenic recruitment, and now in this work. No words can ever describe or capture the love and gratitude I have for you. Instead, I choose to share a perfect day spent with you.

It's a bluebird day in Islamorada. The tarpon are biting and the dolphin are running. Rick & Julie and the girls (including Annie) decided they couldn't waste such a flat-calm day and went offshore at dawn. They stopped at Alligator Light on the way back in because the visibility was so good. After diving, they enjoyed frozen Snickers on the boat as they shook up some sargassum weed in a clear gallon jug to reveal baby shrimp and budding mangroves. They re-applied sunscreen and said the smell reminded them of Grandmimi.

After cleaning the fish, Margaret and Julie kayaked to Cheeca as Rick took a nap (but pretended not to) and Liz went to the gym. When they made their way to the shore, they first stopped to see the Angel. As the sun began to dry the saltwater on their bodies, they thought about Millard, Gaga, and Uncle Dick. They moved towards the sound of Jimmy Buffet's "A1A" album and ordered two rumrunners (each with floaters) and some conch fritters. They enjoyed each other's company as the sun from the day on the water began to appear on their noses and cheeks.

After they got home, they grilled the dolphin and served it with black beans and rice. Liz made margaritas and Rick played James Taylor on the guitar. After dinner, they enjoyed Key Lime Pie for dessert from the Trading Post. Annie came back in time for them to head outside with flashlights to hunt for hermit crabs and find lobsters and crabs off the dock. As they listened

to the water slap against the slip, they watched the stars light up the sky and pierce the ocean in front of them and dreamed of what the next day's adventures would bring with each other.

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To the incredible educators I have had the pleasure of working alongside and learning from, especially Mrs. Tianna Knight and Mrs. Yolwana Jones. You two are magicians and truly the best in the game. You lead with love and "kids first" and encourage others to do the same. I am grateful for how you have opened your hearts to me and your friendship. I learn from you daily and you make me a better educator, wife, friend, more racially-conscious individual, and maybe Mommy one day. I love you both. Let's keep creating 5-star experiences for children and families!

To Julie: To anyone wondering, my mother and very best friend in the whole wide world share the same name. This is to Julie the best friend, the 8101 partner in crime, my Diet Coke and Twizzlers (and sometimes puffy Cheeto) run partner, my pull a Christmas tree out of your closet for my best birthday gift giver, my Doc Chey's Mongolian with lo-mein noodles and fried tofu and add a scrambled egg on top date (in a booth if possible, please) date, my flash-cards on the head meltdown support, and my person. You have made me a better human and teacher and I refuse to imagine a life in which we are not a 2 for 1 special. Thank you for leaving iced coffee and Diet Coke on my front porch as I finished this up. Here's to more adventures that start with trips to the Humane Society and end on Edgewood. And in the words of our dear Glennon, "It is an honor to know a free woman. Sometimes she will stop by and hold up a mirror for you. She

will help you remember who you are" (Doyle, 2020, p. 112). Thank you for being that free woman for me (and others).

To Peter: A month or so ago, I was complaining about how writing this dissertation was one of the hardest things I'd ever done in my life, and I shared that marrying you was perhaps the easiest thing I'd ever done. Ever since I met you (button-down, khaki shorts), you have enriched my life. I fell in love with your knowledge of the world, kindness, political acumen, intelligence, dedication to your students and your classroom, ability to move through diverse spaces, your dashing good looks, and general "seasoning." I had never or will ever meet anyone like you. Thank you for honoring the way I chose to go through this process, which I know wasn't always the easiest for you. You wielded your passive voice lightsaber when asked without hesitation and thankfully waved your hourly rate. You are my biggest fan and have endless confidence in me. Inside of this thanks is gratitude to Peter's mommy, Caroline - our favorite angel - for raising you (as well as thanks to Steve and Chris). In sum, you're the best, and let's keep doing life together.

To my sister and my dad: also known as the twins. *AB* - my big sister, who became a mommy during this journey. I love you, Walker, and Baby Anna more than you know. Bring out the Mettler! *Dad* - I could write an entire dissertation about the love you have for AB and me and how you exemplify a father who will do anything for his children. You equipped me with a sense of self and home base that gives me the courage to walk through this world with my own opinions and dreams. I love you.

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1 INTRODUCTION

> Teachers need to be taught how to question Whiteness and white supremacy, how to check and deal with their White emotions of guilt and anger, and how these all impact their classrooms. Only after unpacking and interrogating Whiteness…then they can stand in solidarity with their students' communities for social change. (Love, 2019, p, 75)

In *We Want to Do More than Survive,* Love (2019) insists that all white educators must engage in racial identity and consciousness development because of the pervasiveness and harmful effects of whiteness in schools. Love (2019) argues this work must first begin with white educators understanding their white privilege and how it has informed the racist beliefs and biases they hold about their students of color. Racial identities are informed by a number of factors, including a person's childhood, relationships, and family histories. The work of white educators developing their racial identity and consciousness and reflecting upon how they inform their practice as a teacher with all students, but especially students of color, can be complex, emotional, and prove difficult for white educators. However, while this work may be difficult and uncomfortable, the consequences of choosing not to engage in it are dire. When white teachers allow our racial biases and identities to go unquestioned or unexamined, norms of white dominant culture and supremacy are perpetuated inside of our classrooms daily and throughout larger school structures (Aronson & Ashlee, 2018; Chatelain, 2017; DiAngelo, 2004; Sleeter, 1993). These norms and biases can play out in various mechanisms of racism through colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), dysconscious racism (King, 1991), and white-savior mentalities (Matias, 2013b; Emdin, 2016). According to Lawrence & Tatum (1997)

> When White teachers fail to acknowledge their own racial identity, this lack of acknowledgement becomes a barrier to understanding and connecting with the development needs of children of color. It is the teacher who does not acknowledge his or her own racial or ethnic identity…who will not recognize the need for children of color to affirm their own (p. 163).

White educators also often hold harmful deficit perspectives about students of color, their families, and community, have lower expectations of ability and potential of students of color students, over-refer these students for special education services, and struggle with forming relationships with these students and their families (Downy & Pribesh, 2004; Sleeter, 2008; Wigfield, Galper, Denton, & Seefedlt, 1999). The outcomes of our unexamined and unchecked racial identities and biases create harmful realities for students of color.

White people are problematically overrepresented in the teaching workforce and therefore greatly influence the field of education, which creates a critical urgency and need for white teachers to engage in racial identity and consciousness development. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCEA) (2019), the teaching population in the United States is roughly 80% white while the student population is approximately 49% students of color. This racial disparity is also reflected in the United States kindergarten through twelfth-grade principal population, which is also approximately 80% white (NCEA, 2019). White teachers saturate education, and with their presence comes their harmful biases and unchecked perspectives that influence their work with students, families, and colleagues.

Theoretical Perspective

Creswell (2003) shared that, “philosophically, researchers make claims about what is knowledge (ontology), how we know it (epistemology), what values go into it (axiology), how

we write about it (rhetoric), and the processes for the studying it (methodology).” Creswell goes on to define these assumptions as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Creswell, 1998, p. 17). Therefore, the beliefs I hold about how knowledge is created inform the way I approached all aspects of this inquiry. The aforementioned assumptions we as researchers hold about the ways in which knowledge is constructed and experienced have also been referred to as paradigms by Lincoln and Guba (2000) and Mertens (2005) or epistemologies and ontologies by Crotty (1998). Creswell (1990) refers to our general orientations regarding research as worldviews. The worldviews that best inform my thinking and therefore inquiry decisions are constructivism and advocacy/participatory approaches to research, as detailed by Creswell (2003).

Knowledge claims and worldviews are also non-neutral and shape inquiries and research. It is ,therefore, necessary to situate my purposes and processes clearly and reasonings behind my decisions. Below, I will describe my constructivism and advocacy/ participatory (Creswell, 2003) worldview and the ways these stances informed my thinking and decisions across this inquiry. I will then discuss Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) (Applebaum, 2006; Charneneau, 2009; Cullen, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong; 1997; Frankenburg, 2001; Haviland, 2008; Jupp et al., 2016; Kincheloe, Steinburg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998) which served as the theoretical framework for the design and interpretation of the study.

Constructivism. Constructivism is an approach to qualitative research that assumes humans seek to make subjective meanings of the world and experiences through an active, social process that is informed by an individuals’ own social, historical, and cultural perspective. Further, two individuals experiencing the same event or context may reach differing meanings or

interpretations due to the subjective nature of socially constructed knowledge (Creswell, 2003; Crotty, 1998). The individual context and social interactions of the participant is a critical component of this research. This includes noting not only those evidenced by Julie and me, but also acknowledges our own constructed and situated stance as we view, interpret, and endeavor to derive understandings from our inquiry. This is critically aligned with Creswell's (2003) argument that "researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (p. 8). In order to uncover the ways our worldviews have been informed by these experiences, Julie and I collaboratively interrogated our own personal and family histories in order to reflect upon the ways our own backgrounds have informed our past and present racial identities, biases, and consciousness.

Advocacy/Participatory. According to Creswell (2003) the advocacy/participatory worldview contends that research should bring about change for the "lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life" (p. 9). Research, therefore, should be in some way connected to questioning systems of power with the ultimate goal of creating some type of change and freeing individuals from various constraints. In this inquiry, we interrogated whiteness, hegemony, and privilege inside of our experiences and explored the ways we were changed personally and professionally from this work. We also hoped for this work to serve as helpful to other white people, especially those in helping professions, who want to engage in similar racial identity development and interrogation to shift themselves (personally and professionally) in more racially conscious and equitable ways. Additionally, Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) and Creswell (2003) believe researchers and participants move collaboratively through the research process and are "active collaborators"

(Creswell, p.11). Creswell further shared that advocacy/participatory research is "completed *with* others rather than *on* or *to* others" (p. 10) and is evident through my choice to engage collaboration alongside Julie as we learned, grappled, reflected, and altered our thinking and practice. Taken together, our rootedness in constructivist and advocacy/participatory worldviews challenged us to collaboratively question and interrupt the influence of whiteness in our own lives and how we have perpetuated it personally and professionally, which we have endeavored throughout and beyond this collaboration.

Theoretizing and Situating the Inquiry. Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) (Applebaum, 2006; Charneneau, 2009; Cullen, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong; 1997; Frankenburg, 2001; Haviland, 2008; Jupp et al., 2016; Kincheloe, Steinburg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998) served as a theoretical framework that grounded this inquiry at all stages. Prior to understanding how the theory has been utilized to support this inquiry, it is critical to understand its genesis. CWS is an offshoot of Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT originated in the legal field in order to assist legal scholars and activists as they worked to push against structures of power, race, and racism in the legal community (Bell, 1987). Today, researchers utilizing this frame seek to share how various forms of racism operate and are pervasive within society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). According to Solorzano (1997), CRT can be defined "as a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of people of color" (p. 6). Tenants of CRT, including revisionist history and the voice of thesis, will be utilized in chapter four to support analysis.

As an extension of CRT, CWS seek to name "behaviors that signify what it means to be white in our society" (Charbeneau, 2009, p.2) by critically examining various forms of racism. Researchers utilize CWS to interrogate their own white identities in the hopes of interrupting and dismantling institutional racism, oppression, and racial hegemony (Cullen, 2014). CWS provides a framework from which white people can examine these structures and "work to equalize power" (Aronson & Ashlee, 2018, p. 53). According to Love (2019), CWS take a particular interest in examining the ways white supremacy and privilege can be both invisible in society and continually perpetuated. One of the most dangerous aspects of whiteness is its invisibility and normalcy to white people. CWS focus on white people becoming better able to recognize the racial power and social privileges we hold which problematically appear invisible to us (McDermott & Sampson, 2005). According to Maxwell (2013), a theory in an inquiry can be thought of as a spotlight of sorts with the ability to shine a light on particular details and aspects of a phenomenon. In this inquiry, Julie and I sought to illuminate and face the ways our behaviors, biases, and past actions perpetuated whiteness, white supremacy, and racism. CWS allowed Julie and me to "dislodge whiteness from its place of unquestioned, normative status" (Foste, 2017, p. 12) in our lives and histories.

Aronson & Ashlee (2018) contend that while scholars of color such as W.E.B DuBois (1920), James Baldwin (1962), and bell hooks (1994), have been writing about and researching the role of race in society for quite some time, CWS only recently emerged as a vehicle by which white people can deconstruct whiteness. It is troublingly frequent for white people to only study and investigate what it means to be a person of color in this country, while we have historically neglected to deeply understand and reflect upon what it means to be white in this country. In order to do so, we must "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" (Matias & Mackey, 2016, p. 34). Further, engaging in this work can increase our capacity to take part in discourse in both same and cross-racial groups and decrease our likelihood to respond with resistance. This resistance, which is referred to as White Fragility by DiAngelo (2006), can often present itself through emotions such as "anger, withdrawal, emotional incapacitation, guilt, argumentation, and cognitive dissonance" (p. 56) and will be further detailed in chapter two. This work is done by examining the "ways in which history, law, culture, and pseudoscience have contributed to the construction of Whiteness, racism, and White supremacy in the United States" (Aronson & Ashlee, 2018, p. 53). These structures have afforded us undeniable access and comfort while simultaneously oppressing people of color and denying or impeding their upward social, economic, and political mobility. This framework helped Julie and me address our evolving understanding of our white identity and the power and privilege we as white people experience in various settings in our personal and professional lives throughout all stages of our inquiry.

Critical family histories (CFH) and racial socialization also supported our theoretical framework. CFH was created by Christine Sleeter (2013) in order for her, a white person, to answer her need for a framework that questions the relationship between family and context with "a particular focus on power relationships among sociocultural groups" (2016, p. 11). Like CWS, critical family history is also rooted in critical race theory, as well as critical feminism and critical theory. This framework charges researchers to situate family stories or histories within a larger national narrative or context that includes other co-existing socio-cultural groups. By doing so, the researcher can probe power relationships across these groups and compare their findings to national narratives. Julie and I used CFH to interrogate the stories we shared during

our work together by situating them within a broader historical context. While the use of CFH is noted in specific sections to support analysis and discussion, it was not utilized in isolation. Rather, it was a foundational lens that supported our interrogation throughout this work.

Racial socialization is the process by which parents impart implicit and explicit messages about the meaning of one's race in a larger societal context (Coard & Sellers, 2005). It is a critical aspect of parenting among African Americans because it allows parents to support their children in viewing themselves positively, regardless of the ways they are viewed by others or portrayed (Hughes & Chen, 1999; Hughes & Johnson, 2001). Further, according to French-Lee (2018), racial socialization can provide African American children with confidence that assists them in navigating various spaces, such as school and society at large. While the majority of the work looking at racial socialization has focused on the parenting practices of African Americans, there is a growing body of research exploring the racial socialization practices of white parents. These studies have indicated that silence about race has been a theme in white parents' racial socialization practices. This silence could come in the form of outright "failure to mention racial issues" (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 757) or by parents teaching children to be 'colorblind'. According to DiAngelo (2012), white silence in either of these forms reinforces the pervasive racism in the United States. These studies have also investigated the racial contexts parents choose to raise their children in. These contexts include their neighborhoods, schools, peer groups, churches, etc. and according to Hagerman (2014) may lead children to either be oblivious to the effects of race or create opportunities for learning. These contexts inform the way children think about race (Hagerman, 2014).

Rationale of this Study

White teachers must engage in work that forces them to understand their racial privilege, how their existing racial identities were developed, and how to use that knowledge to shift their practice. This work is crucial because of the damaging effects of unchecked teacher whiteness on students of color and the overwhelmingly white teacher workforce in the United States. Doing that work, however, as stated prior, is complex. While a growing body of research explores inquiry with white teacher racial identity development (Aronson & Ashlee, 2018; Behm, Cross, Tosum-Bayazit, 2019; Lawrence & Tatum, 1998; Matias & Mackey, 2015; McManinom & Casey, 2019; Whitaker, Hardee, Johnson, & McFaden, 2019) the field is narrow and leaves opportunities for inquiry with in-service teachers. The existing inquiries do not deeply interrogate the influence of white teacher's childhoods and racial socialization on their current racial awareness and identities. Further, they insufficiently investigate how white in-service teacher's practices and/or the practices of others in helping professions have been influenced by identity development and increased racial consciousness.

As a teacher who works primarily with students and colleagues of color, I engaged in this work far later than I needed to, much to the detriment of former students, their families, and colleagues. Because this happened after years of work in the classroom, I can to compare my past problematic practices to how I conceptualize my work today. I now clearly see how critical racial identity work with white teachers is foundational to disrupting white-centering practices inside of schools because I can see how this work influenced my own practice. As I explored whiteness, my white identity, my childhood, and the various forms of privilege I bring into my school daily, I strengthened my ability to identify when my racism has shown itself. The work of untangling my own racial identity and how it revealed itself in my work as a teacher often led me to interrogate my childhood and family history. As further detailed in chapter three, this work

was done alongside my mother, whose own personal journey understanding how her racial identity and privilege informed her work as a mental health counselor is also a focus of this critical collaborative inquiry. In doing this work together, we drew upon shared memories and experiences that enabled us to challenge former understandings of racism and practices in our lives and in our respective helping professions. This work aimed to share our experience of critically interrogating our whiteness and how our personal and professional lives were influenced by this work.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative inquiry shared my mother and I's experience as we developed our white identities and learned more about our own racial socialization as children. During this process, we also broadened our definition and understanding of racism. Further, we shared the ways our evolving racial awareness and consciousness have informed our work in our respective helping professions as a teacher and mental health counselor. We hope this inquiry offers guidance and support to other white teachers or those employed in helping professions who choose to engage in similar work that aims to strengthen their understanding of racism, their racial identities, and how it influences their practice. As noted above in my theoretical framework, I believe that learning is driven by work alongside others and heavily influenced by the identities, experiences, and perspectives of the learners. This makes it necessary for readers to understand the complex identities of Julie and myself and the way we storied ourselves and our histories as we engaged in this work. Much of the data will be related to our uncovering and interrupting systems of white supremacy in our lives. These self-authored introductions are included to situate this uncovering within our identities and the way we recounted our lives and the choices toward the middle of our inquiry.

Julie

I am a 61-year-old white married female. That is how I would start off if I was writing a psychological intake on myself, something that I do for my job. It seems limiting in that I am more than that and those aren't the most important things about me, so why do I limit others in that way with those particular identifiers. Interesting.

It is important to me that I was born and raised in Florida as there are so few of us it seems. It is also important – and I state often – that I have lived elsewhere and even lived in Mexico for a time. I like the idea that although I am rooted maybe I like to think I chose my roots by coming back to the place I was born. Another thing that seems kind of odd. Interesting, also.

I was born into a family that was 3⁄4 deeply Southern – 2 grandparents raised in Folkston, Georgia, one from south Alabama and the other from Iowa. The southern was dominant in many ways. I also married into a family that was heavily influenced by the culture of South Georgia.

Being a mother has been the most important thing in my life. When I look at the decisions I have made and the way I have spent my time and energy and what has brought me the most joy and interest – it is around being a mother. It has been mostly fun. I was blessed with some creativity, some curiosity and some resources that allowed me to then have patience and space to let my children grow into the people they are. I mostly like them but am always challenged by them to grow more. Whether it is having to stretch my ability to set limits, to keep my mouth shut, to allow them to suffer, to give more of myself than I'd like – I continue to be challenged. I love that they are independent and highly motivated people who are, in very different ways, making the world a better place and who are also challenging themselves. If given the choice I would always choose to spend time with them over anyone else.

I am a wife, too, but what it means to be a wife has been very much in flux since I started college in 1976. I think I have traditionally defined being a wife more in terms of what I would not do rather than what it would mean to me. I did not want to change my name legally because it never made sense to me. Why give me a last name if it doesn't really count. I objected to the idea of an engagement ring because it seemed to me to be a brand on a cow. It didn't make sense to me that women had to be identified as "taken" but men were exempt. When my husband was in politics, we agreed that I was not expected to appear alongside him as "wife of" at his events. We had a deal that he would let me know when he really needed me and I would happily go. I have a husband who has stretched his own idea of what "wife" was to mean. It is not lost on me that I entered the marriage with my own money, a family that would support me, and an ability to earn a living and support myself.

Since 1983, when I finished graduate school, I have worked in the mental health field. I initially worked in alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs and this gave me a solid start in setting boundaries, keeping my expectations in check, and learning the difference between patients who want to "feel better" and those who want to "get better." Big difference. I worked for 22 years for a small group private psychology practice. There I was valued for my work and my boss taught me how to run a business and treat patients with respect. This was helpful when circumstances left me with little choice but to open my own office. I now work fewer hours and pick and choose the kind of patients I will see and enjoy the freedom that my years of developing a reputation have given me. I am most proud of the referrals I get from the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) community, which was a hard-earned bit of respect.

I was raised in the Catholic faith and it was a great presence in my life growing up: 16 years of Catholic school which included attending a Catholic college, receiving the Sacraments,

Mass on Sundays, no meat on Fridays, and wearing toilet paper on my head to Wednesday morning school Mass when I had forgotten my beret and backup chapel veil. I went to school with pretty much the same 30 kids from first grade to eighth grade with a few "new kids" who cycled in every year from the outer regions. Only a few – one or two – came from families with other than two parents at home, and none were non-white until the fifth-grade arrival of Jerry Smith (pseudonym); at that time one of three black kids at the whole school. The others were girls older than me – Sally and Montana (pseudonyms). I remember them. I then went to a nearby Catholic high school which seemed more progressive – no more toilet paper and more guitars in the Masses. Jerry was now the only black kid in the school. Catholicism was big. My paternal grandmother was a devout and insistent Catholic and she was instrumental in the development of the Catholic community in our town and in the building of the high school. I went to Catholic college largely because – in this order – it was a small school, it was far away, it was not FSU or UF where most people I knew were going, and I knew someone who went there. It was also Catholic. I found the faith aspect of the school to be mostly concerned with social justice and less with adhering to strict rules of dogma. It was great. It was less great when a few years later the Church began to be focused on excluding people who did not fit. I no longer fit because I did not want to participate in the excluding. I no longer identify as Catholic. I did some time as a Presbyterian (PC-USA, not PCA), a deacon, a Sunday school teacher, and generally a Catholic in Presbyterian clothing. I go now with my husband on occasion but do not attend regularly.

My paternal grandmother was also an anomaly in that she was very definitely a "southern belle" in many ways, but she was a hard-working businesswoman. She started a garden club in town, but she also, to a great degree, ran the family business. (My grandfather was a "big

picture" kind of fellow and she was a detail-oriented taskmaster). It is important to note that I was named after this grandmother. I have always felt that while it was on balance a good thing to have her name, it was not without its problems. I remember times when I tended to question authority - I was compared to her in terms of being "difficult."

When I was about to graduate from college, the psychology department required its seniors to write a reflection or autobiographical thesis on where we hoped to be in 5 years. I remember some of it. I wanted to be well read, politically aware, finished with graduate school, working in some capacity in the counseling field, living in an apartment with a cat or two. My husband of 35 years helped with the "politically aware" part as he had just won his first political primary race just before we met. He went on to spend 8 years in the Florida House of Representatives, 7 years in the Florida Senate, several House and Senate races and a run for Governor and then being the Lieutenant Governor nominee in a significant race against a candidate from a high-profile political family. Our shared interest in politics and in remaining a part of the Democratic Party while most others here have abandoned ship has been a nice thing in our lives. I can't say we are terribly active, but we are holdouts.

I now love spending free time wandering around and shooting pictures at a nature reserve in our area that has become quite well known around the state and even the country for its varied wildlife, especially birds. I love the hunting of it, the solitude, and the optimism that I feel every time I go, waiting to see what I might find. It very much reminds me of how it felt to go fishing with my father as a child, a teenager, and an adult.

Margaret

Hello. My name is Margaret. I was named after my mother's very favorite cousin, who is an incredible woman. She was both a ballerina and the first woman to receive a Master of Business

Administration from the University of Florida. My middle name is Whelchel, which is my father's mother's maiden name. My sister's middle name is my great-grandmother's maiden name. My parents chose to give my sister and me middle names that allowed for the last names of beloved women in my family to remain a part of us. My last name is Dantzler, the same name on my birth certificate and the last name on my marriage certificate. I married a wonderful, kind, funny (although not as funny as me, as I have to often remind him), dutiful, and so dang smart man about three years ago. He also happens to look exactly like Captain America. I briefly entertained the possibility of hyphenating my last name but there are honestly just so many consonants and far too few vowels between our last names. And I like my name and it feels like me. So, I remain MWD.

So much of this research was informed by our experiences as children so when inviting you to know more about me, I know I must start there. I grew up in a small, southern town in the Southeastern United States. Summers were spent water skiing in murky and lily pad decorated lakes and fishing in crystal-clear ocean waters. Fall was occupied by college and high school football and trips to the woods to make the most of deer hunting season. Winter came with little changes in weather, although cozy fires inside or boisterous bonfire parties took place most nights. Spring was perfumed by citrus blossoms and spent sliding down Slip-N-Slides. I had an adventurous childhood fueled by my family's love and respect of the outdoors, the natural wonders of my home state, and a priority placed on connecting as a family through experiences outside. This childhood that equipped me with the ability to bait my own fishing hook and read ocean weed lines and bird patterns to track schools of offshore fish was also supplemented by the presence of strong women who could do all things outdoors, but also "glam" with the best of them. A central part of my identity is being a "girl who can do both." The women in my family

can be sporting camouflage and blaze orange in one minute and then seamlessly transition to sipping champagne awaiting spa treatments the next. And we can entertain, cook, and home-make while being able to fiercely champion for feminism and talk politics with the ease of any news anchor. Growing up, my Dad had a "Helpless Girls List" that detailed all of the things he and my Mom wanted my sister and me to be able to do ourselves so that we never had to depend on anyone, especially a man, to do for us. Some of these items are pretty expected (change a tire) and some we still laugh about and have yet to utilize (clean a turtle). I realize how gendered this part of me is - girls and boys should be able to do anything without restrictions or judgment of what is and isn't expected of them. But, this is an important part of how I view myself.

My parents also prioritized exposing our family to theatre and the performing arts. This became the central focus of my life through high school. I took part in regional musical theatre and competitive dancing. I loved the discipline, joy, and people the musical theatre brought to my life. Although my performances are now relegated to the kitchen and car, my mind always begins choreographing when I hear music.

My parents and sister are my home base. Although I don't get to go home as much as I like or should, whenever I walk into my parent's house, I feel a sense of calm and peace that only comes with stepping into the house you grew up in. I had one address and one home phone number my entire life until I left for college, which I know is something few people are lucky enough to experience. Words cannot describe the deep love and connection I have for and with my parents and sister. They are my favorite people to be with in the world. I think it's amazing that as I grew up and found other people I loved and chose to share my life with, these individuals became additions, rather than substitutions, to the presence of my parents and sister.

Fast-forward a bit, and I ended up a major state school in the Southeast for college and boy, did I have a great time. There is nothing like a Southeastern Conference (SEC) college, especially on a Saturday in the fall. I joined a Panhellenic sorority and was extremely involved in campus leadership. My senior year, I was elected as the President of *all* the Panhellenic sororities on campus, which at that time were sixteen individual chapters with roughly two hundred members in each.

My sophomore year, I was introduced into the Teach for America (TFA) and was heavily recruited by the organization. I interviewed and was accepted my senior year and was ecstatic about my next step. Blonde highlights in place and pearls on my ears and around my neck, I was placed in a major city in the South East teaching first grade. I look back at the person I was at the time and think about how very, very much she was about to learn and experience. I think about her and am excited that she will, for the first time in her life, feel like herself. This experience was life changing for me - I met my husband, my very best friend in the world, discovered a profession I am deeply satisfied with and committed to, and for the first time in my life lived in a large city where possibilities for just about anything are endless.

Throughout my time as a TFA Corp Member and now alumni, I have come to understand and agree with many of the criticisms of the program. Particularly, I disagree with an organizational priority placed on leadership rather than pedagogy and realize putting the least prepared and newest teachers in particular schools (and not others) often intensifies educational inequities, rather than reducing them. These reflections have aligned with research conducted about the TFA organization and experience (Kavanagh & Dunn, 2013; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005; Heineke & Cameron, 2013). Regardless of my opinion of TFA and my growing understandings of its potential (and often actual) negative influence on communities of color

(Kavanagh & Dunn, 2013; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005; Heineke & Cameron, 2013). I have grown to absolutely love working in schools and being a teacher. Specifically, I have grown to love teaching in the context and community I do. I hope to be a teacher and school leader for the rest of my life.

Teacher, and more importantly, white teacher, is a central component of who I am. Daily, I work at a school that serves 100% students and families experiencing poverty and 99.8% Black. Our staff is 97% people of color, as well. It has been critical for me to better understand and interrogate my whiteness and various privileges to unlearn my socialized racial norms. I know this will be something I continue to work on the rest of my life.

In my most recent years, another part of myself that has seemed to strongly define me is graduate student and now doctoral candidate. In addition to developing me in critical and meaningful ways, this part of my identity has seemed to "take away" from other parts of me that are also important - such as daughter, sister, friend, and wife. However, I love being a scholar. I never felt connected to my intellectual identity until I began graduate school and love the way it has molded my mind, decision-making process, and the way I see the world. It has also connected me with some incredible people.

In addition to my job and graduate work, I love cooking, the outdoors, being with my husband and friends, my cat (Nina), exercising, decorating my home, and relaxing. If someone were to ask me the things that I would like to be said about me professionally, I would want people to think of me as hard-working, smart, that I love kids, and that I would do anything to help the people who support our children be successful in their work with them.

Our identities and stories will be further explored and shared throughout the remainder of this dissertation. As a result of this inquiry, Julie and I have been able to better understand the

ways racism and white supremacy were conditioned in us during our childhoods and has played out in our adult and vocational lives.

Research Questions

1. What is the experience of a mother and daughter learning about and reflecting upon their white identity and whiteness?
2. How has their developing understanding influenced them personally and professionally in their respective helping professions?

The chapters that follow share the conclusions we reached as we collaboratively sought to answer our research questions. In chapter two, I provide a comprehensive review of the literature Julie and I read to support our identity development, critical whiteness studies with teachers, and the methodologies that informed my research design. In chapter three, I describe the methods used to investigate the research questions shared above. In chapter four, I present the findings and discussion of our inquiry. In chapter five, I offer implications, conclusions, and next steps of this work.

Definitions and Choices

privilege: White privilege can be thought of as "an invisible package of unearned assets" (McIntosh, 1988, p. 1). This definition can be used to explain unearned assets or advantage that extend beyond racial privileges, such as economic privileges. These various forms of privilege are often unseen and unacknowledged by the people who hold and benefit from them.

racism: Racism is a "far-reaching system that functions independently from the intentions or self-images of individual actors" and is created when "a racial groups collective prejudice is backed by the power of legal authority and institutional control" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 20). In the United States, white people utilize their social and institutional positions of power to uphold and

perpetuate a system of racism that advantages white people while disadvantaging and oppressing people of color.

white identity: In this inquiry, white identity will refer to the recognition of both one's white race and the various privileges and advantages that accompany membership in the white race. According to Tatum (2017), white people often conceptualize race as something people of color have but not a facet of their personal identities. Tatum (2017) shares this is in part due to silence in white communities about race.

white supremacy: In this work, DiAngelo's (2018) definition of white supremacy will be utilized, which posits that white supremacy refers to the "sociopolitical economic system of domination based upon racial categories that benefits those defined and perceived as white. This system of structural power privilege, centralizes, and elevates white people" (p. 30). Within this system, white people are thought of as the norm or standard. White supremacy operates as a culture that is upheld by structural and institutional racism.

capitalization of Black/white: Throughout this work, I have intentionally chosen to capitalize Black and not capitalize white in my own writing, except for direct quotes from others' work. This decision was made primarily for two reasons. First, in order to overtly distance my work and writing from white supremacist organizations who choose to capitalize the w in white and not the B in Black. And secondly, after discussion with colleagues of color who shared their negative personal reaction to seeing white capitalized and their positive reaction to seeing Black capitalized.

Julie: My mother is referred to as Julie throughout this dissertation in order to honor all of the perspectives, experiences, and identities she brought to this work. Referring to her singularly as "mother" too simplistically defines her only by the connection we share as mother and

daughter. Additionally, while sharing our inquiry process and data, "we" will be used to honor and acknowledge the collaborative nature of this inquiry. "I" will be used when sharing aspects of this work done solely by me. As further discussed in chapter five, language choices during this collaborative inquiry have been complex and have presented opportunities for reflection and shifts in both my thinking and writing.

Are you there, reader? It's me, Margaret.: Throughout this work, I have included short asides to offer readers insight into my decision-making process and journey throughout this inquiry. These were included in hopes to provide readers and future researchers with a stronger understanding of the messiness of this work, which may support their own future racial identity development and interrogation. They are intentionally informal, as they are intended to be an authentic break from the academic prose of this work to peel back the curtain, acknowledge the messiness and decision-making process of this work, and to engage with readers in a way that is transparent, authentic, and hopefully humanizes this process and exploration further.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter I will share a comprehensive review of the literature that informed this work. The chapter is broken into three sections that focus on a) the literature Julie and I read that supported our identity and racial consciousness development; b) critical whiteness studies conducted with teachers; and c) a review of the methodologies that supported my research design.

Contributing Literature

Julie and I collaboratively read various texts to support our understanding of whiteness and white racial identity development. These texts included: *Waking up White* (Irving, 2014), DiAngelo*'s* (2018) text *White Fragility* and her (2011) article "White Fragility." We then read

"Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race" (DiAngelo, 2015), and "No, I Won't Stop Saying White Supremacy" (DiAngelo, 2017). Each of us also independently read various texts on our own. I read *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* (Tatum, 2017), *We Want to Do More than Survive* (Love, 2019), and *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (Anderson, 2016). Julie also read *Tears We Cannot Stop* (Dyson, 2017), and *We Were Eight Years in Power* (Coates, 2017). The texts that we collaboratively read are reviewed below.

Waking up White **(2014) by Debby Irving**

In *Waking up White* (2014), Debby Irving shares her personal journey of awakening to her whiteness and developing her understanding of race and racism. She explores her predominantly white and upper-middle-class upbringing and how her various childhood experiences socialized her to conceptualize race as something "for other people, brown- and black-skinned people" (Irving, 2014, p. xi). Irving (2014) also details how her definition of racism shifted as she began to understand it more broadly as a system that acts as a "barrier, a divider, allowing white people to benefit from the system in ways people of color do not" (p. 56) rather than simply "not liking people of color or being a name-calling bigot" (p. xi). Prior to engaging in the work detailed in this book, Irving considered herself to be actively anti-racist and would have felt "insulted and misunderstood" if someone insinuated she was racist because her understanding of racism was so limited. This evolved definition allowed her to see how racism was very present in her own life and perpetuated through her actions and choices, which she at one time thought were anti-racist. These included color-blind ideology, where she felt ignoring people's race was polite, which ignores the different ways race plays out in people's lives. She also shares a propensity towards her "Robin Hood Syndrome" in which she felt she knew what

people and communities of color needed better than they did. Irving provides connections between structural and institutional racism and her lived experiences throughout the book, which allows readers, specifically Julie and me, to see every-day examples of how policies and systems advantage us as white people while simultaneously oppressing people of color.

White Fragility and other Contributions from Robin DiAngelo

Julie and I also read various works by Robin DiAngelo, including *White Fragility* (2018 book and 2011 article), "Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race" (2015), and "No, I Won't Stop Saying White Supremacy" (2017). Her writing supported us as we worked to understand the emotions we had in response to *Waking up White* (Irving, 2016). DiAngelo (2011) coined the term 'white fragility' as the reaction white people experience when they encounter even a minimal amount of racial stress. This stress triggers a variety of negative behaviors, including anger, guilt, and fear. Matias (2016) argues when white people, especially white educators, encounter these feelings, it is an indication of a critical need for them to interrogate their personal racist biases and behaviors and how they influence their practice and work with students of color. Exploring and understanding these emotions is the first step for white people who choose to interrogate their privilege and ultimately to shift their behavior (Love, 2019). DiAngelo (2011) posits white fragility is often a result of various factors, including segregation, universalism & individualism, entitlement to racial comfort, racial arrogance, racial belonging, psychic freedom, and messaging that communicates white superiority. I will next describe each of these factors, which enable and maintain white fragility, synthesizing throughout with contributions from other scholars.

Segregation. Most white people continue to live racially segregated lives in the United States (Frankenberg, Lee, & Orfield, 2003). As a result of their segregated lives, we (white

people) lack the ability to think critically about racism or consider the perspectives of people of color (Collins, 2000). Problematically, white people also grow up feeling this lack of people of color in their lives (neighborhoods, schools, churches, etc.) is what makes their environment "good" and "this dynamic gain rather than loss via racial segregation may be the most profound aspect of white racial socialization of all" (p. 59).

Universalism & Individualism. White people do not recognize our own race and feel as though our perspectives are universal (Irving, 2014; McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 2017) and the "norm for humanity" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59). This causes white people to remain blind to the ways our lives are positively influenced by the unearned privileges, safeties, and affordances due to our whiteness. Universalism further enables us as white people to assume people of color share the same realities, perspectives, and experiences as them. This is further enabled by individualism, which "erases history and hides the way in which wealth has been distributed and accumulated over generations to benefit whites today" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59) and problematically allows whites to not see ourselves as members of a racialized group that have benefitted and continue to benefit from structural racism. Ignoring the influences of race and racism on an individual's life experiences and perspectives also allow white people to hold on to the myth of meritocracy, claiming that their various forms of privilege are the results of their hard work or virtue and not a by-product of structural and institutional racism.

Entitlement to Racial Comfort. White people experience almost total racial comfort in all settings because they maintain "the dominant position" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 60). This has led us to feel entitled to this comfort, and we lack tolerance for engaging in racial conversations that may trigger in us unwanted feelings of discomfort. When that emotion is triggered, far too often, we blame the person or situation we feel is the source of the discomfort we feel we are

"wrongfully" experiencing. DiAngelo (2011) shares that when white codes of comfort are challenged, white people react as if their actual safety has been compromised, which trivializes the history of violence inflicted upon people and communities of color by white people.

Racial Arrogance. White people rarely have been taught about racism or have the capacity to think complexly about the multiple manifestations of racism as a system. Our lack of understanding of the system of racism, coupled with our positive self-images and falsely internalized negative images of people of color (Feagin, 2000), leads a racial arrogance. This racial arrogance leaves white people with little interest in engaging in conversations about race that challenge their understandings or attempting to understand the perspectives of people of color that differ from theirs.

Racial Belonging. DiAngelo (2011) and McIntosh (1988) posit that white people enjoy a "deeply internalized, largely unconscious sense of racial belonging in U.S. society" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 62). This belonging is the result of a multitude of societal and cultural practices, including (but not limited to) images in the media, textbooks, standards of beauty, heroes, and role models. White racial belonging is also heightened by the racial segregation described above, which white people "consistently choose and enjoy" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 62). However, when that racial belonging is intentionally interrupted or named, it is "destabilizing and frightening to whites" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 62). Interruption of our racial belonging challenges our false sense of racial innocence and non-racialized identities.

Psychic Freedom. White people falsely maintain that race is something people of color are solely burdened by and with. Further, because we (white people) naively believe ourselves to be racially neutral and innocent, we hardly (if ever) think or talk about race. According to DiAngelo (2011), white people are free "from carrying the psychic burden of race. Race is

something for people of color to think about..." (p. 63). This further contributes to our lack of psychosocial stamina to engage in conversations and even thoughts about race.

Constant Messages that we are More Valuable - Through Representation in Everything. White people constantly receive false and damaging messages that we are better and more important than people of color. These messages are everywhere, including (but not limited to) media campaigns that overwhelmingly portray white as beautiful, religious figures portrayed as white, white centering in historical representations and perspectives, and academic textbooks. These messages are even present in car advertisements. Volkswagen ran a national advertisement with a black car labeled with 'naughty?' and a white car 'nice?' (Singleton, 2015). Singleton (2015) goes on to share that media messages such as these "leave lasting personal scars and stimulate anger" (p. 104). Tatum (1997) and Doane (1997) argue that messages such as these in mainstream culture harmfully cause an internalization of white superiority and dominance.

DiAngelo (2018) concludes *White Fragility* with suggestions for what white people should do to continue their own identity development. Primarily, she wants us to understand that the journey of understanding our whiteness and racial socialization is perpetual and that "interrupting racism takes courage and intentionality" (p. 153). We can learn more by continuing to read, listen, and most importantly, reflect upon what we learn by applying our new knowledge to our lives. She encourages us to sit bravely in feedback from people of color when they share with us how our racism shows (because it will) and realize it can be the sign of a strong and trusting relationship. And perhaps most importantly, DiAngelo (2018) shares that as we continue in the work of examining ourselves, we must own this responsibility ourselves and not depend upon people of color to do it for us.

Waking up White (2014) was the first text Julie and I read together. It was helpful because it provided connections between Irving's childhood racial socialization and her future racist biases and beliefs she held as an adult. This encouraged us to engage in similar reflections about our own childhood experiences as we read. Further, Irving's (2014) awakening to seeing her own racist behavior as a result of her shifted definition of racism to view it more broadly as a system of advantage or oppression, allowed for Julie and me to do the same. At the end of reading *Waking up White*, Julie and I felt more developed in understanding our white identities, but also at a bit of a loss for what to do next in light of our emotional reaction to the reflections we had after being able to see ourselves as more racialized individuals benefitting from a system of racism that we realized we uphold and perpetuate. DiAngelo's (2011; 2015; 2017; 2018) work supported our understanding of the emotional responses we found we experienced during discussions about race or privilege and our ability to see examples of racism in our daily lives was strengthened. Further, DiAngelo's (2011; 2015; 2017; 2018) contributions gave us more understanding about what to do with the information we were learning about our whiteness and our evolving white identities.

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) Conducted with Teachers

The next section of this literature review will share CWS conducted with teachers and their influence on our inquiry. In order to center the influence of CWS on teacher practice, an intentional focus on inquiry with educators at all levels of their careers (pre and in-service) was made.

The vast majority of existing literature focuses upon the experiences of pre-service teachers and teacher educators coming to understand how their racial identity influences their work in the classroom and relationships with their peers, including both students and colleagues.

In 2019, Behm Cross, Tosum-Bayazit, and Hadley Dunn examined the experience of a middle-aged, white male pre-service teacher in a Title 1 middle school serving 81% African American students. Data was collected from interviews, coursework artifacts, and classroom observations conducted by his program supervisors. The study specifically sought to examine how he "made sense of the dissonance/discomfort he faced during student teaching and his moves to rationalize student teaching in thinking about curriculum instruction, and work with students" (p. 310). His data was coded and organized into conceptual themes utilizing cognitive dissonance theory (CDT) and critical whiteness studies (CWS). The data indicated that the teacher experienced dissonance in the alignment of his thoughts and actions related to his relationships with students, collaborative classroom practices, and his own engagement in his learning process. After further analysis, the researchers found elements of whiteness in his rationalizations and explanations of his experience as a pre-service teacher Notably missing from any of his reflections was the recognition and interrogating of his positionality as a white male teacher or his own agency in navigating this new environment which he found challenging. The researchers point to the need for teacher preparation programs to discuss the ways pre-service teachers may use components of whiteness (such as colorblind racism, white fragility, and emotionalities of whiteness) to process and reflect upon their experiences in schools. Further, the researchers also called for the integration of psychology and teacher preparation by encouraging pre-service teachers to deeply interrogate cognitive dissonance when they experience it to reveal underlying biases which may contribute to the ways they understand and experience and carry out their teaching practice.

While this study illustrated an in-depth interrogation of a white pre-service teacher's whiteness, the interrogation was done by the researchers, not the teacher himself. The researchers shared the ways they felt teacher preparation could be strengthened based upon this particular

pre-service teacher's experience and reflections, which will hopefully lead to improvements in teacher development programs. However, this CWS was essentially done *about* a white pre-service teacher, rather than *by* or *alongside.* The learning and white identity development was not experienced by this individual, meaning his racial consciousness and capacity for engaging in work with students, colleagues, and families of color was not strengthened. This work may lead to future pre-service teachers being influenced by possible shifts in teacher education based upon the experience of this teacher and these teacher educator researchers. However, it was not evident that the teacher himself experienced a heightened awareness of his whiteness and its role in his experience as a pre-service with and alongside students and others in his school. Further, it is unclear if his mindset or practice shifted for the benefit of his students. If the pre-service teacher himself and other colleagues in his preparation program read and reflected upon their racial identities together, this work would be extended by utilizing collaborative and constructivist elements. Additionally, having these pre-service teachers share how it influenced their work with students could support the need for similar work to be done.

Other research focused on how CWS have been integrated into coursework at college and university schools of education and professional learning with practicing teachers. These studies have allowed for individuals to personally and intentionally engage in the work of white identity development in partnership with others. Matias and Mackey (2016) shared their experience as teacher educators of color incorporating white racial consciousness in a pre-service teacher diversity course. Their intentional shift in pedagogical practices was in response to a university audit that suggested that while their teacher candidates were progressing in their familiarity with "racially-just terminology" (p. 35), they were using this new knowledge in inappropriate ways and problematically reinforcing whiteness. Their goal was to interject CWS into the coursework

with an emphasis on pre-service self-reflection of their own teaching and learning. According to the authors, they sought "to use various self-reflective tools to guide their teacher candidates in an honest yet painfully-critical self-reflection of their own emotions, behaviors, thought processes, and reactions…" to ultimately "self-discover their own whiteness" (p. 35). Their work also aimed at preparing their students emotionally to engage in antiracist and racial justice-oriented teaching. They posited that they wanted their students to enter into their future schools with a strengthened capacity to engage in racial discourse and an ability to push back on the racist educational system in which they would soon be teaching. Matias and Mackey (2016) shared they felt their research provided a starting point for other educators to utilize pedagogical applications of CWS within their own coursework and classrooms.

Matias and Mackey's (2016) work leads to further questions about how pre-service teachers used their grapplings knowledge in their work alongside of students in classrooms. For example, while the work includes reflections from students about how they felt following discussions or assignments, it was not apparent the students turned those feelings into actions. Additionally, it is important to note this work was pursued by teacher educators of color. This further adds to the problematic frequency of the work of people of color shouldering the responsibility for racial equity and the racial consciousness development of white pre-service teachers. This work should be urgently prioritized by white educators at all levels, including teacher educators.

Whitaker, Hardee, Johnson, & McFaden (2019) also focused their inquiry on work with pre-service teachers with the goal of developing a "strategy for confronting Southern White supremacy" (p. 82) in response to the publication of a racially offensive catalog cover published by their university that received national attention. According to the authors, who are teacher

educators at the university, the university's response to the article "deflected responsibility and ignored the systems creating the behavior, and demonstrated how ingrained our racialized socialization has become, especially with regard to the Southern place" (p.82). Their two-year study sought to examine their pre-service teacher's experiences and perspectives following required multicultural education courses and how they could better prepare their students to work alongside students of color. Researchers specifically interrogated their students' representations and conceptualizations of the American South, where the university is located. Their findings indicated their students were sorely underprepared to work alongside students, colleagues, and families of color. While they appeared to have become more aware of race and racial implications throughout the two-year study, their understandings seemed to remain surface-level and their capacity for engaging in racial discourse frail. Whitaker, Hardee, Johnson, & McFaden (2019) fiercely championed for a shift in pre-service teacher preparation (and their own teaching practices) in order to better prepare students for their futures as classroom teachers, especially in the Southern region of the United States. Future research that includes concrete examples of how to begin that shift can build upon the strong case made by Whitaker, Hardee, Johnson, & McFaden (2019) for the *necessity* of implementing comprehensive strategies to confront white supremacy with and within pre-service teachers.

Literature that shares the experiences of in-service teachers engaging in CWS is far less common, even though its' importance is paramount. However, some teachers are taking up the work of white identity development and racial consciousness interrogation.

A group of eight white in-service teachers engaged in a voluntary two-year long professional development aimed at supporting their understanding of race within their own identity, their classrooms and teaching practice, and in society (McManinom & Casey, 2019).

The group met monthly to learn about whiteness and discuss their teaching practice and was facilitated by two doctoral students at a local university. An equal emphasis was placed on both reflection and action to ensure concrete steps were taken following learning and discourse. Throughout their two-year long work together, the teachers became able to identify "concrete manifestations of White supremacy and discrimination across multiple settings and worked in material ways to combat them" (McManinom & Casey, 2019, p. 403). A similar course was designed, implemented, and written about by Lawrence & Tatum (1998) with graduate students who were also in-service teachers. An emphasis on reading relevant literature, interactive discussions, and a priority on implications of practice was similarly present.

These groups and experiences provided a space for these educators to support each other as they developed their understandings of race and its' influence on their personal lives and professional practice. It also allowed them to strengthen their capacity to engage in conversations about race alongside peers with whom they felt a certain amount of comfort. While McManinom & Casey's (2019) inquiry took place inside of a same-race affinity group, which is helpful in preparation for cross-racial conversations and allows white people to engage in racial discussions without causing further harm to people of color (DiAngelo, 2011; Irving, 2014; Tatum, 2017), Lawrence & Tatum's (1998) work was in a cross-racial group. I believe each of these inquires could have been strengthened by the incorporation of cross-racial and same-race affinity groups in tandem. Lawrence & Tatum's (1998) white participants could have benefitted from an affinity group to prepare for cross-racial conversations. McManinom & Casey's (2019) teachers spent two years discussing whiteness without hearing the perspectives of a person of color. However, all of these authors shared they feel this work was not complete and see the importance of anti-racist and racial identity based professional learning to be an on-going experience. Nevertheless,

this learning opportunity was not merely an isolated seminar or presentation but rather was sustained in comparison to traditional workshop/lecture models of professional learning offered to in-service teachers. Through each of these initiatives, participants deeply engaged in work that incorporated theory, reflection, and practical applications. These studies demonstrate the promise and criticality of racial identity work with white in-service teachers.

Review of Methodologies

As I will further detail in chapter three, my inquiry will utilize collaborative critical inquiry informed by autoethnographical practices, particularly in attention to the ethics of this work. This method seeks to challenge hegemonic structures and bring about action or change through the study of the self by researchers reflecting alongside each other (Reed-Danahay,1997; Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2013). This work often includes first-person narratives from participants and their evolving understanding of those experiences throughout the inquiry process (Bochner & Ellis, 2003; Ellis, 2004). Further, it allows for collaborating researchers to create a space in which they engage in critical work and co-reflection while accurately representing the complexity of personal relationships (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012).

Other researchers have used this methodology to collectively examine individual biographies to further understand sociocultural phenomenon (Chang, Ngunjiri, & Hernandez, 2013). Ashlee, Zamora, & Karakari (2017) used this approach to explore their experiences as women of color in graduate programs. They also utilized collaborative critical autoethnography as a form of resistance by situating their research within a critical paradigm “with the goal of liberation for ourselves and future women of color in higher education” (Ashlee, Zamora, & Karakari, 2017, p. 91). In this study, they provided their own brief narratives by responding to questions related to their experiences of oppression during graduate school. The three women

then met to read through and examine their respective narratives. They then pulled out emerging themes from their writing that connected their own experiences to larger systems of power.

While the aforementioned studies have framed their work with critical collaborative autoethnographic methods, other studies have supported my methodological decisions. I believe it is important to share the contributions of each of these methodologies as they helped me design the data sources, collection methods, analytical, and methodological framework for this inquiry. The summaries that follow outline the contributions of each of these methodologies and how they have informed and supported my own inquiry.

Brock, Borti, Frahm, Howe, Khasilova, & Ventura-Kalen (2017) were a group of doctoral students who utilized collaborative autoethnography to explore their own identities and educational equity. Like Ashlee, Zamora, & Karakari (2017), this inquiry also employed narrative vignettes in order for each collaborator to interrogate their own lived experiences. These co-authors also included group sessions where they shared their thinking and reflected together. This inquiry included the use of visuals and images to explore definitions of equity. Although this research collaboratively explored ideas of equity and power through multimodal texts, the inquiry did not utilize a critical theoretical stance to drive the inquiry or the data analysis, a lens that seems critical in considering any question of equity/inequity.

In this inquiry, we situated a critical lens as the grounding principle of this research design and data analysis as we considered our family's social structuring around whiteness and white supremacy. Without the centering influence a critical framework provided, this inquiry could have easily become two white women merely sitting around talking about being white. A critical framework provided us a roadmap centering our collaborative inquiry on becoming active co-conspirators (Love, 2019) and seeking to question and interrupt our own white

privilege with the goal of making change in ourselves through our inquiry (Freire, 1972; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Pennington and Brock (2012) shared the experience of white educators engaging in critical autoethnographic work to reflect upon their white racial identity and how it influenced their work with students who were culturally and linguistically diverse. They utilized CWS to question their own white identity development, framing their data collection and analysis within this lens. Individually they created their own critical autoethnographies which included self-reflections, selected readings, and group discussions (Pennington & Brock, 2012). These data creation/collection practices and analytical approaches are similar to the approach Julie and I created for this inquiry. We also built upon the processes of their work by adding a collaborative stance to support each other's development. We sought throughout to make this inquiry authentically collaborative and confront traditional roles of power and agency in research, positioning our research instead as a co-investigation, while also acknowledging the responsibilities and complexities of this design in process and product as a dissertation thesis. Our chosen methodology is also a meaningful manifestation of my commitment to support true social change through research. This change includes not only our own personal evolution and development throughout this inquiry, but also how our work together could support other researchers and individuals who hope to interrogate their own stories, privileges, and daily lives.

In this chapter, I reviewed the literature that informed this inquiry. This review included the texts Julie and I collaboratively read prior to our retreat weekend, a review of critical whiteness studies conducted with teachers, and the methodologies that informed my research design. The next chapter will detail the methodology used for this inquiry.

3 METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to share the experience of my mother (Julie) and I as we began to develop our white identities and learn more about our own racial socialization. Further, we sought to share the ways our evolving racial awareness and identities informed our work in our respective helping professions as a teacher and mental health counselor. The research questions that guided this inquiry were: 1.) What is the experience of a mother and daughter learning about and reflecting upon their white identity and whiteness? and 2.) How has their developing understanding influenced them personally and professionally?

The data sources for this critical collaborative inquiry included reflective memos recorded in response to the reading of selected texts, open-ended discussions supported through photograph elicitation and reflective memos, and our final collaborative autoethnographies. I utilized thematic analysis, including In Vivo coding, which will be detailed later in this chapter, to uncover meanings from the data. Following the description of the chosen methodology, I will discuss the efforts I have taken to tend to ethics in the study and conclude with the aesthetic, prudential, and moral considerations that have been attended to in the inquiry (Schwandt, 1996).

Critical Collaborative Inquiry

The chosen methodology for this study was a critical collaborative inquiry informed by autoethnographical practices. As detailed in chapter two, this methodology incorporates tenants of autoethnography, critically situated inquiry, and collaborative inquiry. I chose critical collaborative inquiry because it allows researchers to challenge hegemonic structures and bring about action or change through the study of self by researchers reflecting alongside each other (Reed-Danahay,1997; Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012; Bhattacharya, 2013). Further, it allows for collaborating researchers to create a space in which they engage in critical work and co-

reflection while accurately representing the complexity of personal relationships (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012).

Data Sources and Analytical Process

The data sources for this inquiry included reflective memos recorded in response to the reading of selected texts, open-ended discussions supported through photograph elicitation and reflective memos, and our final collaborative autoethnographies. I will first briefly introduce and describe each data source below and then provide a description of the retreat weekend Julie and I created for focused exploration of our racialized identities and personal manifestations of whiteness. I then describe the analytical process used to develop our findings and close with how I have attended to issues of ethics and trustworthiness throughout the inquiry.

Reflective memos based upon selected texts. Throughout the last year, Julie and I read and reflected upon various texts (see chapter two) related to our whiteness. These selections were made based upon recommendations from university faculty. Drawing upon the work of Pennington & Brock (2012), articles and books were utilized as data sources that deepened our own understanding of our white identity and white supremacy and have been the basis of many of our discussions. Additionally, they assisted our journey of self-critique and racial awareness. Rather than analyzing or critiquing the sources themselves, like Pennington & Brock (2012), we co-analyzed the influences of these texts on our evolving understandings of our racial identity development through recording our reflections and responses to the texts individually and then sharing them with each other. Our chosen medium for recording our reflections varied based upon preference. While the majority of my notes have been written on my computer, Julie felt the most comfortable utilizing audio recordings.

Retreat weekend. Julie and I came together for a retreat weekend to collaboratively interrogate our family histories, evolving identities, and engage in discussion about our current tensions in our personal and professional lives in light of our strengthening understanding of our whiteness. During this weekend, we brought together all of our independent memos, readings, and visual data to engage in further data collection and analysis together. We leveraged the use of visual data in the form of photographs from our childhoods that we self-selected to bring to our retreat weekend to support discussion. We collaboratively decided to bring photographs that we have come to view differently following our independent reading, reflection, and evolving racial identity and awareness. The weekend culminated in us beginning the creation of our autoethnographies together. Our retreat included three sessions and each of the sessions is detailed below.

Session one: The goal for our first session was to share our reflections from our independent reading and learning through discussion. Building upon the work of Ashlee, Zamora, & Karakari (2017), we each brought questions we wanted to explore together related to our readings, reflections, and stories. Our session was semi-structured in nature, which allowed us to "respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to the new ideas on the topic" (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). Although we each came with questions and topics we wanted to discuss, we found our session was primarily driven by the organic conversation we engaged in. Our questions became more influenced not by what we entered having written on a page, but rather driven by a genuine curiosity to learn more about each other's thinking and journey. This session lasted roughly three hours. We audiotaped our discussions on password-protected software.

During session one, we utilized visual data to deepen our conversation. Other inquiries (Brock, Borti, Frahm, Howe, Khasilova, & Ventura-Kalen, 2017) have utilized visual data in autoethnographic work as a catalyst for discussion. For ethical reasons, we did not include the photographs themselves or specific descriptions of them in this dissertation because we did not know the names of many of the individuals photographed and were therefore unable to secure their consent. Further discussion of how we have attempted to attend to ethics in this work will be discussed below. However, these photographs supported our critical and collaborative problematizing of different events of our family's past and generational practices which will be discussed in our findings.

Following discussion for session one, the recordings were immediately submitted to Rev.com for rushed transcription to utilize them for session two.

Session two: We used thematic analysis in our next session to collaboratively interrogate our evolving stories to support the creation of our final autoethnographies. According to Braun & Clarke, (2006) thematic analysis is utilized "for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 84). While I coded the entirety of our discussion, autoethnographies, and reflective memos following our retreat, Julie and I selected two portions of our discussion we found to be the most interesting and thought-provoking and collaboratively analyzed these data segments. As will further detail below, attending to ethics has been important in engaging in research with a family member who is not also pursuing a doctoral degree. I felt having Julie be a part of the complete coding process would have been too much to ask of her. Instead, we decided upon two selections we wanted to code and explore for themes collaboratively. I independently analyzed the remaining data, which included the remainder of the discussion, our

autoethnographies, and our reflective memos. Our analytical process will be described below following a description of session three.

Session three: The purpose of session three was to discuss the creation of our autoethnographies. First, we reviewed and discussed the different formats of critical autoethnographies. For example, some autoethnographies (Cann & DeMeulaneare, 2012) utilized dialogue as the basis of their storytelling while others (Ashlee, Zamora, & Karakari, 2017) utilized poetry and first-person narratives. It was important to me that my mother and I had examples of the varieties of autoethnographies so that our decisions regarding our storytelling medium selections were left broad and up to the individual to decide which medium we wanted to pursue. While our autoethnographies and understanding of our whiteness will be ever evolving, we shared with each other where our stories were following our retreat weekend. We also decided upon a reasonable timeline for sharing the autoethnographies with each other and shared with each other which parts of our stories we wanted to keep private in our collaborative space. Our entire autoethnographies are not shared in this work. Rather, they were used as data sources and are shared as excerpts when appropriate.

Data Analysis

I utilized thematic analysis to answer our research questions that sought to share the experience of a mother and daughter as we learned about and reflected upon our white identities and how our developing understanding influenced us personally and professionally. Reflection memos, discussion, and our autoethnographies were analyzed to identity and interpret patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All stages of the analytical process were approached utilizing our theoretical framework of critical whiteness studies in order to reveal and deconstruct

connections between our data and whiteness and privilege. We utilized Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase analysis protocol (described below) to develop the themes of our work.

Familiarizing yourself with your data. Prior to this first phase, audio-taped discussions were transcribed utilizing Rev.com transcription software immediately following session one. Once transcriptions were returned, those transcripts, our reflective memos, and final autoethnographies were stored on a password-protected computer and reviewed for validity and any errors in transcription. We then began to *familiarize ourselves with our data.* During this phase, the researcher(s) immerse themselves by repeatedly and actively re-reading hard copy transcriptions of data sources (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This allowed Julie and me to begin searching for and reflecting on emerging and possible meanings and patterns.

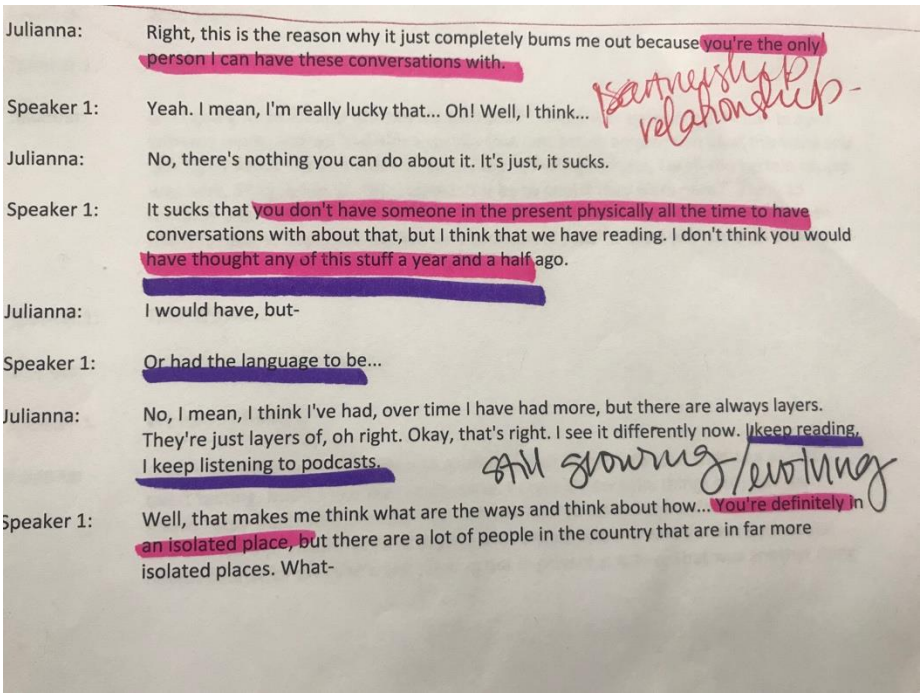
During this phase, we also utilized Saldana's (2016) strategy of using analytic memos to record our emerging thoughts as we actively re-read our transcriptions. According to Saldana (2016), "analytic memos are somewhat comparable to researcher's journals or blogs - a place to 'dump your brain' about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation by thinking and writing and thus thinking even more…" (p. 44). We found that during the collaborative analysis we would often verbalize our analytic memos to one another as they emerged, and it would spark further discussion. When I engaged in independent analysis, I would hand-write my thoughts, questions, and emerging understandings.

Generating initial codes. During our second phase of analysis, we sought to "identify a feature of the data (semantic or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst" (Braun & Clarke, 2006), p. 18). These codes "refer to the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 63). During this phase, hard copy transcriptions of our discussions were utilized from

our prior session in order to initially code selected portions of our discussions. I did the same initial coding practice when I began to analyze our final autoethnographies.

While we had originally intended to utilize digital software to support our coding, we mutually decided we wanted to manually engage in code generation. When we attempted to utilize software, we felt disconnected from the text and enjoyed the physical connection we felt to our words and stories while highlighting, underlining, and writing as we went line by line re-reading our stories and thoughts. Engaging in manual coding allowed us to feel more engaged in the work together as we verbally discussed initial codes based upon data items (see Figures 1-3 for examples of this initial manual coding). In order to keep data sources clear in regards to what data source they came from and who contributed them throughout the findings and discussion of this dissertation, all data was marked with the date they were collected and with the initials of the contributing participant (Margaret=MWD; Julie=JPD), and with the data source (D= discussion, M= reflective memo; AE= autoethnography).

In Vivo coding was used to "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (Saldana, 2016, p. 106) and initial coding was utilized in order to keep codes tentative and open to "further exploration" (p. 115). The use of In Vivo Coding also aligned with our research question that aimed to understand our personal journey of the development of our white identity. I found it necessary to utilize an Excel spreadsheet of the codes as they emerged to visually support keeping track of the codes. In total, close to 100 emergent codes were generated. Examples of initial codes that were generated include: *noticing that other people were different but never thinking about being white, intense emotion, the role of family, importance of conversation, comfort in being white, looking for subtle indicators in other white people if they think like we do.*



Julianna: Right, this is the reason why it just completely bums me out because you're the only person I can have these conversations with.

Speaker 1: Yeah. I mean, I'm really lucky that... Oh! Well, I think...

Julianna: No, there's nothing you can do about it. It's just, it sucks.

Speaker 1: It sucks that you don't have someone in the present physically all the time to have conversations with about that, but I think that we have reading. I don't think you would have thought any of this stuff a year and a half ago.

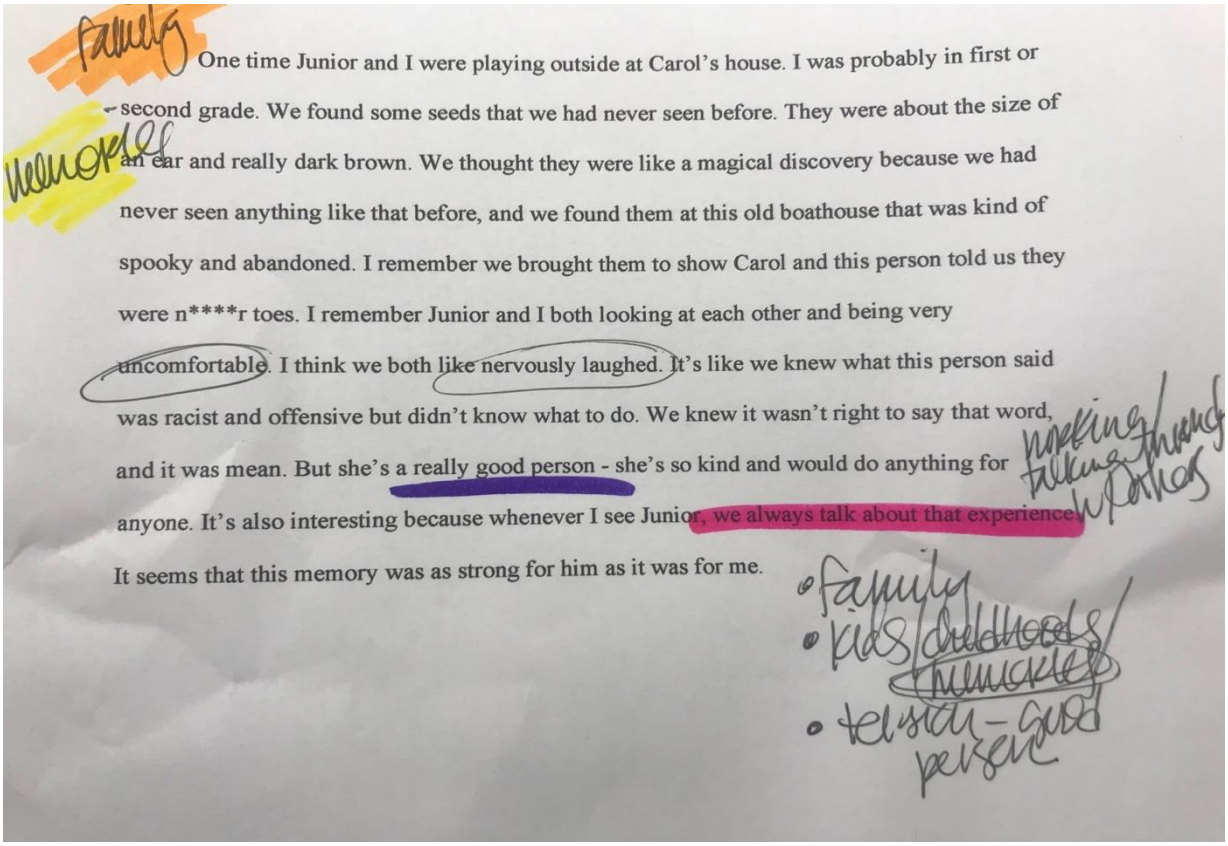
Julianna: I would have, but-

Speaker 1: Or had the language to be...

Julianna: No, I mean, I think I've had, over time I have had more, but there are always layers. They're just layers of, oh right. Okay, that's right. I see it differently now. I keep reading, I keep listening to podcasts.

Speaker 1: Well, that makes me think what are the ways and think about how... You're definitely in an isolated place, but there are a lot of people in the country that are in far more isolated places. What-

Figure 1: In vivo coding sample 1



One time Junior and I were playing outside at Carol's house. I was probably in first or second grade. We found some seeds that we had never seen before. They were about the size of an ear and really dark brown. We thought they were like a magical discovery because we had never seen anything like that before, and we found them at this old boathouse that was kind of spooky and abandoned. I remember we brought them to show Carol and this person told us they were n****r toes. I remember Junior and I both looking at each other and being very uncomfortable. I think we both like nervously laughed. It's like we knew what this person said was racist and offensive but didn't know what to do. We knew it wasn't right to say that word, and it was mean. But she's a really good person - she's so kind and would do anything for anyone. It's also interesting because whenever I see Junior, we always talk about that experience. It seems that this memory was as strong for him as it was for me.

Figure 2: In vivo coding sample 2

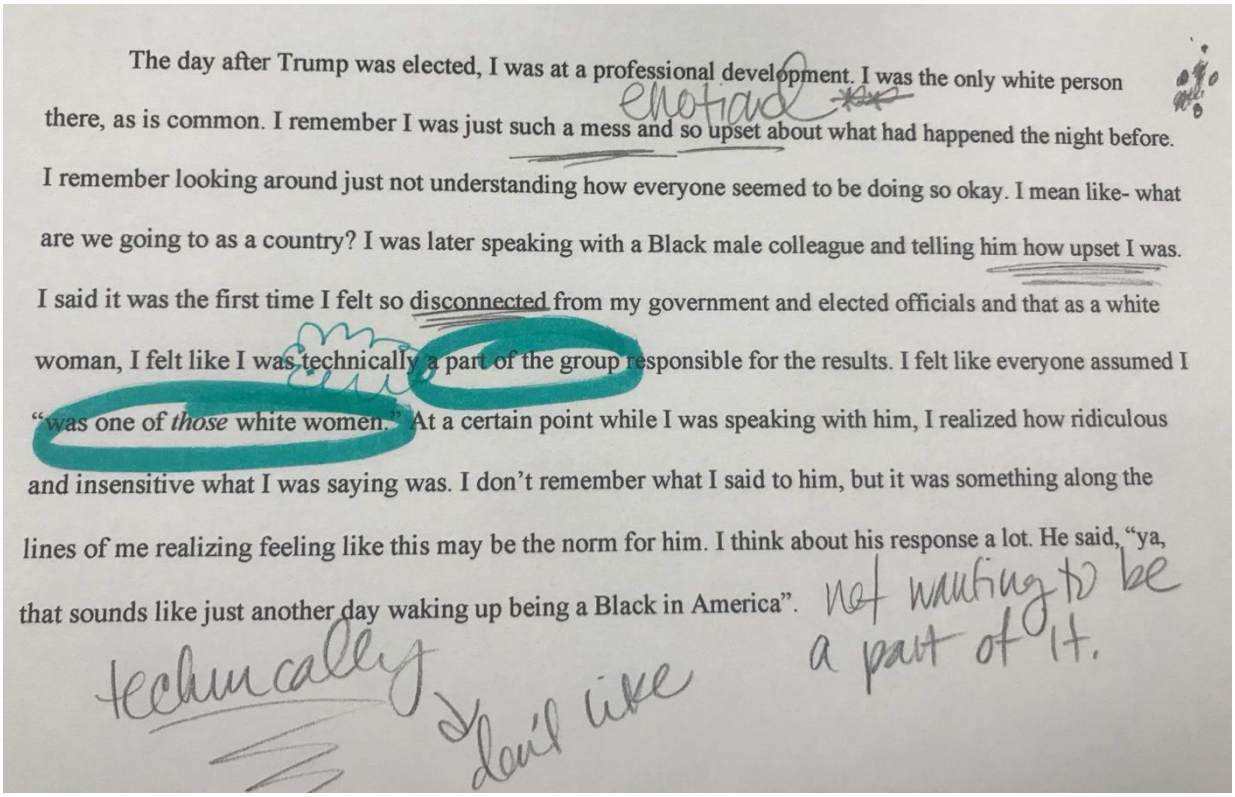


Figure 3: In vivo coding sample 3

Searching for themes. The purpose of this next phase was to make sense of the over a hundred initial and in vivo codes that we generated (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in phase one. Utilizing the codes created in the prior phase, I re-focused analysis on broader level themes and created candidate themes. Braun & Clarke (2006) contend that by grouping codes into these candidate themes, a "coherent story that makes sense of the data" (p. 110) can be created (see Figure 4). This step enabled me to see that our data had clear trends and I created five candidate themes based upon our initial codes. These candidate themes were:

Candidate Theme 1: Childhood as a formative experience

Candidate Theme 2: Critical role of context and thought partners

Candidate Theme 3: Our understanding is evolving and our racial stamina is growing

Candidate Theme 4: We perpetuate white supremacy and often with “good” intentions

Candidate Theme 5: We question and problematize a lot of our family’s history and past

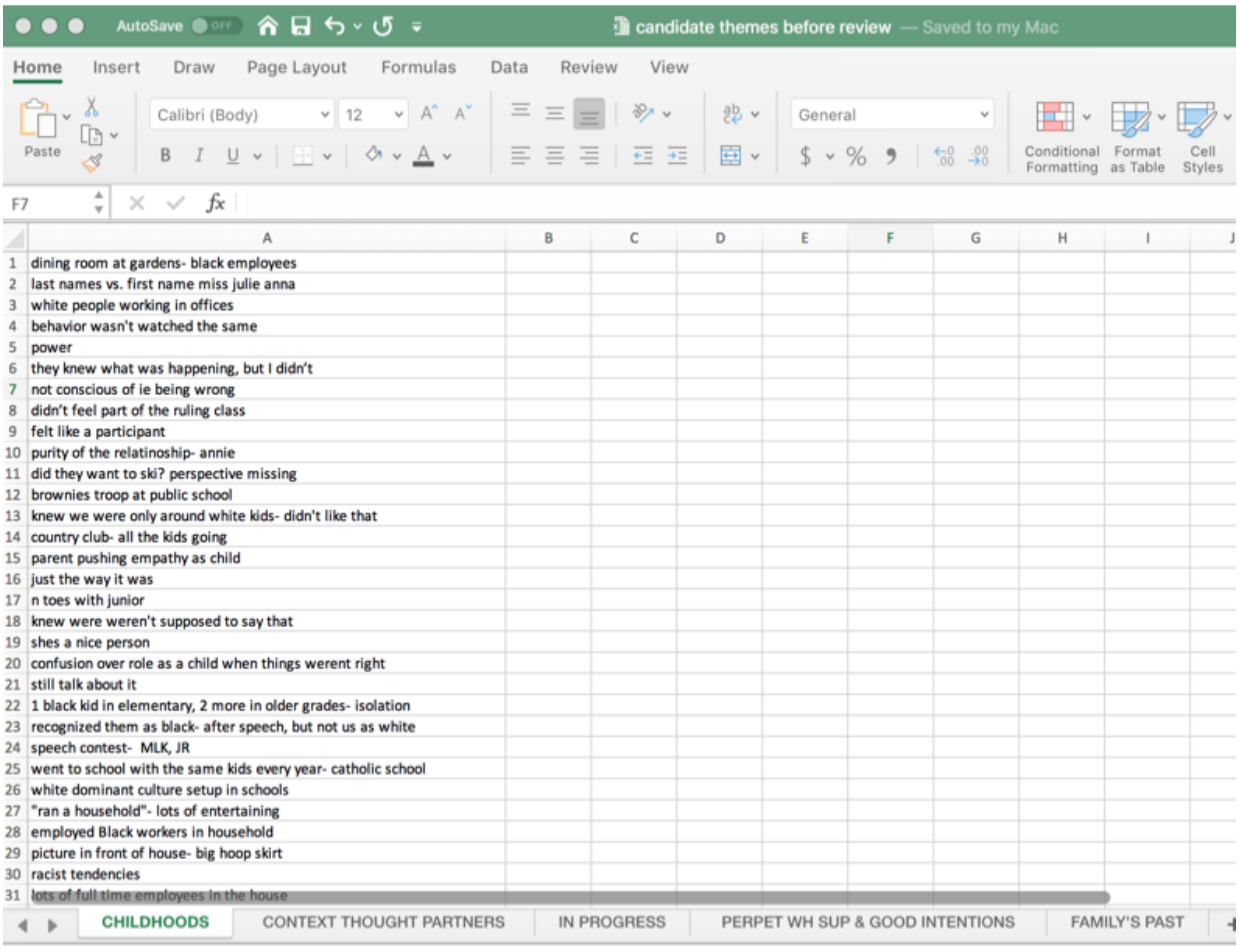


Figure 4: Initial codes grouped into candidate themes

Reviewing themes. In order to review our existing themes, I examined our codes alongside their corresponding data excerpts and discussed their alignment (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After looking more closely at each candidate theme and the corresponding data, I realized that each of these themes centered on data pertaining to our individual childhoods or our current personal and/or professional tensions. Therefore, I consolidated the five candidate themes into

two themes (a) our childhoods served as racially conditioning experiences, and (b) our present-day vocational and personal tensions with our whiteness and consequently more developed racial awareness and identities. I created three sub-themes from theme one (a) experiences, traditions, and relationships, (b) misconceptions about the definition of racism, and (c) revising history to create heroic family narratives. Figure 5 shows sub-theme grouping from theme one (our childhoods served as racially conditioning experiences), as codes were grouped together following review.

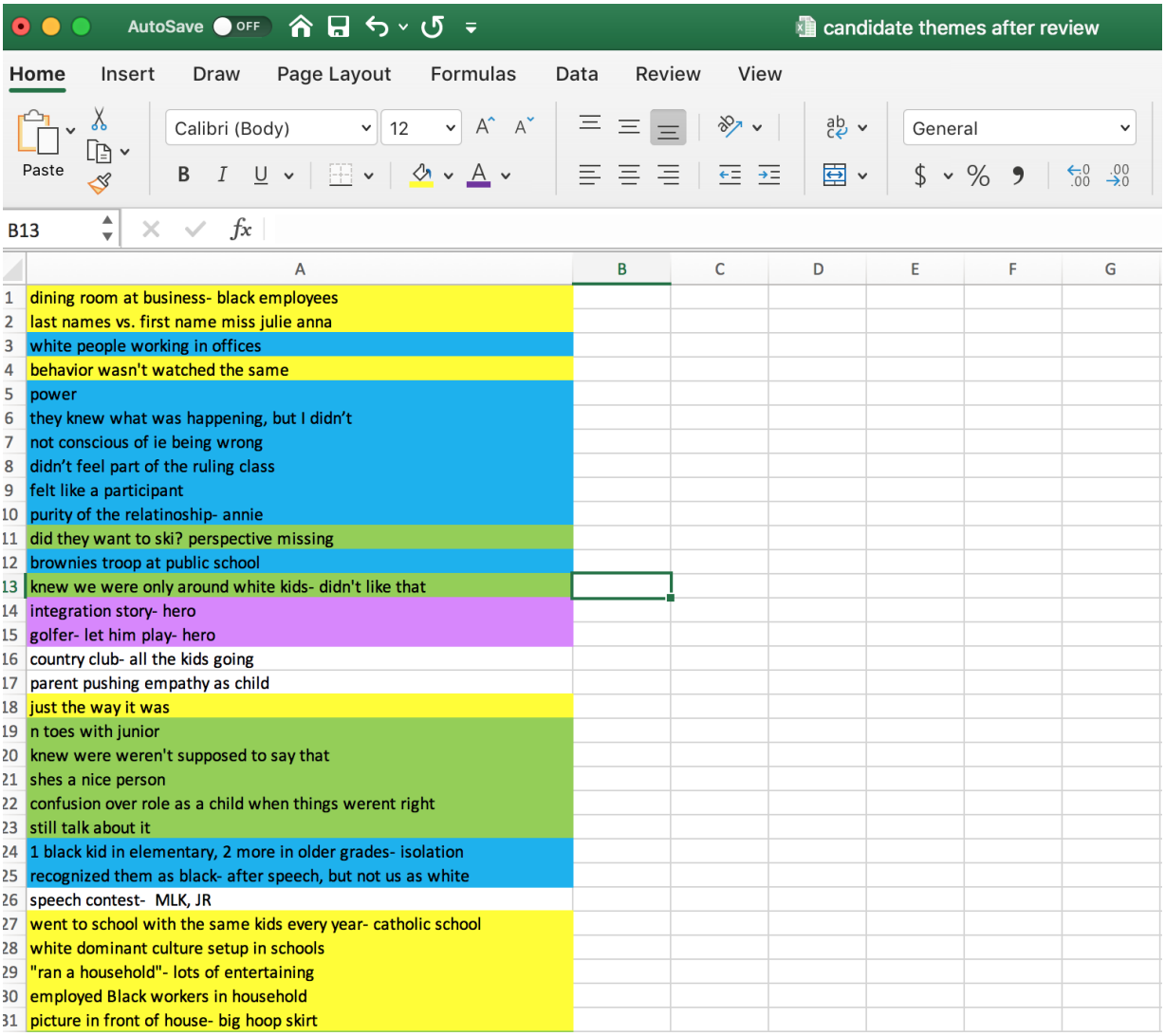


Figure 5: Candidate themes following review

Defining and naming our themes. During this final phase, I "define(d)" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 22) the final themes we selected in the prior stage and identified their "essence(s)" (p. 22). Theme definitions were supported with connections made between them and selected data, which are shared and discussed in Chapter 4. This discussion also includes connecting our data to literature about whiteness and privilege.

Producing the report. In the sixth phase of analysis, I endeavored to "tell the complicated story of our data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23). During this phase, I added onto the theme definitions by deconstructing them alongside the literature on whiteness, privilege, racial socialization, and white fragility in order to uncover the story of this work.

Are you there, reader? It's me, Margaret.

Wasn't that section so nice and neat? I wrote it up pretty clearly, didn't I? However, my analysis was a lot messier than the stylistic version shared above. Although that was the format I followed, I think it's helpful to share more detail about what that looked like and what it felt like, especially around phase three.

I tried to use an online software to support my coding but frankly, I didn't like it. I had engaged in thematic coding by hand prior to this research using color-coded markers and remembered what a better fit it was for me. So, I began highlighting and marking for trends as I noticed them. Then, I began dumping all that data into a digital excel document in order to group them together and then created the candidate themes.

During this phase I also began submitting drafts to my chair, Dr. Teresa Fisher-Ari, as I deconstructed the themes alongside the literature this inquiry is built upon. Dr. Fisher-Ari, is in her teaching and her research, attuned to the way language- particularly language used in teacher reflections- reveals (and at time conceals) manifestations of power, privilege, and white centering. During this phase, we went through five drafts, where Dr. Fisher-Ari's guidance and feedback supported me as I excised language that reflected the thinking I was trying to dismantle in this inquiry. We then began submitting drafts to my second expert reviewer/committee member, Dr. Stacey French-Lee. Dr. French Lee's work is centered in critical race theory, racial socialization, intersectionality, and critical discourse analysis. She further extended the language analysis and feedback began by Dr. Fisher-Ari and also supported this work by offering the voice of thesis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) as a Black woman, which was a missing and needed perspective to my analysis. I was hedging in much of my analysis and discussion – it included a lot of "may," "can," and "some." Both Dr. Fisher-Ari and Dr. French-Lee challenged me to make broader connections to institutional and structural racism and reframe my analysis with careful attention to language that reflected the intention of my inquiry. Dr. Fisher-Ari and I went through twelve drafts in this phase, each draft coming closer to to extracting and excizing vestiges of whiteness and places where my language needed to be more specific, less coded, more vulnerable and precise.

Although I didn't question the necessity of these edits, it was an emotional choice for me (and continues to be). This was the phase of the work where I intentionally and bravely chose to problematize and center myself, my family, and our stories inside of racism and white supremacy. I use "bravely" here not because I want a sticker, but because I want to be clear that in this inquiry, I made deliberate decisions that did not always feel comfortable to me, but I knew were necessary to honor the questions I was trying to answer. For example, it feels a lot better for me to say, "some white people" instead of "white people" or "we may have" than "we did." However, when I chose to sit inside the feedback from Dr. Fisher-Ari and Dr. French-Lee and the messiness that that feedback fostered in me and in this work. My thinking shifted and this work was strengthened. This further illustrates the political act that is investigation of self and other and the non-neutrality of researcher and participant and those that join us on our journeys of dismantling oppressive institutions – both the broad social institutions and our institutions of self (dinner tables, holidays, relationships, language choices, and thoughts). If we don't welcome our own cognitive dissonances (Festinger, 1957) throughout the inquiry process as researchers (regardless of how it feels), I think the chances of us sharing any meaningful work with the world is slim. But, dang, it's hard.

Further, the synergistic and ongoing process of unveiling, reflecting, feeling, and revising that took place in this phase speaks to the necessity of collaborators, advisors, and friends who can help reveal to us the thinking reflected in our language that appears hidden to us. Even after a successful defense and this document was accepted with revisions, as I endeavored to add these asides to offer insights into my thinking and process, white-centering language continued to creep in. The challenge to do this work is clearly never over in any of us.

Ethical Considerations

Carolyn Ellis (2007, 2010) heavily influenced the ethical considerations of this critical collaborative inquiry. Ellis has been outspoken in her critique of her own past work that shared the lived experiences of her personal friends and family members in ways that she now questions. Her writing and critique of her past work helped me in seeing the gravity of engaging in research with "intimate others" (2007, p. 3), which made me constantly reflect upon possible personal or professional ramifications of this inquiry for Julie, my family, and me. Julie, as my mother, is my intimate other and therefore my work alongside her must acknowledge our bond, our ethical responsibilities to each other, and our ethical responsibilities to any others in our family or community who are identifiable in our shared stories. Ethics have been a critical consideration and focus throughout this inquiry. I elicited the perspective of my mother and my committee chair to help me anticipate consequences I did not think of, and based upon their

feedback, changes were made, such as rewording sections that Julie felt did not align with her perspective or memories.

Ellis (2007, 2010) also shared with researchers that relationships change over time, and relationships in inquiry are no different. Prior to our retreat weekend, I accepted that our relationship may have changed throughout the course of this inquiry, in both positive or potentially negative ways. I also fully realized there may have come a point where Julie did not want to continue this line of work together, and that is a reality of collaborative research I had to accept as a possibility. To ensure Julie was comfortable engaging in this work throughout the inquiry process, I practiced "process consent" in which I will checked with her throughout the process to determine if she still wanted to be a part of this work. I also shared with her that I had a plan in place to complete this inquiry in the event she felt compelled to leave the inquiry (Etherington, 2005; Grafanaki, 1996).

Ellis' (2007, 2010) work also prompted me to question throughout this inquiry if I had asked too much of Julie. Should I have offered to pay for the texts we have read? Would Julie share if she ever felt uncomfortable discussing her own memories as a child? Would there be professional or personal ramifications for her participating in this work? Should I have been responsible for her travel fare during our retreat weekend? Questions like these and the answers that Julie and I found for them reinforced both the critical and the collaborative nature of our inquiry. Additionally, these tensions evidenced the complexity of this endeavor, specifically as these memories connected to the lives and experiences of others who had not consented to be part of our inquiry and who were not positioned to share their own perspective about the memories and experiences we were recounting and reframing.

According to Freadman (2004, p. 128), stories of the self always involve revelations and stories of others. I align my thinking with Ellis, who shared that we "don't have an inalienable right to tell the stories of others" (2007, p. 25). Following her advice, certain stories and data sources were intentionally left out of our findings and discussion. We left out the photographs we utilized to guide discussion in session one during our retreat because we were unable to gain consent from the individuals depicted. Additionally, we utilized pseudonyms for all named persons with the exception of Julie and me. Although we realize inquiry such as this, which involves memories including others and family histories, may have effects we may never be able to fully anticipate, we feel as though we have followed the advice of researchers before us (Ellis, (2007, 2010; Freadman, 2004) and have adequately attended to ethical considerations.

Are you there, reader? It's me, Margaret.

Engaging in inquiry with intimate others, while examining our personal and family histories, can have significant ramifications for participants and those effected by the sharing of the work. Inquiry such as this is just downright messy – there's just no other way to put it. I was constantly ruminating on the possible negative and unintended consequences that identifiable others (specifically my family) could face because of the personal choice I have made as a researcher to pursue and share this work, which includes our shared stories. I am quite certain there are a number of people very close to me that will disagree with the thinking, findings, and choices reflected in this work. They may even be hurt by them.

However, I mostly thought of Julie - her full name is in this dissertation. As shared above, I engaged in "process consent" with her. She read this work before my committee and saw my defense presentation before they did. "Process consent" sounded like this after I shared my writing and she reviewed it: "Mom, are you okay with that? What do you think about that? Does this sound okay to you? Are you comfortable with this?" Julie's response was consistently "tell it all, don't hold anything back."

To me, the thing that makes this the messiest, is there are no right answers to any of these questions. Further, answers and conclusions that may seem appropriate now, may change a month from now, years from now. There is no checklist to download and then use to make sure the work you put out into the world doesn't offend or harm someone, or maybe even offend or harm yourself one day. So, although Julie has endorsed this work, which provides me some solace, let me be clear - the messiness remains. And I don't think it's going to get cleaned up anytime soon, if ever.

Trustworthiness

In order to produce a body of research that makes a contribution of scholarly work and is trustworthy, certain characteristics must be considered. For this inquiry, I chose to utilize Schwandt's (1996) characteristics of prudential quality to assess trustworthiness. Schwandt (1996) refers to prudential quality as the extent to which research is logistically and methodologically sound. In order to assure prudential quality, I align my thinking with Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who urge qualitative researchers to look to the qualities of apparency, verisimilitude, and transferability. Below, I describe each of these characteristics and the ways that we attended to them throughout this inquiry.

Apparency. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the grounding of findings between data and clear sharing of methods refers to the apparency in qualitative inquiry. This characteristic assures that the researcher has a clear link from data to overall study findings. Much of our collected data will be presented in the memories, independent memos, and autoethnographies and is also supported through audit trails I maintained throughout the inquiry process.

Verisimilitude. Versimilitude refers to the extent to which the findings of this inquiry ring true in relation to the data and according to the participants. By creating autoethnographies, Julie and I ensured our final narratives rang true to us because we created them. The multiple sources of data collected also helped assure verisimilitude through triangulation that provided a richer reservoir of resources and insights to utilize during data analysis.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be generalized, informative to, or relevant to others in different contexts. Although the research in this study served a specific purpose with unique participants, presenting a clear research method where readers could easily determine how findings were derived, transferability was established.

Although this inquiry may not be easily replicated, future researchers who intend to critically or collaboratively deconstruct and dismantle systems of white supremacy and white conditioning in their own lived experiences may benefit from our collaborative inquiry. We both hope other mothers and daughters and white co-conspirators will engage in this type of self-work and sincerely hope our inquiry can serve as support for them in doing so.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Through our analysis of open-ended discussions, reflective memos, and collaborative, critical autoethnographies, we found that this collaborative journey profoundly influenced Julie and me both personally and professionally as we interrogated our racial consciousness and identities. I share the results and discussion from our inquiry in the following section.

I will present the overarching themes that emerged from analysis of our data and their connection to our research questions below. Our data analysis revealed two major themes: (a) our childhoods served as racially conditioning experiences, and (b) our present-day vocational and personal tensions with our whiteness and consequently more developed racial awareness and identities. I present each of these themes through excerpts from our data including our discussions, personal memos, and critical autoethnographies. Each theme includes a discussion guided and supported through theories of whiteness and critical family history. Throughout each example, I note examples of structural and institutionalized racism that played out in our lives and family.

Table 1:Themes and Definitions

Theme and Subthemes (if applicable)	Definition
Childhood Memories that Served as Conditioning Experiences • Experiences, Traditions, and Relationships	Our childhood memories served as racially conditioning experiences that informed our beliefs, biases, racialized identities, and stereotypes we now work to push-back upon.

• Misconceptions about the Definition of Racism • Revising History to Create Heroic Family Narratives	
Present Day Vocational and Personal Tensions	In light of our developing racial consciousness and identities, we experience tensions as we interrogate and interrupt our own former actions.

Childhood Memories That Served As Conditioning Experiences

> I was never raised that I had a white identity. It was that they were Black, and they were different…it's like a piece of art, where you have the blue sky, and that's the backdrop, but then there's a cloud. But you don't even see the blue sky. It's the cloud…and it's the cloud that stands out as being in front. (JPD, D)

In this theme, I address the ways our childhoods served as racially conditioning experiences. As we analyzed our data, we found that while as children we were not conscious of the ways our own racial identities or biases developed during these experiences, as adults with more developed racial consciousnesses, we are now able to see the ways these memories informed many of the beliefs, biases, racialized identities, and stereotypes we are now working to push back on. We can see the ways that manifestations of structural and institutional racism influenced our childhoods. Further, we now realize that there are and were ways our family (including Julie and me) preserved and perpetuated these structures.

There are three sub-themes within this theme. I first share how our everyday experiences, traditions, and relationships as children informed and developed our racial biases and identities. Our second sub-theme relates to how the strengthening of our racial consciousness has evolved our definition of racism. In our final sub-theme, I address family narratives that we have interrogated and reinterpreted through a critical family histories perspective. In the section that

follows I first present the data that supports each sub-theme and then engage in discussion that utilizes a critical whiteness and critical family histories stance to interrogate the memories in light of individual and structural racism.

"Our Normal"

Through analysis, we learned that the experiences, traditions, and relationships Julie and I had during our childhoods informed our racial biases and identities, and that the confluence of our racial, financial, and political privileges founded and maintained these experiences, traditions, and relationships.

Our analysis indicated that as children, while we were aware of the race of Black or Brown individuals, we were never aware of our own race or how it influenced our experiences. However, it is evident through our memories that we each remember being aware of our financial privileges. Julie described her grandmother's household as "very much like The Help meets Downtown Abbey" (JPD-D, 8/30/2019). She goes on to share what dinners at her parents' and grandparents' houses were like, and a time she showed genuine confusion and distaste towards some of her family's practices:

> At dinner, there might be 20 people at her dining table, and everything was set just so and perfect, with a beautiful table, all that kind of stuff. There was just the linens, everything, just like Downtown Abbey. But if my grandmother noticed that somebody at the table needed something like that, she would ring the bell. She had a little bell, and she would ring the bell. And Stanley (pseudonym), who was the butler, would come and address her, and she would tell him what to go and get. They rented a house in North Carolina, and she didn't have a bell there, because underneath the dining table there was a foot buzzer…and so I remember we were at the table, and this was just family. It was a small

> group of us, and she was just slamming her foot on that buzzer, getting more and more aggravated because apparently it wasn't ringing into the kitchen, and Stanley wasn't coming out to see what was going on, to get her instructions. And I was about eight. And I remember I looked at her, with her not-working foot buzzer, and I said to her, I said, "Nana, why don't you just get up and get it yourself?" Because that just seemed like that really was a legit question. I looked at my aunt and she [had] a very angry look on her face, and then it was really bad. But to this day, I still don't understand why you would ever wait on a server to get your salt that you don't have at your table, or your ketchup or whatever, when you can see it right across the room. And why wouldn't you just get it yourself? Why would you get angry about somebody not doing something for you, when you could just do it yourself. That seemed crazy. (JPD-D, 8/30/2019)

Stanley was Black, as were all of Julie's parent's and grandparent's household employees. Due to our financial privilege, both of my grandparent's households employed Black men and women for various tasks throughout their childhoods and throughout mine. These tasks included cooking, cleaning, and caring for the family. Julie's family's business also employed hundreds of workers. Julie goes on to share differences she now notices in how she was expected to address these individuals and how they were expected to address her based upon their race.

> As a child, the white employees at my family's business and home called me Julie Anna. These people also always had jobs as a secretary or manager in an office. But the Black employees never worked in the offices. They worked outside like maintaining the gardens or grounds or in the kitchens. And I remember they had to call me Miss Julie Anna. But I was allowed, as a child, to call them by their first name…it was like there was a level of familiarity or that I could be more lax, I didn't need to check myself. I

didn't need to watch myself. But there was a level of respect that was conferred on the white people." (JPD-D, 8/30/2019)

These memories include manifestations of structural racism through the ways in which Julie was expected to be addressed by people of color, how she was expected to address them, and through the types of jobs she observed these people having. Her relationships with people of color were situated within systems of hierarchy that advantaged her while oppressing people of color. Further, her reflections about the types of jobs she observed people of color holding and not holding indicated the institutional racism that continued to advantage her and other white people exclusively. She shared that white people were secretaries and managers at her family's business but people of color "never worked in the offices…they worked outside" (JPD-D, 8/30/2019) These memories, including holding harmful resemblances to slavery, indicate that not only did my family operate within and benefit from these structures of racism, but we also upheld, reproduced, and perpetuated them in the ways we imparted worth and hierarchy through our language and employment practices.

When sharing the memories of her childhood, I can hear the confusion and discomfort in Julie's voice in being, as she calls it, a "beneficiary of the ruling class" (JPD-D, 8/30/2019), and her evolved awareness of the racial and economic privilege that she experienced as a child. She seems to teeter back and forth between feeling like maybe the Black employees gave her "a certain amount of grace or forgiveness or something because I was a little kid" (8/30/2019) and knowing how it must have felt for an adult Black man or woman to be called by their first names by a five-year-old while they were required to use a title when addressing the same child. According to DuRocher (2011), these specific language practices, especially in the post-Jim Crow South, illustrated the "language of White supremacy" (p. 20). Braden (1958) posits that to

children, these racial etiquette practices reinforce social position and that white people were harmfully viewed as ‘superior stock’ in comparison to Black people. Additionally, this type of racial socialization is presented to children subtly and serves as a way for implicit and explicit messages about the meaning of one’s race in a larger societal context (Coard & Sellers, 2005). In white families, this is often accomplished through silent forms of racial socialization (such as colorblindness) or outright “failure to mention racial issues” (Hughes et al., 2006, p. 757), such as the language structures mentioned above or the differences Julie observed as a child in the types of jobs held by white people and people of color in her families employment.

> My childhood was filled with similar memories of the roles I observed Black people in at my grandparents’ homes. My autoethnography includes one particular memory from when I was a child, where I went to a family member’s house to help prepare for a Thanksgiving celebration. On this particular year, I decided I wanted to go over to Esther’s (pseudonym) house the day before Thanksgiving and help prepare the meal for the next day. I was so excited because I thought it would be me and Esther cooking together. I’ll never forget that I printed out a recipe for Hello Dolly’s that I was going to make. But I was only there for about a half-hour when I realized it was only me and Annie, the women who cooked for my family in the kitchen. I remember being really sad because I thought that I would have been spending the day with certain family members, but they had left. And I remember Annie, who worked full-time for my grandparents, helped me make that Hello Dolly recipe. I remember it came out of the oven, and it didn’t turn out right. I vividly remember staring at the dish and just being really sad. Like, I thought I was going to be cooking with my family, and it was like all the disappointment

and confusion I was feeling was so perfectly captured by the failed recipe. I remember throwing the pan of Hello Dolly's in the trash.

Years later, I randomly began to think of the specific dishes we always had on Thanksgiving and other holidays: squash casserole bubbling over with perfectly browned cheese, sweet potato pie so dense it could be held like a slice of pizza that always made my father squeal with excitement, and a particular rice dish I have always tried to replicate but never quite can. As I was reminiscing on these delicious dishes and how certain dishes and foods are often so closely and personally associated with family gatherings, especially in the South, somehow the memory from my childhood entered my mind. I thought about how on that day, I observed my family members not taking part in the preparation of these dishes. Rather, I watched the Black women who worked for my family making the meal we would enjoy the next day. And how these women were the ones who helped me make that pan of Hello Dolly's, not Esther. (MWD-AE)

During discussion with Julie, I further interrogated this memory:

I realized that these dishes that we always think about and associate with specific holidays and as our family's special recipes, maybe they are not like, ours. I think that maybe those are Annie's family recipes. Does her family eat the same thing on Thanksgiving? And I wonder if the day before Thanksgiving she may wish that she was home cooking for her own family and not ours. (MWD-D, 8/30/2019)

In addition to the employment of people of color inside our family's households and businesses, we each shared what other interactions we had with people of color as children and the unconscious impressions they left on us that we are now working to identify, deconstruct, and dismantle. These interactions resulted in unconscious understandings of hierarchy, white supremacy and the types of relationships we shared with people of color. Because the genesis of

our relationships with these individuals was primarily based upon their employment in our household's we did not think of them as personal friendships. They were not the same as the ones we held with the white peers or family friends we went to dinner with or shared vacations with. While they were personal, and at times, very close in nature, they were established within the context of employment, oppression, political, racial, and economic power.

I oftentimes reflect upon my personal relationship with Annie, a Black woman employed by my family for generations noted in the data above, as the person who stepped in to cook a recipe with me when my family member chose not to. When I go home to visit family or for the holidays, my trips always include time going to her house or her coming to visit me at my parent's house. I deeply love this woman, as do other members of my family, but I find myself frequently wondering if her care for me is rife with complexity because I know that taking care of me and my family was her job. And if she does love me, did I take away space she had in heart or time in her day she should have reserved for her own children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren? Research indicates that the work Black domestic workers did for white families (such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children) did affect Black domestic workers from doing the same for their own families (Mahnaz, 1999). Further, this also resulted in Black women often being "judged deficient as wives and mothers according to middle-class standards" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 26). I also wonder what Annie (and other employees of my family's) experiences were and the treatment they experienced in my family's homes. As a result of Jim Crow laws (and the continuation of structural racism in my deep-South community), women of color were left with little to no vocational options and were forced to work low-paying jobs, such as domestic work inside of white homes. Employment in domestic service left them "vulnerable to unequal, unfair, and often abusive treatment" (Holzer, 1996; Sharpless, 2010) because their profession had no

legislative protection. Further, Black domestic workers inside of white households experienced sexual harassment or assault (including rape) (West & Johnson, 2013). I feel compelled to understand better how my family treated Annie and the other people of color my family employed.

As I will explore in the second theme, the perspectives, realities, and experiences for the people of color involved in our memories, such as Annie's, are missing from this inquiry. Their memories and perspectives would provide a counternarrative that could "challenge and displace" (Deglado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 50) our white-centric perspectives. I also cannot reflect upon Annie's role in our house and family without also questioning and examining the choices of the women in my family. As recounted above, Annie made the recipe with me because my family member was not there. Annie was essentially responsible for raising members of my family. Thankfully, Julie chose to break the cycle of women of color doing the work that belonged to the caregivers in my family. When my parents brought my older sister (their firstborn child) home from the hospital, a domestic worker was awaiting their arrival. Unbeknownst to Julie, a family member had hired her and sent her over to their home. Julie said she told the woman, "you seem like a very nice woman but I'm going to raise my kids" and sent her home. Julie made decisions such as this not only because she (along with my father) wanted to be the primary caregivers for my sister and me, but also because she chose to be financially independent and work. She shares that although she cannot imagine perpetuating many of the practices that were common place in her household growing up (such as domestic workers and nurses) she also made intentional decisions in her life that made some of those practices financially impractical. The complexities of relationships that are developed, fostered, and maintained between the strands of race class, political power, and love are not tensions I have been able to fully comprehend throughout my

life or through this inquiry, especially while missing key perspectives of those involved in the complexity, such as Annie's.

> ***Are you there, reader? It's me, Margaret.***
>
> Do y'all see what I meant earlier when I said I worked through multiple iterations of this writing and analysis and chose to intentionally center myself, my family, and our stories inside racism and white supremacy? And remember when I said that drafts of this work included a lot of hedging? And that my committee members were pivotal in my thinking and language shifts? This was especially evident in this section. I have already shared how important my second expert reviewer, Dr. French-Lee, was to this work based upon her expertise in critical race theory, racial socialization, critical discourse analysis, and intersectionality. However, she also shared the perspective she holds as the granddaughter and great-granddaughter of Black domestic workers. I had always wondered what Annie's family thought of me and my family but connecting those thoughts to an actual person pushed me to more strongly interrogate those thoughts, with connections to my growing understandings of racism and my own political, economic, and racial privilege.

While our upbringings and proximity to Black employees of my family were significant parts of both our stories, our schooling, and social worlds were also markedly segregated. This aligns with DiAngelo's (2018) writing shared in chapter two on white fragility, which notes the frequency for white people to choose to live in racial isolation from people of color. Julie and I also reflect upon our racial isolation in school, as Julie shares on 8/30/2019:

> As for me, I never really thought about me being white, at all, really. I remember in the small town where I grew up and where you grew up, it was very segregated, and still really is. Where I went to school was a Catholic school that I went to for elementary school for eight years. And there was one Black kid in my grade who was my friend. I would've considered him a friend. I think he considered me a friend. And then there were two Black girls two years older. And that was it. In terms of peers, those were the only people, really people of color at all that I was ever exposed to. So it wasn't that, for me, I was never raised that I had a white identity. It was that they were Black, and they were different. But the whole…it's like a piece of art, where you have the blue sky, and that's

> the backdrop, but then there's a cloud…but you don't even see the blue sky. It's the cloud. And it's the cloud that stands out as being in front. (JPD, D, 8/30/2019)

As discussed in chapter two, DiAngelo (2018) argued that this allowance for whites to perceive themselves as non-racialized while seeing the race of people of color is a privilege not afforded to any other racial groups. Tatum (2017) echoed these same sentiments in sharing "there is a lot of silence about race in white communities, and as a consequence whites tend to think of racial identity as something that other people have, not something that is salient for them" (p. 186) which contributes to a racial cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957). For instance, Irving (2014) shared that while she understood she was white in the sense she would check 'white' or 'Caucasian' on a census form, she felt her race was "just plain, normal" (p. xi) and she identified people of color as "the real races" (p. xi). Our socioeconomic status and economic privilege also supported our lack of consciousness and psychic freedom from having to acknowledge our whiteness. Kivel (2002) shares that often people who are both white and financially privileged are less likely to recognize their race because they have not had to "assert their whiteness against the effects of economic discrimination and the presences of other racial groups" (pgs. 10-11) in the way white people experiencing poverty have.

Our data analysis and interrogations aligned with Frankenburg (1993) and DiAngelo (2011) in that we also viewed ourselves as "racially neutral" and that we were "normal, American." While we often referred to the race of others when reflecting on our childhoods, it was apparent in our memories that we never referenced or had a consciousness of our own racial identity and how it influenced our experiences. Julie described this explicitly when she said, "For me, I was never raised that I had a white identity. It was that they were Black, and they were different" (JPD, D, 8/30/2019). According to Delgaldo & Stefancic (2017), we (white people)

often think of ourselves as raceless and our viewpoints as universal, or "the unexamined norm" (Tatum, 2017, p. 185). Therefore, any racial difference we encountered was a deviation from us and our whiteness was "the one against which all others were measured" (Tatum, 2017, p. 187). This is a foundational tenant of white supremacy and beliefs about racial superiority and a contributing factor to white fragility, as discussed in chapter two. Our biases can also be seen in the next excerpt when I refer to people of color as "non-white," which harmfully identifies people of color only in their relation to their non-whiteness. This is evidence of how we have seen the need for our language to shift because of this work as we continue to identify and dismantle our internalized beliefs and biases.

My memories of my childhood (in the 1990s and early 2000s) align with my mother's (in the 1960s and early 1970s) in terms of our isolation from interactions with peers who were people of color. Even though we grew up generations apart, the similarities of our educational and personal racial isolation are striking. In a memo dated 11/20/2019 I share:

> I look back on my childhood and see how incredibly racially insulated I was in terms of any personal relationships my family and I shared with people of color. When I got to high school, I remember a lot of Black peers. But up until then, I remember only two peers of color, and they had each just recently immigrated to the country. I didn't have a Black teacher until I was in undergrad. Our family friends that we like went to dinner with or went on trips with were all white. I have no recollection of a family member ever dating or bringing a person of color to an event. I frequently saw Black women who were employed by our family, and I recall attending Black churches growing up. My dad was friends with a Black street preacher, and we went and played with his family a few times. But I look back on attending those churches now or when we played with those kids -

were those politically motivated relationships? Like, were we just trying to secure the Black vote? (MWD, M, 11/20/2019)

The messages Julie and I received and internalized as children that resulted in racialized understandings of hierarchy, white supremacy, and the types of relationships white people shared with people of color were also heightened by the racial isolation we experienced in each of our educational experiences. Although Julie and I went to school decades apart, we each note in our data having hardly any peers or friendships with children of color because our economic privileges and familial perspectives of what spaces were for us, educationally and socially, enabled us to attend white-dominated private schools for the majority of our educations. It is important to note the historical context of private schools (particularly in the United States of America, South), which were "established, expanded, and supported to preserve the Southern tradition of racial segregation" (A History of Private Schools and Race in the American South, n.d). Private schools show how some white people, including my family, can and did choose to leverage our financial privilege to counter efforts to dismantle institutional racism (such as school desegregation) and maintain preferred systems of racial separation. Even when I did attend a public high school with a more racially diverse student body, I continued to be racially isolated due to academic tracking practices which harmfully affected students of color while benefiting white students, such as myself (Carter, 2012; Tyson, 2011; Welton, 2013). In addition to my racial privilege, my kindergarten through eighth-grade private school education (which my family's economic privilege enabled me to have) better prepared me for the assessments taken to determine placement into advanced placement and honors tracks. Because of the racial isolation we experienced at school, which was a result of our private school and tracking experiences, we

did not grow up going to school with peers of color or establishing personal friendships with them.

Julie and I recall our childhood impressions of our unconsciously internalized racial superiority about people of color, and further recognize that such impressions exemplify a personal and interpersonal manifestation of a structural and institutional system of hierarchy that imparts biases, such as centering whiteness even while masking the existence of whiteness as a system and as a marker of our own identities.

Misconceptions About The Definition Of Racism

The sub-theme misconceptions about the definition of racism is illustrative how through interrogating our memories, we became more aware of our misconceptions about the meaning of racism. For example, through this theme, we evidence how throughout our childhood, we each narrowly conceptualized racism as overt exclusion or the use of racial slurs, while ignoring racism's structural and institutional components and the ways we personally perpetuated it through our family's beliefs and practices. Rather, by shifting our definition of racism to align with Wellman (1977) and by viewing it more broadly and complexly as "a system of advantage based on race" (p. 210) and not simply outward expressions of prejudice, we can better understand the extent to which our various "protective pillows" (Fine, 1997, p. 57) (including our racial, economic, and political power) benefitted us while disadvantaging others. Further, as we share in our data below, we found that we are still working to fully shift our definition and understanding of racism to include its pervasiveness and complexities.

When discussing and reflecting with each other about our memories of racism as children, we only recount experiences where people close to us used overtly racist language. Julie shares on 8/30/2019 during discussion:

> When I was about ten, I and another Girl Scout were chosen by our troop leaders to go on a special camping trip. There were two of us, and we were to be in a tent with another girl scout from another troop from a different town, so she was a stranger. The girl I was paired with was Black, and I don't remember having any kind of reaction to that except that she was kind of quiet and I liked her. I had a little Kodak Instamatic camera and I took a picture of her and a lot of other things from the trip. When the film was developed, I remember showing the picture to some family members, and I remember one person in a hushed tone and kind of whispered "chocolate." I remember being confused and kind of annoyed. (JPD, D, 8/30/2019)

I go on to share a similar memory in my autoethnography where another family member used a racial slur:

> One time Junior and I were playing outside at Carol's house. I was probably in first or second grade. We found some seeds that we had never seen before. They were about the size of an ear and really dark brown. We thought they were like a magical discovery because we had never seen anything like that before, and we found them at this old boathouse that was kind of spooky and abandoned. I remember we brought them to show Carol and this person told us they were n****r toes. I remember Junior and I both looking at each other and being very uncomfortable. I think we both like nervously laughed. It's like we knew what this person said was racist and offensive but didn't know what to do. We knew it wasn't right to say that word, and it was mean. But she's a really good person - she's so kind and would do anything for anyone. It's also interesting because whenever I see Junior, we always talk about that experience. It seems that this memory was as strong for him as it was for me. (MWD- AE)

This excerpt from my autoethnography illustrates a complex tension. When I described the memory of the event involving the use of the racist slur and the person who said this harmful word, I followed it up with saying that the person involved was "a really good person, so kind, and would do anything for anyone" (MWD-AE). Additionally, I problematically shared that using that word was simply "mean" (MWD-AE), which fails to situate the history of violences perpetrated with the use of such racial slurs.

Julie used the same type of language when describing her father (my grandfather), stating during discussion that, "I can think of lots of examples of ways where my dad imparted on me the value of every human being…he did not participate in any discriminatory race-based language" (JPD-D, 8/30/2019). These examples show how we were unable to accept that someone could have racist beliefs and act in racist ways and also be a "good person" or that by not engaging in overtly discriminatory behavior and language, our family did not perpetuate or benefit from structural and institutional racism. These excerpts and our discussion about these individuals evidence our propensity towards either/or thinking, or the good/binary according to DiAngelo (2018), and they also lack understanding of the complexities and systematic nature of racism. This "effective adaptation of racism" (p.71) contends that following the civil rights movement, one could not be a good, moral person while simultaneously participating in racism. We have now come to understand racism better as an institutional and structural system that is far more complex than individual actions.

Our confusion about how to handle situations of overt and blatant racism continued throughout our schooling. In one discussion about our salient memories with race, I shared a memory from high school that also reflects a tension between the behavior and opinions of

others that I did not agree with and my confusion with how to respond to it. When walking in the hallway with a friend on the way to class:

> she looked at me and she said, "don't you just wish we could have separate hallways?" And I looked around, and I was like holy shit, it's us and everyone else was Black people. And I looked at her and I said, "I can't believe you just said that." And I was so stunned and I think about that moment, and I think of two things…I wish I would have said more. I'm ashamed that I didn't have a stronger response. I think about, Goddamnit, I really wish twenty-eight- year-old Margaret could go and get inside of thirteen-year-old Margaret's body and just absolutely rip her a new one. But the second thing I remember thinking was I couldn't believe she thought that was something that she could say to me. How did she think that was something I would entertain? Did she think I would like that idea? What did that mean about what she thought I stood for and was okay with? (MWD-D, 8/30/2019)

This memory illustrated the discomfort I feel when I am viewed as a member of the white collective and not as an individual. In the memory shared above where my friend suggested our halls become segregated, I was upset that my friend assumed my thoughts aligned with hers and that my peers did not see me as "unique and original" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59). As referenced in chapter two, this discomfort with being seen as a member of a group (rather than as an individual) is a common experience for white people, especially if they feel their self-definition is threatened (Tatum, 2017). Omowale Akintunde (1999) defined racism as

> a systemic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality. For most whites, however, racism is like murder: the concept exists, but someone has to commit it in order for it to happen.

> This limited view of such a multilayered syndrome cultivates the sinister nature of racism and, in fact, perpetuates racist phenomena rather than eradicates them (1999, p. 2).

Examining our narratives and deconstructing our previous experiences and even our language choice indicate that our prior understandings of a racist as a person performing specific racist acts (such as denying people of color access to certain things or spaces) and/or saying specific racist things (such as racial slurs or endorsing segregation) needed to shift to also include the multi-layeredness and "systemic, social, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon" (Akintunde, 1999) of racism that did pervade every bit of our realities, then and now. This shifted definition of racism and new image of a racist adds to the discomfort we feel when confronted with our racist behavior or how we benefit from racism. This shift was also instrumental in Irving's (2014) *Waking up White,* as discussed in chapter two.

When reflecting upon the ways I conceptualized and witnessed racism throughout my childhood, I am struck by the fact that this hallway experience and conversation about separate hallways was one of the strongest memories I had to share. However, as we interrogated our stories further, I realized that I was surrounded by racism, that my family perpetuated it, and that I benefitted from it (and continue to).

In writing this section, I further interrogated these past experiences and how I conceptualized them during our discussion and in my autoethnography.

> In reflecting on this memory as I'm writing, I'm really seeing how I'm not considering the full definition of what racism is and how pervasive it was in my childhood, and how I'm critiquing them now. I think it's also interesting that for my mom, whose life was far more racialized than mine in some ways, she doesn't note the extent to how racially

charged her childhood was (such as the presence of Black domestic workers and her memory of only one Black student during her K-12 education). When I reflected on my childhood, I've problematically limited it to stories where an individual person was doing or saying an individual thing. In these memories a racial slur was used in one and in the other, this person was essentially championing for segregation. These are the main two stories I included in discussion that I felt were the most influential for me, but I didn't include other memories where quieter (to me, at least) and more complex examples of systemic racism that was present.

For example, in high school my administration tracked me into honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes. At some point in high school, I realized that there were only a few students of color ever in these classes. And by the time I got to my junior and senior year, it was down to these same two guys. So, while when I was in the hallways at my school, I was surrounded by people with darker skin than me, when I got into my classes, they were all white. I now understand the racial differences I saw in the hallway versus my classrooms were not the result of intelligence or hard work, rather, they were manifestations of my family's economic, racial, and political privilege. My family paid for me to attend private elementary and middle school, so I was automatically put in advanced classes as a freshman. I also know without the shadow of a doubt that teachers and school administrators treated me differently because of my last name and expected me to do well in advanced courses. The rest of my world outside of school was also incredibly white. The churches we went to were white, when we went out to eat we were surrounded by people who looked like us, and our family friends were white. These

> are powerful examples of how racialized my childhood was, but the only thing I was really identifying then as racist was overt, individual acts (MWD, M, 1/18/2020).

When I problematically understood racism as limited to "individual and intentional acts committed by unkind people" (DiAngelo, 2018, p.73), like the excerpts shared above, I felt if I did not use racial slurs, if I believed all people were created equal, and if I wanted to live in an integrated world, I was innocent of being a participant in a system that oppressed and marginalized people of color. Until I developed a stronger understanding of what racism actually was and how it operates, I could not see how my family and I were so clearly a part of perpetuating it. Even as I fiercely pushed back upon membership to a larger white collective and endeavored to distance myself from such categorizations, I continued to benefit from my racial, economic, and political privilege.

Through this analysis and our collaborative work across this inquiry, Akintunde's (1999) definition enabled us to see ways our formerly dismissive and simplistic notions of racism ignored everyday examples of racism in our own lives. Structurally, racism is evident in Julie's childhood through the titles she was given as a child that others were denied as adults, and through the employment of people of color by our family to prepare our food, cook our food, and care for our children. Institutionally, my family has benefitted from generational wealth through business ownership (including plantations that enslaved people of color on both sides of my family) and direct influence on public policy through holding elected office. Although my understanding of the full definition of racism and the confluences of my multiple sources privileges are strengthening, I know there is still so much I have yet to grasp about this system and the depths of the way it has benefitted me.

Revising History to Create Heroic Family Narratives

Kuhn (1995) shares that "the past is unavoidably re-written, revised, through memory" (p. 155) and Sleeter (2008) encourages and challenges us through critical family history (CFH) inquiries "to situate the family within the larger socio-cultural and power relationships in order to look below transmitted stories, and to tease out the impact of larger socio-cultural relationships on the family over generations" (p.19). She shared that we (white people) fail to acknowledge the role of culture and power in our lives and that our stories often ignore the experiences and perspectives of people of color. A significant component of our collaboration included interrogating heroic narratives that our family has upheld through the lens of revisionist history and CFH (Delgado & Stefacic, 2017; Sleeter, 2008). Critical race theory (CRT) informs CFH (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate,1995) and it is imperative that we understand and utilize these theories alongside each other to reexamine our family's past and present patterns of oppression.

Revisionist history (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) aided my analysis of our data, and further allowed for the critical reinterpretation of the following narratives. Revisionist history "reexamines American's historical record, replacing comforting majoritarian interpretations of events with ones that square more accurately with minorities' experiences" (p. 25) and how historical records have supported and maintained the interest of "elite whites" (p.25). Missing from harmful revisionist histories (such as the ones I will share below) are counternarratives that include stories communicated by and from the perspectives of the individuals who experienced them and that "challenge and displace" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 50) white centric perspectives. CRT refers to this as the voice of thesis, which posits that, "African Americans are better able to and should be called upon to communicate their own experiences with racism, rather than having someone speak for them" (French-Lee, 2018, p. 34).

Growing up, family members frequently told me stories about my family's involvement in community leadership. These stories reveal my family's own revisionist history and harmful storytelling, in large part because they problematically centered us at heroes and focused solely on our perspective. Family members re-told certain stories over and over, and two in particular focused on my family's involvement in Black/white community relations. These stories positioned my family as central to creating peace and opening up opportunities for people of color in our community. However, these stories never included the perspectives of the people of color in our community.

I now question the way my family members recounted those stories to me and my former interpretations of them because they lacked the perspective and voice of those with the "direct experience of oppression" (Brainard, 2009, p. 33). In discussion on 8/30/2019, I shared:

> You know, it's like we have these narratives we hold so dear that I always heard growing up, that were very impactful on my own identity development and taught who *we* were and what "that" means. These stories shaped me. But they always made us sound like the heroes. And I was thinking about this a while ago…and realized I never heard those stories told by anyone other than one of our family members. And I wonder how that story would be told by someone not related to us (MWD-D, 8/30/2019)

The reflection above shows my growing understanding that many of our family narratives failed to include the perspectives, realities, and experiences of other people involved in these stories even though their presence was critical to the way we heroically defined ourselves as a result of these encounters. While endeavoring to critically reinterpret these stories I was led to question my own identity, memoing on 12/12019:

I grew up hearing vivid re-tellings of this relative in the middle of the street one night with Black people on one side and white people on the other. Each group held weapons and were apparently on the brink of rioting in response to integration. My relative, the town mayor at the time, and a representative from the Black community reached some type of an agreement and the conflict was avoided. This story was also always shared in the context of this family member's commitment to equity throughout his time in office and in his personal life. In trying to utilize a Critical Family Histories perspective, I wanted to try and look at this story historically and see if I could find any articles related to the event. I quickly discovered through simple online research that the years this family member was in elected office did not align with the year my hometown was integrated. But my relative was in office years prior which means he wasn't in office at the time of integration. I plan to learn more about his involvement from community members of color. Initial inquiries and collaborations with black community leaders from the time seem to indicate that he made significant steps to prepare the city, particularly the community college, for integration. However, we must be cautious of the continuation and perpetuation of revisionist narratives, especially when they position our ancestors heroically.

By looking at this story from a more critical stance and researching the historical and contextual components that have always remained unknown to me, I have learned the way this memory was always told to me (and I retold it) was false. Stories like this have had influence on my family for generations and instilled within me the understanding that my life should have a purpose and include service. But I wonder if they actually just inflated me with a problematic sense of nobility? Or like some assumption that our

> community looked to and depended upon my family's leadership and presence to bring about more justice, fairness, and equity? (MWD, M, 12/1/2019)

This story illustrates how my family commonly perpetuates revisionist histories that center ourselves while failing to take into account the perspectives, realities, and experiences of the people of color involved in our retellings. Similarly, Julie and I discussed the second commonly re-told story about a family member who would have a young Black man caddy for him while he played golf:

> Julie: So, he would have this guy caddy for him. And at that time, you know Black men couldn't play golf at that course. And he didn't like playing golf. So after they got to like the, I don't know, whatever hole they were out of sight of the clubhouse or other golf carts, he would let this young man play for him. But did that guy even want to play golf? (JPD, D, 8/30/2019)
>
> Margaret: Right! And like, maybe the guy did want to play golf but who knows how that even started. I think about the racial and economic power dynamics that would have been unavoidable on that golf course and in an exchange between them. If this family member asked this young man if he wanted to play, would he have been able to say anything but yes? And also, like what would have happened to that young man if he had been seen or I guess caught by other golfers? I like to think this family member would have done what he could have to protect him. But maybe something really bad could have happened that he couldn't have protected him from and it was because of a situation he kind of put him in (MWD, D, 8/30/2019).

Our understanding of this memory is further complicated by the man going on to become a professional golfer on the Professional Golfers Association tour. He was one of very few

people of color at this time invited to be part of the tour. It is easy for us to rest upon a narrative that centers our family's benevolence as not only providing this man the opportunity to participate in an activity he was denied due to his race but also the reason he went on to have a professional career in the sport. Julie went on to further reflect on this tension in a memo from 3/4/2020:

> …the fellow did like playing golf…it was just he wasn't allowed to play and he didn't have clubs. But it is highly likely that again with the benevolence of "once we get around the corner, you can play my ball" was never a thought of what might happen to HIM if he were caught. I can imagine my dad thinking only of the sadness he would feel if he couldn't play (he had a lot of empathy) and that it was wrong…

Narratives, such as these, are often rich in "uncritical celebrations" (p. 121) that ignore the historical and cultural contexts of the stories according to Sleeter (2008). Sleeter shares that when she engages her white pre-service teachers in critically examining their family histories in order to "reveal the ways in which power and privilege have been constructed" (p. 115) they (like Julie and me) often adopt the "heroic individual" narrative. This tendency for Americans to idolize and distort facts about their ancestors is also common in United States textbooks, largely written by white authors that centralize whiteness and Eurocentricity, which leads to biased, white-centric, and hegemonic historical representations (Loewen, 1995. Each of these stories hold evidence that our memories and retellings have been rewritten, revised (Kuhn,1995), and distorted to paint our family members as heroes, while failing to consider or include the perspectives and experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Throughout the analysis and early writing of this inquiry, I harmfully did the same. In early drafts of Julie's and my data, I left out names or used pseudonyms for family members when sharing stories with

them in it, particularly those stories in which instances of racism were explicit. However, when I shared stories involving people of color or those outside of my family, I problematically used their real names. Thankfully, I am supported by expert reviewers who helped me notice and rectify this. This example, though, underscores the importance of my engagement in this inquiry and is an indication that rooting out white-centering and white-conditioning is ongoing, constant, effortful, and necessary work.

Through this inquiry, Julie and I sought to interrogate these two commonly re-told and celebrated stories and collaboratively reflect upon the ways these retellings have problematically centered both our family members and whiteness. Further, by broadening our re-interpretations to include dynamics of power, race, and privilege, we were able to see the ways these narratives and our retellings simplistically characterized other individuals in the stories and ignored the ways our whiteness and privilege influenced the events themselves and our retellings.

Throughout this theme we detailed the powerful ways our childhood memories informed our conceptions of race and our racial identities as adults and evidence examples of structural and institutional racism. By examining our childhood memories using critical whiteness and critical family history lenses, we were able to interrogate: a) how we were racialized as children and how these experiences informed our racial awareness; b) how our definition of racism; and c) how our revisionist family histories can be reframed and re-crafted through a critical family histories perspective and aided by tenants of critical race theory. Certainly, our childhood and racial socialization has had a long-lasting impact on our development and current experiences, both personally and professionally. In the next section I discuss the second theme examining our current personal and professional tensions.

Are you there, reader? It's me, Margaret.

This family stuff was the messiest and most emotional part of this work for me, and still is. Julie and I think one reason it's so hard, is because of the good/bad binary that we continue to grapple with. It's a lot easier for us to swing to the opposite end of the field and quickly decide a person is "good" or "bad" than to sit in the confusion and discomfort we feel when we interrogate our histories and ourselves. And it is profoundly easier to write in this binary way. Thinking like this is especially hard when these people are people I love.

Current Personal and Professional Tensions

A substantive focus of our work together explored our current personal and professional tensions in light of our developing racial consciousness and identities. Through this inquiry we have come to see that we have each harmfully perpetuated our white racial socialization onto others, specifically people of color, even when we have acted upon and with what we felt were good intentions. Our evolving critical lenses and racial consciousnesses have allowed us to interrogate and interrupt our own former actions. In the following section I will first share excerpts from the data followed with a discussion around the specific characteristic of white supremacy, whiteness, or white fragility the excerpts represent. The three characteristics we uncovered through our analysis of the data are: universalism, challenges with us being seen as members of the white collective, and that we experience tension when our racial comfort is threatened.

Universalism. Both Julie and I have become more aware of the ways we have caused harm to our colleagues, students, or therapeutic clients of color. I will first share and discuss how we each have falsely assumed our perspectives, experiences, and interpretations are universal, regardless of the influence of race or privilege. Julie shared a realization she had a few months ago in how she supports her Black women clients, specifically. She shared during discussion:

> One of the things I started to notice across the population of Black women that I see, I became aware of a bias that I might have, that I might have been forcing onto them, which was I raised you and your sister to be very independent. I value independence. I

> value the idea that, if you can pay your way, then you're free…that's a strong bias I have and that is not always a good thing because not everybody lives like that…I noticed that with the majority of my Black female clients, they were financially successful, and they felt obligated to do things like cosign for cars for their cousins. Or somebody needs them to give them money, or I have to support you financially, and then you don't pay me back, and then it gets me into trouble, or there were all these financial entanglements that were directly tied to some of the difficulties they were having that brought them into my office. And I remember thinking, and I remember it being a really big deal, because I felt like, in encouraging independence, saying "don't do that," or having them think through is this a good thing to do? What I remember thinking was, I don't have that. No one is asking me for money. I've never really had that. And I certainly don't know what it would be like for me to have to say no. I pushed my independence on them without thinking about what their experience was and how it is different than mine. (JPD, D, 8/30/2019)

This excerpt from the data shows a failure to account for cultural differences between ourselves and people of color, especially with differences in how our family and racial group viewed and prioritized individualism over collectivism. Collectivism has been defined as "an individual's concern with the advancement of the group to which he or she belongs" (Carson, 2009, p. 327) and is often cited as a critical aspect of African American culture. It has roots in African culture that prioritizes a responsibility for others that helped to ensure survival of the community (White & Parham, 1990). White communities and families, however, focus on personal advancement and autonomy, as opposed to collectivism (Vargas & Kemmelmeier,

2013). In the excerpt above, Julie failed to see how her culture (which focused on autonomy) differed from that of her client's (which focused on collectivism).

I shared a similar experience, which reveals how I have failed to account for how my various forms of privilege profoundly influence my confidence and comfort in the workplace. However, I have ignored how this perspective may not be universal and may not be a comfort all of my colleagues' experience. I shared during discussion:

> I've been thinking a lot lately about the relationships I have with colleagues at work, many of whom are Black women and like how you said you've realized you feel like you've actually done things that are harmful when you thought you were helping? I think I do the same a lot…like even now I do it. A lot of times I have pushed colleagues to like…stand up for what they need or if they're upset about something admin did or isn't doing that they should tell them. I always thought this was me supporting and encouraging them but I was talking with a coworker who I also consider a friend and she was telling me about how when she was growing up and like…it sounded so different than how you and Dad raised me and Anna (pseudonym). She said that her parents always told her to not talk about how she was feeling or like if she thought something should be different, especially at work, because it would be like she was causing trouble and could cause her to lose her job. She said that she knows when I encourage her to act on her frustrations or like dissatisfactions she is entitled to and probably should, but that it's just really hard for her because of how she was raised and also that when she's done that in the past, nothing happened or she felt she was targeted because of it. When I thought about what she said, I just kept thinking how opposite that was of my experience. I have never been in a professional situation where I didn't feel like my perspective

> would be valued, much less that I may suffer consequences for expressing myself. So here I have been encouraging people to do stuff when I didn't once consider what might be playing into their reluctance to do so and why I feel so damn comfortable all the time (MWD-D, 8/30/2019).

More recently, I listened to the results of a fellow doctoral candidate's research that shared the perspectives of Black female teachers (Dunmeyer, 2020). Her findings indicated that these teachers continually felt as though their schools did not welcome their voices and continually ignored their experiences, much like my school-based colleague referenced above. These examples strongly indicate to me that my colleague's experience, sense of vocational safety, and past experiences of her voice and perspectives being welcomed (or not) in the workplace are far different than mine. Additionally, I have ignored how my own racial privilege, access, and comfort interacting with people in positions of power because of my parent's jobs and financial freedom have served as buffers or a "protective pillow" (Fine, 1997, p. 57) that profoundly influence how I operate in the workplace. Shortly following Dunmeyer's presentation I memoed:

> Multiple times a day I think about the mountains of privilege I have had since birth and the ways it has influenced my life. I also think there are probably a lot of advantages that aren't obvious to me but probably glaring to others. When we as white people encourage others, especially people of color, to alter their behavior or judge how they navigate racialized spaces without taking into account the privileges we are given but they are denied, we ignore the presence and power of the system of whiteness (MWD, M, 11/19/2019).

Each of these experiences and reflections illustrated our racial socialization, privilege, ignorance, and failure to account for the systemic inequities and racial factors that are realities for people of color that may influence their thinking and actions. Further, it shows how even as self-identified progressives claiming a commitment to social justice, our racial conditioning results in behaviors that center ourselves while perpetuating ideals of white supremacy. By not considering that our life experience as white women may differ than that of a person of color, we perpetuate universalism, which posits that as human beings (not individuals) we are all the same. According to DiAngelo (2006), universalism "assumes that whites and people of color have the same realities, the same experiences in the same contexts, the same responses from others, and assumes that the same doors are open to all" (p. 59). In each of these experiences, our intentions came from a place of wanting to support a peer or therapeutic client. However, in these situations we failed to consider the role our whiteness played in the choices and affordances we had in our lives (which inherently informed our experiences), as well as our personal interpretations that we viewed as universal truths. Accordingly, we dismissed the influence of race (both ours and of others) and systemic and individual racism altogether. While failing to account for varied perspectives and experiences, white people also simultaneously defend their individuality, which I explore next.

Tensions when seen as a member of the White collective. Analysis of our data indicated that Julie and I get frustrated with the possibility of being seen as a member of the White collective or otherwise benefitting from our privilege. I shared in my autoethnography:

> The day after Trump was elected, I was at a professional development. I was the only white person there, as is common. I remember I was just such a mess and so upset about

> what had happened the night before. I remember looking around just not understanding how everyone seemed to be doing so okay. I mean, like, what are we going to as a country? I was later speaking with a Black male colleague and telling him how upset I was. I said it was the first time I felt so disconnected from my government and elected officials and that as a white woman, I felt like I was technically a part of the group responsible for the results. I felt like everyone assumed I "was one of *those* white women." At a certain point while I was speaking with him, I realized how ridiculous and insensitive what I was saying was. I don't remember what I said to him, but it was something along the lines of me realizing feeling like this might be the norm for him. I think about his response a lot. He said, "ya, that sounds like just another day waking up being a Black in America." (MWD-AE)

During discussion, Julie shared a memory of visiting her daughter's (my sister's) guidance counselor, a Black woman, when she was a freshman in high school. My sister wanted the counselor to place her in a more challenging math class but, in order to do so, a meeting had to be held between the student, family, and guidance counselor. After the meeting the schedule change was successfully made

> Then, the counselor said, "You know, I think you need to know that you're not going to be able to get what you want because of who your daddy is." We were like, what? And I couldn't figure out where that was coming from because I didn't come in with a fruit basket for her with some bribery set up. And I remember saying to Anna, I said "Sweet pea, could you wait outside for just a second?" And I told the counselor, I said "I don't really know where that is coming from but none of us will

> ever ask for something we don't earn. And I've never traded in on my name or my husband's name." I didn't know what my offense had been (JPD, D, 8/30/2019).

As shared in an earlier theme and in chapter 2, discomfort with being seen as a member of a group, as opposed to "unique and original" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59) is a common experience for white people, especially when our self-definition is challenged or it is implied that we benefit from racism or privilege. In each of these memories, Julie and I felt our personal identities were challenged. In my memory, I felt frustrated and feared judgment from other people who would assume I was "one of *those* white women" who had aligned their thinking with and voted for Donald J. Trump. This example illustrates my ability to recognize the system and significance of Whiteness but view it as an "individual problem of other bad white people," not something I was associated with (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 59). In Julie's memory, the feeling when someone else (and in this case, a person of color) implied that she or her child felt they were entitled to special treatment due to our family's position of political, racial, and economic power and privilege threatened her self-definition. As analysis of her data has indicated, Julie's sense of independence and refusal to capitalize on her family's name or success is important to her. Additionally, her memory shows that at the time, she problematically did not acknowledge the privileges and advantages our family experienced daily because of our last name and/or our whiteness. Each of these memories illustrated how we responded defensively, and displayed fragility, when we were "linked to other whites as a group or accused of collectively benefitting from racism" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 60).

Tension when our comfort is challenged. Our analysis also revealed that we continue to experience tension when our evolving understanding of racism threatens our comfort in both our

professional and personal contexts. Julie shared during discussion on 8/30/2019 her tensions with her context

> I live in a place where they proudly fly confederate flags. Where I can go one street over and some guy's got Confederate stuff on his car. I live in a place where now with Trump, I don't know who I can talk to and I am continually disappointed with the support that he has. It just feels less and less safe. It's pretty hostile there…I think there are a lot of things you think about when you turn 60. I feel like this is one of those things where I feel like tick, tick, tick. Like I'm doing this work so late and I don't have that much time left… (JPD, D, 8/30/2019)

It is important to note that while we find this work at times uncomfortable, we know our experience pales in comparison to the violence people of Color experience due to systems and structures of power, hegemony, and systematic white supremacy in their daily lives. When my mother mentions that her context feels "less and less safe" (JPD, D, 8/30/2019) we realize our feelings of emotional safety in regards to whom we feel we can share conversations of equity with is far different than the lack of safety (both physical and mental) people of Color experience. Similarly, the current President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, recently used harmful language in claiming that he regarded his impending impeachment as a "lynching" (Donald J. Trump, 2019). As discussed within chapter two, DiAngelo (2011) shares that "fragility distorts and perverts reality," and whites can often use language that assigns actual violence when describing anti-racist discussions and exchanges when it has been merely our comfort that has been challenged, not our physical safety (DiAngelo, 2011).

In our data analysis we found that Julie and I both indicated that we are apprehensive about how we are perceived by others, especially people of color, while we make efforts to be

more racially conscious and equitable in our personal and professional lives. Julie shared in discussion

> I try to make my office welcoming to anyone that comes in or that maybe they will see the books that I have and magazines I choose to have and they will see things that identify the way I think…maybe they will spark a question or maybe they will ask me about that book. I try to have things that say this is what I think about. I've also started to try and really support a young Black therapist. I invited her to be a part of this professional group I'm in with other therapists and have begun referring people to her. But a lot of the time I feel I'm not doing enough (JPD, D, 8 /30/2019).

In her autoethnography Julie shared an experience she had when attending a fundraiser for a national Black organization who had recently asked her to sit on a panel regarding mental health:

> …I noticed in the paper they were having a charity function to raise money for their organization and I thought, well shoot, let's me and your dad go to that. Let's support that. They asked me to speak, that was an honor, we should support this. We were the only white people there and there were like 300 people there. We were uncomfortably escorted to a table of some distinction. I can't say that I felt like I was supposed to be there? I don't think so…was I welcome there? How do you break-in? Where do you start? (JPD-AE)

While Julie feels she is making steps towards making social justice a priority in her work, she still feels like she "isn't doing enough" (JPD, D, 8/30/2019). She worries if her commitment to inclusivity and forging relationships with colleagues of color appears - or is - authentic. Often, she worries if she may be invading spaces she should not be. Her language also indicates her

discomfort. For example, Julie shares she is not sure how to "break-in," which implies the existence of a strong and intentional separation. It also points to a possible held belief that her presence would be alarming and perhaps unwelcomed. In the following memo I also share the discomfort I experience while I work and subsequent reflections about my words:

> Sometimes I worry about the fine line between being an ally and being perceived as performative. I spoke up about some stuff in a meeting today and I almost felt like people rolled their eyes that I brought up a racial factor I wanted us to consider. Even though I work with primarily all people of Color, sometimes I feel like I'm adding drama if I bring up race. Should people of color be the only ones to bring up these topics? I don't think so - especially if we're in a white-dominated space. I think that's our responsibility. But I feel like maybe it looks like I was centering myself or like that I wanted to be perceived a certain way. This is a hard balance for me and it's something I can get really self-conscious about (MWD-M-5/12/2019).

A commonly used term for white people who view themselves as partners in social justice and racial equity work is an ally. According to Love (2019), an ally can "still center Whiteness," and "is often performative or self-glorifying" (p. 117) and "can be driven by self-satisfaction" (p. 119). Allies also do not deeply interrogate their privilege and they choose to "stop freedom dreams because they are not interested in tearing down systems that benefit them and their loved ones" (p. 117). To me, Love's description of an ally feels shamefully familiar. When I share my worry about being perceived as performative or that I centered myself in these moments, I know I did because I was concerned with making sure the people around me felt I was not racist. I now align my thinking with Love (2019) and other scholars who call for a shift in both language and practice from white people serving as allies to *coconspirators.* Love (2019)

shares a conspirator is action-oriented, someone who understands how whiteness works, and is focused on complex and challenging inner work that serves as the groundwork for entering "freedom dreaming spaces" (p. 118). Love (2019) also offers perspective on the tension I speak to when I wonder about my role should be in bringing up race, especially in spaces I share with people of color. Before this inquiry, I thought that, regardless of the space, it was my job as an ally to advocate for equity and to speak up about race and racism across the spaces I join personally and professionally. However, my understanding has now shifted to realize that my role varies by setting. Love shares that as a white person, my job in white spaces is to "advocate with and for dark people" (p. 159). In comparison, my job in spaces shared and lead by people of color is to "stand in solidarity with dark people by recognizing my whiteness in dark spaces and recognizing how it can take up space if unchecked" (p. 161). In these spaces, such as my school, my job is to continually interrogate my whiteness and keep it in check. Following that inner work, my job as a co-conspirator is to stand alongside the people of color and follow their lead. In white spaces, the criticality of interrogating and recognizing my privilege continues, however, my role shifts to that of an advocate. As I continue to grow my thinking, language, and action towards that of a co-conspirator and not ally, I also am reminded of the advice of Shelby Knox, a white feminist who shares that "fellow white feminists…it's time for us to take a damn seat and listen" (Knox, 2013).

As explored in chapter two, DiAngelo (2015) argued that while people of color talk directly or openly about race, we (white people) can often withdraw or ignore the discussion altogether, maintaining a state of psychic freedom. We also exhibit outward symptoms of racial stress, which she terms White Fragility. During one discussion, I shared a memory from my first-

year teaching that illustrates how my discomfort (and subsequent withdrawal) negatively influenced a possible connection I could have formed with a family at my school.

> You know how we will sometimes meet or see a Black person on TV with our same last name? Like that football player a while back? And usually they're from South Carolina or have roots there. And Dad's family had a pretty big plantation there? Well, my first year teaching there was a fifth grader at my school with the same last name. And she would get called to the office a lot because she had to take medicine a few times a day and always forgot and I would always hear her name and kind of panic like maybe one day someone would ask about it or bring it up. Well, one day I was in the office and I think I was talking to the secretary and she said my name, and this girl's mom was up there I guess. Well, this mom was like "Oh my gosh, we have the same last name!" And I remember just starting to freeze. And she said something about where she was from and asked where I was from and, of course, it was the town in South Carolina where the plantation was. And… I was just like stuttering at this point and then she said "Ya'll probably owned us back then! We should have a big family reunion!" And I just was completely frozen and had no idea what to do. I don't even remember how I responded. I look back on that and know my fragility was just on spotlight. I didn't have the capacity to engage in that conversation. And I think back to even when the student's name would come on the intercom and I would have such a freak-out and it was essentially just me, I just shut off to it. I don't even remember what I said. I was really worried I would say the wrong thing or make someone uncomfortable, again assuming I held the power in the exchange. I now realize I was actually just uncomfortable myself; I wasn't actually worried about that woman's feelings. I was trying to protect my own. And I remember

> the mom was like almost joking around about it. And I think about how I would respond now and while I still may feel uncomfortable, I would try to be more aware of that feeling I was having, and not let it override the possibility I had to make a connection with that woman. Even when I'm sharing this memory, I don't know, like I feel like I'm centering my emotions, my response. This woman shared where her family was from and all I could do was focus on how I was feeling. I didn't ask her anything about like…if she still had family there, when she moved here, etcetera, any of the things I would normally do. My discomfort with engaging in that type of conversation completely kept me from connecting with her and I remember feeling like she had almost attacked me (MWD, D, 8/29/2019)

The memory above shows how my discomfort engaging in a racially-charged conversation resulted in me completely shutting down and quickly exiting the conversation, which is a common response when white people's racial isolation is interrupted, as discussed in chapter two (DiAngelo, 2011). My fragility and the centering of my emotions negated the woman's attempt to connect with me. Additionally, I perceived the conversation as confrontational, which is a common response white women can feel when they perceive a woman of color's words or actions to be "too harsh" or that they are being "bullied." Ruby Hamad (2018) discussed how the emotional responses of White women, which often include crying, can be "employed to muster sympathy and avoid accountability" (para. 4). Responses such as these can have traumatic and deadly consequences for people of color. These extreme emotional responses, which Luvvie Ajayi (2018) terms the "weary weaponizing of White women's tears" are often used to shift responsibility back to the person of color in response to something that person said or did that made the white woman uncomfortable. Data analysis

indicated Julie and I continue to grapple with experiencing discomfort while navigating racial discussions personally and professionally. Further, because of the potentially traumatic and deadly consequences people of Color can face when white women, such as us, experience and outwardly show such emotions, we are committed to monitoring our own emotional responses during these moments of discomfort and pushing back upon them when we experience them or we see them in other white women.

Throughout this inquiry, Julie and I grappled with our current personal and professional tensions related to our growing racial awareness and identities and how we have harmfully perpetuated our whiteness onto others, even with what we have believed were good intentions. Data and discussion supported this, and further aligned with three characteristics (universalism, challenges with us being seen as members of the white collective, and that we experience tension when our racial comfort is threatened) that according to DiAngelo (2011), "incalculate" (p. 58) White Fragility. As detailed in Chapter 2, segregation, racial arrogance, racial belonging, psychic freedom, and constant messages that we are more valuable than people of color also contribute to our lack of racial stamina, which often results in heightened emotions which can lead to a "range of defensive moves" (p. 57). While our findings indicated that we have and continue to engage in behaviors and reflections that perpetuate white supremacy, this inquiry has supported us in becoming more conscious and aware of these racist behaviors so that we may better disrupt them.

In the next chapter I will detail the implications of this work and conclusions. Our inquiry strengthened our understanding of our white identities, which has enabled us to be more racially conscious in our personal and professional lives. We encourage other white people, and especially those in helping professions, to engage in similar work to better understand the ways

their white identities and privileges inform their work with students, colleagues, and clients. Implications for individuals and organizations will be shared in the following section. Our work in supporting each other as we attempt to cause less harm to others, especially people of color, in our personal and professional lives will continue indefinitely.

5 IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In the following sections I will share my practical and scholarly implications from this inquiry, which include specific recommendations for white teachers and others in helping professions. Analysis of our data indicated that following our collaborative investigation and increased development of our racial identities and consciousness, problematic racial socialization, family histories, and racial isolation influenced our practice. These reflections have influenced us to change our practice and continue to pursue our own development. However, we troublingly realize this was a journey we essentially self-selected to engage in, and not one required of us through our professional or personal networks. Below I share the recommendations for white individuals and organizations to begin the critical process of interrogating whiteness and the implications of our racial identities and biases in our work in helping professions.

Our work points to implications on the personal level and in larger structures, including school systems and teacher preparation programs. I first share recommendations for white individuals in teaching (or other helping professions), which include independent learning and the presence of fellow white individuals committed to the same anti-racist work. Next, I discuss implications for schools and school systems which include the use of staff book studies that focus on racial identity and equity development paired with intentional and equity-focused hiring and programming practices. I then share implications for teacher preparation programs and

colleges of education that include intentional selection and pairing of mentor/mentee teachers and sustained critical whiteness and racial identity work with pre-service teachers and university faculty. Finally, I conclude with implications for others who wish to engage in similar inquiry and a conclusion to share my final reflections.

Individual and Collaborative Racial Consciousness and Identity Development

It is the independent responsibility of white educators and those in helping professions to educate themselves about the system of whiteness, what it means to be white, and how our identities as white people inform our work with our clients and students. In the following section I first share the independent learning, which white educators and those in helping professions must engage in and the necessity of developing relationships with fellow white allies committed to developing their own racial awareness and supporting others as they do the same.

Independent Learning. It is of critical importance that teachers and others in helping professions educate themselves on the history and current systems of racial oppression (Aronson & Ashlee, 2018; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Emdin, 2016; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Lynch, 2018; Sleeter, 2008). This work is necessary so that we constantly interrogate and reflect upon our own biases and perspectives in order to provide more equitable and social-justice centered work in our respective helping professions. Further, if we choose to continue to remain blind to the system of whiteness we will continue to perpetuate its ideals, causing further harm and violating the well-being of our students and clients.

In order to do this, one must first seek understanding of the systemic structures and societal influences that perpetuate white supremacy. My analysis of our data showed that we gained a heightened understanding of whiteness and our own white identity through extensively reading and learning about it. We challenge other white people in helping professions to engage

in similar, intentional inquiry that extends to include more counternarratives and writing shared from the voice of thesis, or those with the "direct experience of oppression" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; French-Lee, 2018; Brainard, 2009, p. 33). Critical reading around racial equity and whiteness includes books, articles, other critical autoethnographies, and other critical whiteness studies. Specifically, it is especially pivotal to read about white identity development and white supremacy. However, it is important to note that our interrogation of the system of whiteness and our role in it will never be complete. Further, we must understand that even as we continue to educate ourselves and attempt to become more racially conscious, we will be drawn to our own comfortable positions within the system that centers and privileges whiteness. We align our thinking with DiAngelo (2011) in that it is not a question of *if* our racism or socialization will appear, but *how and when*. We cannot undo the many ways in which we have been and continue to be racialized in our society. Rather, we can work to become more aware of that racial socialization and white centering and urgently attempt to tame and dismantle it. Our challenge to ourselves and other white people is to work to become aware of when and how our racism shows itself, especially in our work in our respective helping professions.

Relationships and Collaboration with Fellow White People that Share a Commitment to Identity Development. Following a more comprehensive and developed understanding of the system of whiteness, teachers and others in helping professions must deeply interrogate and reflect upon their own racial identity. In order to do this, teachers and others in helping professions must develop and nurture their own network of fellow white people committed to developing their racial consciousness. These relationships can offer candid and honest feedback that supports each member of the friendship. Additionally, these relationships can strengthen individuals' capacity for engaging in discussions about race, privilege, or whiteness. Due to

racial isolation and perceived racial neutrality, white people are often ill-equipped to engage in dialogue, and sometimes even think, about racism or whiteness because we have not had to (Anderson, 2016; DiAngelo, 2011; Irving, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Tatum, 2017). While many white people are beginning to learn about, discuss, and interrogate race and privilege for the first time, opting into this conversation is not a luxury people of Color are afforded (Tatum, 2017). Rather, people of color have to talk about race, because their lives are dangerously influenced by it. Tatum (2017) shares that for Black parents especially, not discussing race is a "matter of life and death," and not doing so is "putting your child at risk" (p. 32). She goes on to share that "some people have to have these conversations whether they want to or not" (p. 32) because of the way in which race negatively defines the experiences of people of color. So, because white people have not had to engage in race-based discussion in the ways people of color have, we often shy away from this type of discussion due to an undesired emotional response or discomfort. However, our lack of comfort or preparation does not negate our responsibility to prioritize and engage in this work, especially as white people in helping professions. We must strengthen our psychosocial stamina, which we found can be accomplished through discussion and reflection within same-race affinity groups or with relationships with other whites who hold a commitment to interrogating their own privilege and racial identity (DiAngelo, 2011; Irving, 2014, Tatum, 2017). The discussions Julie and I engaged in better prepared us to have conversations about race with other, less familiar people, including people of Color. Work inside affinity groups and in same-race relationships should be pursued in order for us to be better prepared for cross-racial discussions and relationships, which disrupt white racial isolation.

Additionally, work inside same-race groups is important because it mitigates the likelihood of white people further harming or triggering people of color through racist words and actions. Working inside same-race groups is also an appropriate and productive starting place for white people to engage in racially charged discussions (DiAngelo, 2011; Irving, 2014; Tatum, 2017). Further, it will take away the problematically common propensity for us (white individuals) assuming that it is the responsibility of people of Color to explain whiteness and privilege to white people or to interrupt racism (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; hooks, 1995; Wise, 2003). I also share recommendations for reading and reflective activities (see Appendix) that I hope will be supportive to others interested in engaging in similar identity development and interrogation.

Schools and School Systems

Work and initiatives related to race and privilege must be on the forefront of strategic plans and initiatives of individual schools and larger districts. As discussed in chapter two, while the racial makeup of the United States' student population is becoming increasingly more diverse, the racial demographics of teachers and school leaders remain problematically white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). I argue one way to embed racial identity and equity into schools and districts is through book studies and intentional hiring and programming practices. In the section that follows, I first detail how school systems can utilize book studies to develop individuals' understandings of whiteness and racial identity development and how schools can further use these studies in conjunction with school and district strategic plans and goals. I then discuss the need for intentional hiring and programming practices in order to diversify these problematically white occupied, white-informed, and white-centering spaces (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lawrence & Tatum, 2018)

Professional Book Studies. Professional book studies are increasingly common inside of schools, grade levels, and groups of teachers as a way for teachers to engage in professional learning and collaborate with colleagues about their practice (Burbank & Kauchak, 2003; Flood & Lapp, 1994; George, 2002). I argue that individual schools and district level leadership should select texts that teachers can choose from that discuss topics related to racism, whiteness, and racial identity. Reading and discussing books such as *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* by Beverly Tatum, and *Waking up White* by Debby Irving were instrumental in Julie's and my development of a stronger racial consciousness and awareness of the systems of whiteness. These texts (and others) can provide teachers and school leaders with the needed knowledge to strengthen their own awareness of their racialized identities. Julie and I learned that we needed the support of these texts before we could discuss and interrogate our understandings of whiteness, only after which we could begin to apply these understandings both personally and professionally. Further, these texts supported us in understanding the ways our racial identities played out in our work in helping professions and ultimately shifted our practice. Book club discussions should include time in same-race affinity groups as well as cross-race groups. These discussions should be led by trained facilitators (both white and people of color) and always include significant discussion about teachers' work with students and families in order to support participants' connections to their individual practice. For example, if a book study group has finished a reading around racial bias, facilitators should encourage teachers to reflect upon and discuss biases they are currently working towards dismantling about their students or students' families or that they have perhaps held in the past.

Schools and districts should also consider equity-focused book studies as an opportunity to align racial identity development with existing strategic plan goals or initiatives. For example, if a school has a goal of decreasing out of school suspension rates, a practice consistently shown to impact students of color at far higher rates and with far more significant consequences than imposed on white students (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Breene, & Leaf, 2010; Losen & Gillispie, 2012; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002), schools should intentionally select books that offer critical analysis of structural practices, individual racial biases, and the problematic influence of white dominant culture that influence the topic of focus. For the example shared above (decreasing out of school suspension rates) schools and teachers could select texts such as *These Kids are out of Control: Why we Must Reimagine "Classroom Management" for Equity"* by Richard Milner or *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* by Monique W. Morris, among others.

In the event schools and districts problematically choose not to pursue this imperative work or lack the resources to do so (such as trained facilitators or budgetary constraints), I challenge white educators and others in helping professions to begin the work themselves inside of their schools and communities by inviting other white teachers to learn together through the aforementioned professional book studies on their own. This will also provide them opportunities to discuss how their practice is being influenced by their development. For an example of this practice, teachers could refer to the inquiry conducted by McManinom & Casey (2018), that followed a group of white teachers for two years as they worked to learn more about whiteness and shift their practice in response. I believe there can be no excuses for white teachers or others in helping professions to not pursue this work, regardless of whether this is a school or district sanctioned initiative.

Intentional Hiring and Programming Practices. In addition to professional book studies, I argue school districts must make intentional hiring at all levels (superintendents, principals, instructional coaches, grade level chairs, etc.) and programming decisions (professional learning, budgeting, stakeholder engagement) that reflect a commitment to racial equity and development. If educational leaders recognize the value in acknowledging, talking about, and discussing racism, then their hiring practices and programming should reflect that. This may include, but is not limited to, encouraging and financially prioritizing professional learning opportunities that educate other school officials on anti-racist teaching practices (such as the book studies mentioned above), equity-based professional learning protocols that challenge educators to reflect upon if assignments and assessments are culturally relevant or examine bias in language (such as the Equity Protocol from School Reform Initiative), and challenging white-dominant cultural practices inside of schools such as zero-tolerance discipline mandates (Milner, 2018; Welch & Payne, 2010; Tailor & Detch, 1998) and the policing of non-white hairstyles ("Black Girl Sent Home From School Over Hair Extensions, 2019; "Black Texas Teen Told to Cut His Dreadlocks or not Walk at Graduation, 2020; "Do DeKalb School's Hairstyle Rules Stifle Black Expression?, 2019).

Additionally, school districts must actively work to hire, retain, develop, and promote people of color to leadership positions. In 2006, the School Superintendent's Association conducted a study that alarmingly shared only 6% of superintendents in the United States were people of color. More recently, the National Center for Education Statistics that focused on data from the 2017-2018 school year determined that principals in the United States were 79.6% white. This data aligns with the national teaching force that continues to be overwhelmingly white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), and indicates that at all levels in school

leadership and power, whiteness continues to dominate. By intentionally developing a teaching and school leadership force that is more racially diverse, schools and districts will not only more strongly reflect the race of the students and families we serve, but also center more diverse perspectives and experiences to lead school buildings and districts.

Teacher Preparation Programs and Colleges of Education

In addition to a commitment to white teachers and those in helping professions, and a prioritization by school systems of professional learning about racial consciousness and intentional staffing, teacher preparation programs and colleges of education have a responsibility to better prepare and equip white teachers with the capacity for engaging in racial dialogue and an awareness of their white identity. I contend that two ways this can be accomplished in these certifying bodies is through intentional selection and matching of pre-service teacher mentors with teacher candidates and sustained critical whiteness work with pre-service teachers throughout their programs of study and with program staff.

Intentional Selection of Pre-Service Teacher Mentors and Matching. Pre-service teaching serves as a critical learning and socialization experience for future teachers (Fisher-Ari, Eaton, Dantzler; 2019). Throughout this time in a pre-service teacher's development, classroom-based mentor teachers should serve as models, coaches, and thought partners to help future teachers develop and reflect upon their practice in preparation for their own classrooms. I argue that racial consciousness and anti-racist teaching practices should be considered when selecting mentor teachers. These mentor teachers can be of any race and should have the capacity and ability to engage their mentees in dialogue about race and how racial identity influences classroom pedagogy and practice. Additionally, these teachers would serve as models for multi-cultural and social-justice educators in both their pedagogy and practice.

Complexities and challenges in effective mentor/mentee matching are well documented (Fisher-Ari, Tanguay, Lynch, Fernandes-Williams, Saxton & Dangel, 2017; Glickman, 1990; Kardos & Johnson, 2010; McIntyre & Byrd, 1998). I realize adding a developed racial identity and consciousness to the requirements for mentor teacher eligibility adds further difficulties to the existing challenges currently present in selecting and matching teacher candidates with school-based mentors for their clinical practice. Additionally, developing a screening process for gauging mentor racial awareness and anti-racist teaching practices would also be challenging. However, I contend because of the substantial opportunity for development it would provide to the mentee and how harmful it may be if selecting racially justice-focused mentors is not prioritized, it must become a factor in the selection and matching process.

Critical (w)hiteness Work with Future Teachers and University Faculty. While teacher education programs are growing in their commitment to developing and preparing future teachers for working with diverse learners through multi-cultural education courses (Bartoleme;, 2004; Darling-Hammond, et al., 2005) I argue that equal importance should be given to sustained racial identity work throughout the pre-service teacher's program of study and by university faculty. These future and current teachers should be continually challenged to reflect on how their whiteness plays out in their teaching practice. This is of critical importance with white pre-service teachers and advising faculty in order to prepare them for the power they will hold as teachers with any students, and especially those of different races than them. Pre-service teachers and faculty staff should be continually exposed to coursework and professional learning opportunities that teach them about the structural racism present throughout various systems (including education) in the United States and engage in reading, discussion, and reflection about their white identity, including supporting them as they reflect upon their childhoods and how

their own racial socialization created their current racial biases. University faculty members must be constantly engaging similar work, in order to interrogate and push back upon the ways their racial socialization and identities plays out in their work with future teachers. This is of critical importance based upon the racial makeup of college faculty, which is overwhelmingly white (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Further, additional research focused on white pre-service teachers engaging in critical whiteness inquiry that adds to the existing literature utilizing such methodologies (Behm Cross, Tosum- Bayazit, & Hadley Dunn, 2019; Matias & Mackey, 2016; McManinom & Casey, 2019; Whitaker, Hardee, Johnson & McFaden, 2019) should be expanded upon to provide more insight for other organizations to begin the same type of work with its employees.

This is especially critical in non-profit educational programs such as Teach for America (TFA), of which I am an alumnus, where the majority of teachers will enter classrooms without degrees in education and perhaps little to no racial identity coursework. Problematically, while the majority of students taught by Teach for America teachers are Black and Brown, the organization remains overwhelmingly white. TFA's practice of bringing uninformed and unprepared teachers who feel they know the needs of the communities they enter is a highly problematic manifestation of what Irving (2014) termed the "Robin Hood" syndrome in *Waking up White.* This disparity heightens the need for organizations like TFA to be pursuing this work (Lapayese, Aldana, & Lara, 2014). As an alumnus, I can personally attest to never taking part in any conversations during my five-week institute or two-year Corps Member experience facilitated by the organization that educated or challenged me to interrogate the way my whiteness influenced my experience as a teacher or my students' and colleagues' experiences with me. All teacher preparation programs and organizations whose mission is educational

equity and access must put racial identity work and development at the forefront of their preparation programs and in-service support.

Implications for Further Research

In the following section I share implications for those who wish to engage in similar research. First, engaging in this type of inquiry with an intimate other (Ellis, 2007) proved to be critical to Julie's and my work and I encourage others to do the same, if possible. In addition to already having an established relationship in which we deeply trusted each other to discuss personal memories and complex reflections, we shared background knowledge of each other and our stories that supported our collaborative inquiry. The bond we have with each other allowed us to love each other through and beyond the good/bad binary and honor where our understandings, tensions, and challenges currently were. Additionally, since Julie and I were family members, we were also able to engage collaboratively in utilizing critical family histories, while also sharing a common understanding of the people and places involved in the histories we interrogated. While we wholeheartedly believe this work to be messy, we each agree it was less messy because we were doing it with each other, inside of a trusting, loving, and grace-filled relationships. During the dissertation defense, Julie shared that our relationship during this work was similar to "clinging to each other during a storm," which pointed to the strength and security we depended upon each other for throughout this work and throughout our lives together.

Additional relationships also proved critical to the transformative outcomes of this work and I posit are foundational to co-constructed and co-interrogated racial identity development and equity work. For example, I note in our findings the conversations I engaged in with a trusted colleague and friend I work with and the feedback from Dr. French-Lee. The commitment they both hold to truth-telling was pivotal to understanding that my past, present,

and future experiences are racialized. Further, Dr. Fisher-Ari and I share a personal relationship that began almost ten years ago and is both professional and personal. Because of the emotionally safe space supported by our relationship, I was able to receive the critical feedback she provided me during this inquiry (particularly as it related to the coded and at times hedging nature of language) that was not always easy to hear and reflect upon.

The commitment and varied perspectives and lived experiences of the individuals that supported this work (Julie, my advisor, committee, colleagues) and the relationships we shared was pivotal for these outcomes. The work of research and becoming a researcher has been, for me, inherently and foundationally collaborative as I have been striving to uncover and understand the complexity of whiteness, and my whiteness, and how it operates in the world. I would encourage other doctoral candidates to intentionally think about the perspectives that will be offered through their committees and prioritize the relationships they share with them (and others) and how those relationships will inform and transform their work and ultimately, their lives after their doctoral research. This practice of reflection and action and research that changes the world and the researcher themselves is the ultimate goal of critical research (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998).

Julie and I also encourage others who wish to engage in similar identity development and interrogation to begin with reading and reflecting upon the work of others who have done the same (Anderson; 2016; Behm Cross, Tosum- Bayazit, & Hadley Dunn, 2019; DiAngelo, 2011; Irving, 2014; Matias & Mackey, 2015; McManinom & Casey, 2019; Tatum, 2017; Whitaker, Hardee, Johnson & McFaden, 2019). Our ability to discuss what we previously read and how it aligned with our developing understandings of whiteness (and its influence) supported our discussions, individual reflections, and autoethnographies. We also found that by reading the

works of others, we began to take up and grapple with the language and the constructs we needed to describe our feelings and the complexities of white supremacy, racism, and privilege that we had previously lacked.

Finally, we would encourage others to remember there is no one "right" or "perfect" way to engage in inquiry such as this, which can be emotional and messy at times. While Julie and I were each deeply committed to our research, we engaged with it in different ways. For example, voice memos were Julie's preferred way of documenting her reflections, while I preferred to utilize a digital researcher's journal. Additionally, the ethical components involved in interrogating personal family stories is messy and it is critical for researchers to reflect constantly upon possible implications of their work for others. For example, although we utilized photographs for the purposes of discussion, we did not include the photos or descriptions of them in our final work. Because we did not know the names of some of the individuals in the photos, and therefore we would be unable to secure their consent to use them, we felt it would be inappropriate to use their images in our inquiry. While we remained committed to our research design, we also allowed our process to be responsive to our needs and shifted when necessary.

We would also encourage other researchers who engage in similar inquiries to remain open to learning throughout the research process, especially as it relates to language choices. While engaging in collaborative inquiry, questions and tensions arise as to when to use "we" or "I." Ultimately, we made these decisions based upon the particular section of the dissertation and who was primarily responsible for that work. However, no right answers to questions such as these exist and future research collaborators should reflect upon what is most appropriate for their individual inquiry. Further, throughout data analysis, we saw multiple examples of racism and bias in our language and perspectives such as referring to people of color as "non-white."

Throughout this work, we intentionally chose to include these manifestations of bias in our presentation of data and then problematize them and make our thinking and self-critique apparent to ourselves and others. We feel these examples where we were- and are "not-yet" illustrate both the tensions and growth we experienced throughout this inquiry and evidence the significant commitments we have made to own our mistakes and shift our language and behavior to become more racially conscious.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The purpose of this qualitative study was to share the experience of one mother and daughter as we developed and interrogated our white racial identities and how this experience influenced us in our personal lives and in our professional roles in helping professions. Our data analysis indicated that through selected readings, personal reflections collected through researcher memos, collaborative autoethnographies, and discussion, our growing racial awareness and white identities profoundly influenced us both professionally and personally. Although we have ended the formal stages of our inquiry, we continue to depend upon each other to support our racial consciousness and development. We both feel our inquiry did not provide us answers or formal conclusions. Rather, it indicated to us just how much more work we still have to do. We each had additional memories of our racial socialization as children come to us as we read final drafts of this dissertation. We welcome further recollections and new understandings as they become apparent to us.

As a mother and daughter, the work of interrogating our identities and our role in the systems that perpetuate white supremacy strengthened our connection and bond as we walked alongside each other emotionally and intellectually. Our ongoing conversations continue to focus on questions of racial equity and our role in dismantling white supremacy as professionals in

helping careers, as wives, as daughters, as mothers, and as individuals whose lives have been easier because of the presence of the system of whiteness. We each are quick to share we have an incredible amount of learning to still do and it will be work that will continue for the rest of our lives. Specifically, we would like to engage in additional critical family history inquiries so that we can further situate ourselves with our family's past within larger political, cultural, and racial contexts. As noted in our data, we benefitted greatly from a business founded by my great-grandparents. We have discussed taking a closer look into the founding of that business, with a particular interest in the original seller of that land, the history of that land, and its indigenous peoples. Additionally, I would like to take a closer look into the political past of my living and deceased family members, including voting records, articles, and the present-day influences of their time in public office (such as the outcomes of legislation they sponsored or supported). We anticipate the outcomes of this future inquiry will also inform further reflections, understandings, tensions, and questions. However, this inquiry has forever influenced us, and we challenge other white people, and especially those in helping professions, to also take it upon themselves to develop and interrogate their own racial identities and to allow the experience to inform changes in their lives personally and professionally.

In order to attend to the ethical considerations of engaging in collaborative inquiry alongside an "intimate other" (Ellis, 2007, p. 3), throughout this inquiry, my mother has had the final say in how we have presented our findings, learnings, and existing wonderings. It seems only fitting that this work concludes with her words.

I had a conversation with a friend about racism and I mentioned your dissertation which led to some back and forth about reading material. I gave her a suggestion of the Waking Up White book. She got and read it soon thereafter. I then texted her info about Robin D'Angelo and White

Fragility and she asked if this was going to be another book that had a lot of information on the problem but was short on solutions. I told her that I have discovered that it is not all bad having no solutions and that I have found it has taken me a long time to really know my own mind and see the many ways the subtle and not so subtle experiences and belief systems that have made me blind to so many things. I think if I had had a list of "Here's What We Do Now" I might have run out and started tackling the righting the wrongs part of the story. It's kind of like when my husband wants to fix things before he really understands what the problem is. But the problem is me. And understanding how it (racism) lives in me is the work.

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APPENDIX

READING AND REFLECTIVE ACTIVITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

So, you're white and interested in strengthening your racial identity, understanding of white supremacy, and interrogating your own white fragility. This appendix may be a helpful place for you to start. Start by grabbing a few friends (hopefully future co-conspirators) who have the same interest in interrupting hegemony and whiteness. Commit to serve as truth-tellers for each other, which are needed when we work to identify and dismantle the bias, white centering, and racism in our language, thoughts, and lives. Trust me, we can't do this stuff alone.

Start by thinking about your own racial identity and current white fragility awareness. These questions are helpful for reflection that invite us to recount memories of racialized events and begin to uncover spaces and manifestations of white supremacy and racism.:

1.) *What does it mean to be white in my neighborhood, community, state, country?*
2.) *What interactions did I have with people of color in my childhood? Young adulthood? Current life (personally and professionally)?*
3.) *What is racism? When have I "seen" it? When do I "see" it now?*
4.) *Who do I follow on my social media accounts? Is it diverse?*
5.) *Why am I choosing to engage in this work?*

So, you're getting started- go you! Hopefully you talked about your reflections with your group. Now you're ready to do some reading. The more you read, the more your thinking will be stretched, which is what we want. As a group, decide on a schedule/plan for reading the books listed below.

1.) *Waking up White* by Debby Irving
2.) *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Race* by Robin DiAngelo

3.) *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* by Beverly Tatum

As you're reading, meet regularly to discuss your thinking, tensions, wonderings, and evolving understandings. Here are some questions that I would encourage you to discuss together as you read:

1.) *What did you read that shocked you?*

2.) *Did you reading anything that you thought didn't apply to you or reflect your experience? Your family? Your workplace? Place of worship? Your child's school?*

3.) *What did you read that pushed your thinking?*

4.) Did you read anything that made you think of your own childhood or that reminded you of stories you've heard of your parents' childhoods?

5.) *What did you read that you want to know more about?*

6.) *Did you read anything that made you have specific questions you wanted to ask a person of color? (FYI- y'all need to talk about these questions in this space - don't put that burden on a person of color – this is your work to do. Or, Google the questions. The answers are probably out there).*

7.) *Are you re-envisioning your racial identity in light of what you have read?*