

SWIMMING THROUGH WHITENESS: EXPLORING NON-RACISM & ANTI-  
RACISM IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER EDUCATION

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

SWIMMING THROUGH WHITENESS: EXPLORING NON-RACISM & ANTI-RACISM IN SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER EDUCATION

presented by Andrea M. Hawkman,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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## Dedication

To my wife, Abby, and our daughter, Marin. Without you, I would not be me, and this would *literally* not be possible.

To the students who are not yet students, and the teachers who are not yet teachers. May this work help improve the education system you will enter.

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and with admiration. I am looking forward to following your careers as you move forward as educators.

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## Academic Abstract

This dissertation sought to uncover the racial knowledge, racial standpoint, and racial pedagogical decision making of secondary social studies teacher education students. Grounded in critical race theory and critical whiteness studies this study examined the ways in which participants engaged with non-racism and anti-racism while developing a racial standpoint in the social studies classroom. Findings indicate that although participants' racial knowledge and understanding increased struggles persisted in enacting anti-racist social studies pedagogical approaches. Implications for research, policy, and praxis are discussed.

In Chapter 1, I detail the overarching context of the study, introduced the theoretical framing, and provided definitions for key terms that will appear throughout the dissertation. Chapter 2 features a discussion of the theoretical foundation of this study as well as relevant research literature on the teaching and learning of race/ism within social studies education. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methods and methodology deployed in this study as well as a discussion of researcher positionality. In Chapter 4, I present findings related to participants' foundational racial knowledge and understanding. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the three racial standpoints embodied by participants over the course of the semester. Finally, Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the implications of this study for social studies, teacher education, and the understanding of race/ism in America

## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“By not addressing critical social issues, are we, as social studies professionals, giving up our moral responsibility as educators to do a more effective job to prepare a mostly White teaching force not only to educate children of color, but also educate all students about racism and its negative effects?” (Pang, Rivera, & Gillette, 1998, p. 432).*

*“It is no secret that our society still continues to struggle with conversations regarding notions of race and racism” (King, 2015, p. ix).*

The teaching and learning of race and racism remains a necessity for schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As we trace our history—over both long and short term arcs—racial tensions and relations remain persistently in flux. From before its founding, the United States has been shaped by a desire to institutionalize the supremacy of a select few over others. As one historian put it, our history is quite literally *Stamped from the Beginning* with racism and white supremacy (Kendi, 2016). To state anything to the contrary is to intentionally ignore the lengthy written record of our founding fathers, political leaders, capitalists, philanthropists, abolitionists, segregationists, social justice advocates, authors, poets, artists, and journalists. It is true that over time, the arc of progress has bent slowly toward racial justice but not without more than its share of hesitance, resistance, and outright denial that racial discrimination continues to influence life in the United States.

In 2017, we find ourselves in a situation that has simultaneously filled some with a sense of disbelief and in others, feelings of déjà vu. We are coming off one of the most divisive and openly hostile presidential campaigns in recent memory. Swaths of the

country rallied behind and cast their vote for president on behalf of an individual who grounded his campaign in racist threats and promises with the support of avowed white supremacists, under the guise of returning to the era of American greatness. Promising to build walls, forcibly remove “unwanted” residents, and to restore jobs to hard working “Americans” the campaign drew on the lowest common denominator: fear. His opponent drew stark contrast by calling his supporters “deplorable” and attempting to champion womens’ rights and her version of small “d” democracy. The mainstream media and globs of celebrity supporters painted a picture of inevitable victory for his opponent.

On election night, the mainstream media and the majority of non-Republican voters voiced their sincere shock as it became clear that Hillary Clinton would not become the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. I sat at an election night party with a group of liberal-leaning white women who watched in disbelief and disgust as the results poured in.

“How could people vote for him,” one partygoer questioned.

“I can’t believe this is happening,” another guest doubtfully sighed as she grimaced at what she was witnessing.

I, too, grew weary about how the night had transpired. A wave of emotions swept over me as I waited early into the morning for the results to become official. *Sadness.*

*Uncertainty. Disappointment. Frustration. Motivation. Fear.*

As time wore on and the results began to sink in, I realized that the results of this election should not have come as a surprise. The tactics deployed by the Republican candidate were old standbys in the American book of political campaigns. From Andrew Jackson to Richard Nixon to Bill Clinton, politicians in this country have a deep history

of drawing on the racial ignorance, intolerance, and fear of individuals to elicit political gains. Even in 2017, it is quite clear, that while the majority of Americans may not perform overt acts of racism reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan, racist rhetoric and association is not a “dealbreaker” in the selection of our most powerful elected and appointed officials.

Yet, when we turn to the field of education, the teaching and learning of race/ism<sup>1</sup> does not have an official home in the curriculum. Upon review of content standards, few, if any reference to race and racism appear (Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012; Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015). We, social studies educators, must acknowledge our complicit and collective role in perpetuating a lack of racial understanding, empathy, and justice amongst the United States citizenry.

This study centers experiences of six pre-service teachers who participated in a social studies methods class at a predominantly white institution (PWI). This class, which was taught in the fall 2016 semester, was designed to engage students in semester-long dialogue and examination of the influence of race and racism within social studies. Students engaged in activities in which they were encouraged to examine the role that race/ism plays in both their personal and professional lives and were challenged to consider what anti-racist teaching might mean for their future work as social studies educators. In this study, three general questions were explored:

1. How does participation in an anti-racist oriented social studies methods class influence the racial knowledge base of pre-service teachers?

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<sup>1</sup> Race and racism are difficult to separate from one another as the construction of race cannot exist without racism. Therefore, throughout the text I will reference the two words as one: race/ism.

2. What influence did participation in the class have on the non/anti-racism positionality of pre-service teachers?
3. What influence did participation in the class have on the racial pedagogical decision making for social studies of pre-service teachers?

In this chapter, I detail the context in which this study was devised, constructed, and implemented. Additionally, I will introduce the theoretical constructs that informed this work, define key terms that will be utilized throughout the dissertation, and provide a brief overview of the entire dissertation.

### **Context of the Study**

On August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, in a small suburb of St. Louis, Missouri known as Ferguson, a young man by the name of Michael Brown was shot and killed by Ferguson Police Officer Darren Wilson. Across the nation, cities and college campuses were mesmerized by the events in Ferguson and began to have challenging, yet necessary, dialogues regarding the state of policing, racial justice, and systems of oppression. Campuses, including Central University<sup>2</sup>, immediately began to wrestle with a bevy of feelings, realizations, omissions, concerns, questions, and fears that had previously gone unexamined due to the vast deepness of whiteness that surrounded and constructed the university.

Months progressed and conversations of racial equity, white<sup>3</sup> privilege, and the affairs of campus climate persisted. However, the university continued to be riddled with

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<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms were used for the campus at the center of this study, as well as for participants.

<sup>3</sup> Although APA 6<sup>th</sup> Edition guidelines call for the capitalization of racial identities, here, I borrow from Matias and colleagues (2014) and choose not to capitalize white, “In an attempt to re-equalize racial labels and terminologies in educational research articles, this article capitalizes Black and Brown to give credence to the racialized experience of People of Color as a proper noun” additionally, using lower case for white is an attempt to challenge the supremacy of whiteness in this dissertation (p. 303). Only when using a direct quote in which the words white or whiteness are capitalized will it appear as such here.

both physical and psyche violence (Leonardo & Porter, 2010) for Students of Color. Yet, as Students of Color persisted in voicing their frustration with the endemic nature of white supremacy on campus, little substantive or institutional change occurred. In November, just before Thanksgiving Break, news was released that the grand jury in charge of determining whether to issue criminal charges against Darren Wilson failed to do so.

As students returned, leaders within the College of Education began to acknowledge that the lived experiences of Students of Color are rife with racialized emotional violence, microaggressions, and enactments of prejudice and privilege. The depth and breadth to which whiteness informed interactions, curriculum, and pedagogy within the College of Education had gone unquestioned for far too long. Ad hoc committees were formed to assess the ways in which the College could better serve its Students of Color. In the spring of 2015, I served on one such committee whose goal it was to brainstorm ways in which the College could establish expectations for diversity and equity related education across all programs.

A major takeaway from one of our meetings was that faculty and staff felt unprepared to address issues related to race/ism and white supremacy in their classrooms. They, after all, were trained specialists in their given fields—not in systems of racialized oppression. While conducting research on potential programs, strategies, and processes for preparing College faculty and staff for becoming more justice and equity oriented, I came across a website for an organization that provided antiracist professional development for educators. On the front page of the website read a powerful quote that

inspired me to inquire further, “Racism dehumanizes us all—Dismantling racism heals us all” (Crossroads, 2015). A powerful statement; that still evokes emotion within me.

At the time, this statement encouraged me to push further into the website for specific information. Intrigued by what this agency could offer us—on-site professional development in antiracist pedagogies—I shared the website with a leader in the committee, who was also closely tied to the College administrative leadership. Excited about the possibilities of this organization’s training, I approached the committee leader,

“Did you see my email about antiracist professional development?”

“Yes, I did see that. Sounds interesting. How much does it cost,” she replied

“I’m not sure,” I responded, “I’ll look into it and get back to you.”

I made a quick note in my file to follow up with specific information. An air of excitement fell over me briefly, as I felt my research had been well received and might possibly lead to change. But, before I could close my journal, the leader replied.

“Though, we couldn’t call it antiracist training. There’s no way the faculty would go for it. Diversity education...maybe. We’d have to think about what to call it.”

*What?!, I thought, Racism is the problem on this campus—everyone who has attended sessions, conversations, and dialogues has admitted this. Yet we can’t call it anti-racist training?*

It became clear to me in that moment that the fear of ruffling the [white] feathers of faculty and staff, was, in this moment, more important than necessary professional development. *If the faculty is unable to support antiracist training, what does this mean? They support racist training? Kowtowing to the discourse of whiteness was not going to dismantle it. Do they really want to change anything?*

Fast forward eight months, to the fall 2015 semester and a breakout of racial protests and student activism on college campuses across the country that would ignite the substantial call for change that could no longer go ignored. The campaigns and work

of student-led protest groups, and their allies, to advocate for justice-oriented institutional change to campus infrastructure forced all programs, schools, and divisions to assess what they were doing to protect Students of Color and students from other marginalized communities from the web of institutional oppression that spread throughout campuses in both historic and contemporary contexts. The College of Education continued its efforts at examining the experiences of Students of Color—but now sought to institutionalize change.

As the local and national attention on race relations on college campuses continued, I was in the midst of designing my dissertation study. Having determined my work centered upon challenging whiteness and white supremacy in the context of social studies teacher education, I began to construct a project that infused antiracist<sup>4</sup> theories within social studies curriculum and pedagogy. Guiding this project was the belief that, as Thompson (1997) asserted, “democratic education must take an active stance against racism, and that, to do so, it cannot merely correct for racism but must help reorient us in ways that enable us to rework and rethink race relations” (p. 9). Meanwhile, as I observed and participated in events on campus while continuing to teach undergraduate courses I realized a disconnect between many [white] students in the College and the surrounding, more engaged, more diverse community. Many students failed to realize, acknowledge, or accept that the university they held dear was also the site of racial trauma and institutionalized oppression for so many. As Milner and Self (2014) observed,

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<sup>4</sup> Antiracist appears in this dissertation with and without a hyphen. It appears as though no consistency has been reached as to how to utilize the word. If referencing the work of another scholar I use the spelling utilized by the original author.

Accordingly, educators and, for the purposes of this discussion, teachers who do not view themselves as racist individuals can have trouble recognizing how racism works and how it can manifest in broader, systemic, and institutionalized structures and forms to prevent certain groups of students from succeeding in the classroom and beyond (p. 4).

Such was the case with students I interacted with in the College of Education. I recall white students sharing feelings of shock and even disinterest as the student led protest group continued its efforts on campus, as they felt these efforts were unnecessary or not “peaceful enough.”<sup>5</sup>

This realization led me to pursue the creation of a course that moved beyond social studies teacher preparation and would be available to the entire undergraduate teacher education student population. *Clearly, this was a conversation that needed to be explored beyond in all educative spaces.* I consulted with my advisor regarding a path to create such a class. Within a week, I met with the entire administrative team and not a single person blinked or rebuffed at the title of the new course, *Anti-Racist Curriculum and Pedagogy*. In fact, the course quickly became a highlight of the College’s plan to improve diversity and equity and was added to the enrollment catalog for the summer 2016 term.<sup>6</sup>

Under the consultation of my advisor, I moved forward with the plan to teach the class to undergraduate teacher education students in the summer term of 2016. Although not ideal—the summer schedule is a condensed and slightly more intense version than the traditional semester—teaching the course in the summer would provide an opportunity

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<sup>5</sup> The “I don’t agree with their methods” response littered my CoE courses.

<sup>6</sup> See Derrick Bell’s interest convergence for more on why this did not come as a surprise.

for students whose traditional semester schedule is bogged down by required coursework to enroll. Additionally, completing the data collection/production process in June would leave ample time for me to transcribe, compose, and analyze data in order to successfully defend my dissertation in early 2017. Nonetheless, the opportunity to teach this class, amidst a campus climate rife with attention to racial justice compelled me to move forward.

In December 2015, I contacted approximately two dozen leading scholars in critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and teacher education—to whom I am eternally grateful—seeking assistance in designing a syllabus for a course devoted to antiracist curriculum and pedagogy. Over the next weeks, many scholars replied and provided sample syllabi, course readings, presentations, and offered to serve as guest lecturers when the class meets. For nearly two months I worked to construct a syllabus that would best serve my expected student population, middle class white women (the leading demographic in the College of Education). Therefore, the course was directly informed and designed with critical whiteness studies in mind.

As the spring 2016 semester rolled along, it became increasingly clear the plan to teach the course in the summer would not be possible. As of April 1, and after substantial recruitment and advertising on my part, only two students had enrolled in the course—neither of whom were students within the College of Education. My advisor and I met feverishly to discuss alternative action plans. Reflecting on my thoughts regarding the decision to abandon the original plan, I wrote,

I was really excited about this study. This project was going to be THE project—*that* dissertation that was cool and finished. I know what is said about good

dissertations: “A good dissertation is a done dissertation,” but I really thought I was going to have an amazing project completely aligned to my theoretical positioning and educative goals. I thought the stars had aligned for me to make this happen. I worked really hard to reach out to scholars I admire to construct a syllabus I was proud of. I really do not want to abandon this work for another approach.

I could tell that my advisor knew I was disappointed about abandoning the original plan for my project. He comforted me, “A dissertation is just another study, Andrea. You’ve already done them, and you will continue to more.” Reality sank back in and we brainstormed several ideas for moving forward. After this reassuring dialogue, we decided the best path to move forward in retaining the integrity of my vision for the project would be to move the course to the fall 2016 semester.

Subsequently, two options emerged. The first would include teaching a subsection of the College’s required diversity education course. Approximately 20 students in one section of the course would be randomly assigned to my section and would engage in a slightly modified version of the course, *Anti-racist Curriculum and Pedagogy*. I would serve as the lead instructor of this group and rely on a research assistant (to be determined) to collect data and conduct participant interviews. The second option was to give over teaching responsibilities and facilitate the development of a social studies methods course rooted in anti-racism. While the allure of working with a larger teacher education population was tempting, I realized that the section option had greater potential impact.

I had served as the instructor of the students enrolled in the secondary social studies methods class for two semesters. We had an established relationship of professional and academic trust. The two previous semesters of methods courses were filled with activities and conversations related to equitable teaching practices, challenging the master script of the social studies curriculum (Swartz, 1992), and critical pedagogical approaches. In a sense, this group of potential participants was prepared to push further into anti-racist pedagogy. Therefore, I moved forward with designing a social studies methods course imbedded with direct and prolonged attention to issues surrounding race and racism.

### **Why Anti-Racism?**

In recent years, multiculturalism has ascended to a position of prominence within the field of teacher education. Beginning with Gibson's 1976 foundational article on the components of multicultural education, followed by contributions from prominent scholars in the field of education (e.g., Banks, 2001, 2004; Banks & Banks, 1995, 2001; Gay, 1997; Sleeter, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 1987) multiculturalism has retained a hearty presence in education circles. Although universal consensus has not been reached in defining multicultural education, generally this approach features the following: content integration, attention to knowledge production, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture (Banks, 2004). As Banks (2004) observed,

for multicultural education to be implemented successfully, institutional changes must be made in the curriculum; the teaching materials; teaching and learning styles; the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of teachers and administrators; and the goals norms, and culture of the school (p. 4).

At its roots, multicultural education provided a theoretical position from which educators could attend to the ways in which schooling has persisted in marginalizing Communities of Color and women. However, the application of multicultural education has often been lacking in depth and criticality when enacted. Given the demographic breakdown of the teaching profession—one that is overwhelmingly populated with white women—whiteness has shaped the implementation of multicultural education efforts (Castagano, 2013).

Despite calls for a multicultural education that seeks to empower Students of Color and complexify understandings of equity and diversity, often, multicultural education is enacted through shallow celebrations of racial harmony and tends to reify white norms. Despite the adoption of multicultural education by a bevy of “well intentioned white folks,” the term has become nothing more than what Castagano (2013) described as, “a weasel word to denote something that has to do with ‘diversity’ and ‘equality’ in educational contexts but which fails to challenge whiteness” (p. 107). Racism and white supremacy are included in the umbrella of multiculturalism—alongside class, sexuality, gender, ability, ethnicity—and may be intended to be featured in instruction, though educator and research interpretation may (un)intentionally remove the focus on racism and white supremacy, in service to “more polite” topics of conversation. In other words, as Leonardo (2013) quipped, “In a word, multiculturalism has become hegemonic; it is the common sense” (p. 84).

Although the multicultural narrative has substantially shifted the conversation to include issues of diversity and inclusion; many contend that multicultural education itself is not enough to directly challenge racism and white supremacy in the classroom (Bery,

2014; Castagno, 2013; McLaren, 1997). Some contend the adoption of a critical multicultural education program achieves this goal (Bery, 2014; May & Sleeter, 2010; Sleeter, 2012). Notably, critical multiculturalism offers educators an approach to more directly engage in “structural analysis of unequal power relationships, analyzing the role of institutionalized inequities, including but not necessarily limited to racism that plagues schooling” (May & Sleeter, 2010). When utilized by scholars and educators who remain committed to the criticality of critical multiculturalism has the potential to offer an inclusive approach to examining structural and institutional oppression that continues to plague education.

Ng, Staton, and Scance (1995) observed, “while the central assumption of multiculturalism education is the sensitization and celebration of difference can counteract biased and prejudiced attitudes...anti-racist education concentrates on examining the histories and the practices that prejudice supports” (p. 6). Although multiculturalism(s) appears to advocate at least non-racist understandings, multicultural education does not insist upon an activist oriented approach to racism, or anti-racism. On the contrary, anti-racism puts into question the goal of mending fences and building a sense of shared existence in the classroom. The point of anti-racism, Thompson (1997) contended,

is to challenge naturalized presumptions of white privilege so that race relations can be problematized and reconstructed, anti-racist considerations apply wherever whiteness has been assumed as a standard or blackness treated as a foil—whether in moral relations, democratic relations, or standards of educational and intellectual achievement (p. 15).

Thus, in order to ensure an agentic instructional, pedagogical, or curricular approach to teaching and learning that centers upon race/ism is to push for the establishment of anti-racist teacher education (Picower, 2009; Thompson, 1997). To that end, in this case study I draw upon components of multiple critical theories of race, that challenge us to move beyond the typical multicultural narrative, as I investigate the experiences of six preservice teachers as they engage in a semester-long social studies methods course infused with anti-racist principles, readings, and discussions. In the following section, I introduce the theoretical framing that drove my efforts in this project.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Framing: At a Glance**

As a queer, white woman with the intention of designing and implementing a course focused on race/ism to a class filled with predominantly white students, I approached this dissertation with specific theoretical constructs in mind. Although Chapter 2 features a thorough discussion of the theoretical framing of this project, here I offer a brief introduction to the two theories that undergird the design of this project: Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies.

Originating in legal studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT) migrated into educational studies in the mid-1990s with the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate. Insisting the use of critical theories resulted in little improvement to the racial realities of Students and Communities of color, scholars called for a new theoretical frame that directly attends to the persistence of race/ism in schooling. According to Dixson and Lynn (2013), since then, CRT education scholars have sought to:

- Show the inextricable relationship between educational inequity and race
- Challenge commonsense beliefs about people and communities of color that essential cite cultural practices and poverty as reasons for educational disparities
- Call into question schooling practices that perpetuate Whiteness
- Challenge and expand our understanding of research methods and methodologies such that we can capture, analyze, and represent racialized educational inequity (p. 3).

In keeping with these goals, I draw upon four constructs associated with CRT in this study: permanence and pervasive nature of racism, counter-storytelling, and interest convergence.

This study was also informed by Critical Whiteness Studies. As a white scholar working with white students at a PWI, Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is useful to center upon the impact that whiteness has on participant experiences. The overarching goal of CWS is to bring into consciousness the existence of whiteness, and then to make it strange for whites to experience. Leonardo (2013) hoped, “No longer able to distinguish itself as normative, Whiteness becomes peculiar once it is located” (p. 85). Consequently, whites then can move forward toward abolition or transformation of whiteness in society. Here, I draw on the CWS concepts of whiteness as property, white commonsense, dysconscious racism, and white investment to examine participant engagement in the project.

## **Non-Racism v. Anti-Racism: The Case for Social Studies**

The two quotes which frame the beginning of this chapter get to what I believe are the core responsibilities of social studies educators. For nearly a century, the social studies has crafted its image as the conservator of citizenship education. While I do not disagree that a driving force of the field is as such, I do take into question the field's ability to enact a form of citizenship education that does little more than to maintain the status quo of whiteness in America. While yes, it is paramount that citizens understand the foundations of civics, I am more concerned with preparing teachers and students to understand how that foundation is applied to construct the world in which we live. *How have civic processes benefited some while disadvantaging others?* For me, to be a citizen is to understand how the institutions, systems, and processes impact me, my community and society writ large. Additionally, to be a citizen is to comprehend that while some institutions, systems, and processes may not directly impact me, they might be quite impactful to others I care about and some that I do not even know.

The social studies classroom must not only address the bedrocks of the field but also push its students to think critically about the knowledge they develop. As the quote from Pang, Rivera, & Gillette (1998) that opens this chapter notes, social studies educators must lean into their privileged position in the classroom. Privileged, in the sense that social studies educators have the possibility of doing one of two things: embrace their positionality by abandoning a hope of neutrality; OR, persistently struggle to grasp at neutrality and fail in perpetuity. Regarding teaching about race/ism, the former calls teachers to adopt an anti-racist stance in the classroom. According to King and Chandler (2015) an anti-racist position, "is an active rejection of the institutional and

structural aspects of race and racism and explains how racism is manifested in various spaces, making the social construct of race visible” (p. 4). In this sense, teachers select texts and resources that call into question the traditions associated with White Social Studies (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015), while engaging students in critical explorations of themselves and the racialized world, in both historic and contemporary contexts. This work is done in the pursuit of pushing students to develop deeper, more critical understanding of the racial dynamics of the institutions, systems, and processes in society.

Conversely, the alternative option for teachers implies a non-racist position in the classroom. King and Chandler (2015) defined a non-racist stance as, “a racially liberal approach to race that favors passive behaviors, discourses, and ideologies and that rejects extreme forms of racism” (p. 4). In this sense, educators marginalized the historic and contemporary iterations of racism through ignoring the structural foundation while highlighting the advances in racial progress that have come overtime. On the surface, a non-racist racial standpoint may seem alluring to well-meaning whites concerned with adopting a neutral stance in the classroom. However, Leonardo and Zembylas (2013) articulated,

The preponderance of constructing a “non-racist” white identity presumes a location outside of racism to which White subjects have access. “Non-racist” becomes an identity, even a badge of honor, whereas anti-racism is arguably a political pledge, a form of race labor, to combat racism before it ossifies into an identity. To the non-racist, it is something one is; to the anti-racist, it is something

one does. Non-racism becomes an all or nothing game, and a white subject's objective is to reach the goal line of non-racism (p. 156).

In both positions, teachers acknowledge that race/ism exist; however, an anti-racist teacher pushes students to see its structural and institutional forms while a non-racist teacher rests on the individual acts of bad men to justify its persistence.

When an anti-racist standpoint, informed by CRT and CWS, is adopted within social studies spaces, we have the potential to make up ground in relation to King's quote that began this chapter. Many Americans continue to struggle with racial dialogue and possess a limited sense of racial literacy (King, 2015). I contend that the field of social studies education has contributed greatly to this inability. Again, I urge us to consider that if we do not address the complicated racialized history of the United States in social studies, then who will do it for us?

### **Definition of Terminology**

Throughout this dissertation several specific racialized terms are used. Anti-Racism/ist, Non-Racism/ist have already been detailed in the previous section. Here, I provide definitions for additional terms that will be utilized throughout this dissertation.

- Race: A socially constructed identity and ideology through which power and privilege are assigned. Although there is no scientific understanding of race, beyond the single human race, "we also accept the power of a social reality that allows for significant disparities in the life chances of people based on the categorical understanding of race" (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p. 39).
- Racism: Racial prejudice + institutional and social power (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Bell, 1992; Leonardo, 2009; Tatum, 1997).

- Master Script: Swartz (1992) defined this as, “the classroom practices, pedagogy, and instructional materials—as well as to the theoretical paradigms from which these aspects are constructed—that are grounded in Eurocentric and White supremacist ideologies. Master scripting silences multiple voices and perspectives, primarily by legitimizing dominant, White, upper-class, male voicings as the ‘standard’ knowledge students need to know” (p. 341).

Participants in this study were introduced to this concept in the fall 2015 semester and also referred to this as the master narrative.

- Racial Standpoint: The position one takes when engaging with discussion, issues, curriculum, and content related to race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy. In this study, I am particularly interested in the adoption/embodiment of non-racist and anti-racist standpoints.
- White Social Studies: This traditional approach to teaching social studies content problematically reifies white norms, white knowledge, and white common sense (Leonardo, 2013) as the official knowledge (Apple, 1993) of social studies, and subsequently contribute to the continued and systemic marginalization of stories and histories of People of Color (Swartz, 2007; Wills, 2001). Chandler and Branscombe (2015) articulated ten components of WSS:
  - Employs common sense, essentialized understandings of race to reify the historical status quo,
  - Has enacted (pedagogical) and personal (philosophical) traits that impact classroom pedagogy,

- Assumes that dominant narratives and paradigms of thinking (Kincheloe, 2008) in the social sciences (particularly historical investigation) are unproblematic,
  - Has a deep, personal, and racial investment in the symbolic, fictive imaginary of the United States as a polity,
  - Is inherently contradictory and self-reinforcing,
  - Is “raceproof” (i.e., historical/social phenomena can be explained without race),
  - Ignores contemporary, current events that cast into question historical narratives’ legitimacy and, more importantly, their meaning,
  - Utilizes selective aspects of historical thinking to support prior claims (i.e., The selective use of chronology: Declaration of Independence is important, slavery is not),
  - Rests squarely in the transmission camp of social studies theory,
  - Protects dominant, European/White narratives from criticism (pp. 63-64).
- white Supremacy: A system of racialized oppression that is historically-based, institutionally and structurally perpetuated established for maintaining and defending wealth, power, privilege, and access (Okun, 2010; Martinez, 2004).

### **Overview of the Dissertation**

In Chapter 1, I detailed the overarching context of the study, introduced the theoretical framing, and provided definitions for key terms that will appear throughout the dissertation. Chapter 2 features a discussion of the theoretical foundation of this study as well as relevant research literature on the teaching and learning of race/ism within

social studies education. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methods and methodology deployed in this study as well as a discussion of researcher positionality. In Chapter 4, I present findings related to participants' foundational racial knowledge and understanding. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of the three racial standpoints embodied by participants over the course of the semester. Finally, Chapter 6 includes a discussion of the implications of this study for social studies, teacher education, and the understanding of race/ism in America.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review: Race and Racism in Secondary Social Studies Education**

*“Racist logic didn’t have to be logical; it just had to make common sense”*

*(Kendi, 2016, p. 303).*

*“It is amazing that the social studies organization with its expressed mission toward citizenship and democracy cannot seem to seriously engage issues of diversity and social justice within the profession” (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 6).*

There exists a long, yet troubling, relationship between race/ism and the field of social studies education. Although attention to race/ism has laced its way through the field over the past century, only recently has the field more directly turned its attention this work with an explicit focus. From a distance, this fact may seem surprising, for as Woynshner and Bohan (2012) noted, social studies education can trace its roots to a course designed for African American and Indigenous students at the Hampton Institute in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The class was designed to prepare Students of Color for roles in manual and subservient labor. As the curriculum expanded under the leadership of Thomas Jesse Jones, the “social studies” began to include civic principles that were intended to prepare students for successful interactions in their community (Woynshner & Bohan, 2012). In line with the work of Booker T. Washington, Jones advocated that Students of Color acquire technical and vocational skills that would prepare them for life in a strictly segregated America.

As the field grew throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, instead of preparing students to challenge complicated social and racial factors and events of the era, social studies classrooms consistently became sites of knowledge transmission and unapologetic patriotism (Evans, 2004). Despite calls from scholars to reimagine social studies as a site of transformation (e.g., George Counts, John Dewey), generally the field has served to reify traditional knowledge about the world in which we live, particularly as it related to race and racism. This *White Social Studies* (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015) presented itself through racial silences, the discourse of American exceptionalism, and racial dominance through selective inclusion and [un]intentional exclusion. Thus, generations of social studies students, and subsequently social studies educators, developed a collective understanding that racism is static, historic, and rooted in the actions of individual actors.

Only within the past three decades has there been a consistent and persistent charge to directly address race/ism within the context of social studies education. This transition, though, did not occur immediately or without complication, controversy, or contest within the field. In 1998, after heated debates amongst the membership of the College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), editors of its flagship journal, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, asked, “Can CUFA be a leader in the national debate on racism?” (Pang, Rivera, & Gillette, 1998, p. 430). Calling on social studies education to acknowledge its seemingly obvious position as the natural leader for examining race and racism within the field of education, Pang and colleagues (1998) pushed for the organization and its members to “commit ourselves to positively impact the way the United States deals with racial

inequalities...and by taking leadership in social change” (p. 434). Despite this impassioned call for movement, most of CUFA’s predominantly white<sup>7</sup> membership failed to move forward in this national conversation.

Thus, in 2003 Ladson-Billings, in her book *Critical Race Theory Perspectives on Social Studies: The Profession, Policies, and Curriculum*, issued an additional call to the scholars of social studies education to respond to its favorable position to tackle the topics of race and racism. Examining official NCSS documents at the time, Ladson-Billings (2003) observed, “With the exception of the multicultural education curriculum guidelines, almost nothing about race and/or racism is featured in NCSS policy and position statements” (p. 8). As stated previously, we know that while multicultural education has the potential to include space for the teaching of race/ism it does not always necessitate that teachers engage in such work. Given the history of social studies as the site of (white) social transmission, Ladson-Billings and others have observed that it is not surprising that social studies education has failed to live up to its potential as it relates to race-related teaching (Branch, 2004; Chandler, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Tyson, 2003). Despite leaving the field of social studies education, Ladson-Billings’ 2003 text served to usher in a new era of race/ism related research amongst social studies scholars. In the past fifteen years, the quantity and quality of research centering on race and racism has grown slowly as race/ism work moved from the margins to the center (Chandler, 2015).

In this chapter, I review recent and relevant literature regarding the teaching and learning of race/ism within secondary social studies spaces. Although research also exists

that attends to the teaching and learning of race/ism in elementary spaces, I focus this review predominantly on contributions dealing with secondary social studies classrooms (6-12) and secondary social studies teacher education. But first, I discuss the theoretical constructs that undergird this case study of students participating in anti-racist social studies teacher education.

### **Theoretical Framework: Critical Theories of Race and Teaching and Learning about Race/ism**

The myth of *America as post-racial* continues to retain relevance in popular discourse. Despite assurances that we have moved beyond race on the part of the individuals across the political spectrum—conservative, neoconservative, neoliberal, and liberal—racism remains ever-present. We do not need to look beyond our current political contexts to bear witness to a tumultuous racial climate in the United States. Admittedly, the embodiment of racism may not exist in the same forms as decades ago.<sup>8</sup> For example, we do not typically see self-identified white supremacists engaging in overt acts of racial violence towards People of Color and *separate but equal* is no longer considered legally appropriate doctrine. In this, the supposedly post-civil rights-Obama era, racism has taken on a new look and feel. Racism is now covert, silent, unseen, and unchallenged by many, especially whites who seek to accept the argument that the civil rights movement of the 1960s resolved “appropriate” racial concerns. Now, in a post-Obama, Trump era, we must remain hyper-vigilant of the ways in which racism and white supremacy are concealed, deployed, and reinvented in educative spaces.

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<sup>8</sup> Given the political climate in which this dissertation was written, I debated revising this sentence to reflect the sharp increase in overtly racist actions appearing throughout the country.

We must acknowledge that dismantling white supremacy requires a multifaceted, multidisciplinary approach that deploys whichever theoretical frame best addresses the issue at hand. Essed and Goldberg (2002) stated clearly something that often goes unattended to regarding race/ism research in education: “there is no singular national space that does or should dominate thinking about race and racism” (p. 3). To that end, in this study I draw upon components of two critical theories of race to investigate the beliefs, knowledge, and hope of preservice teachers as they embark on a social studies methods course infused with attention to race and racism. Tenets of Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies inform this work and will be discussed in the following sections.

### **Critical Race Theory**

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s has often been heralded as the official end to de jure racial segregation and discrimination in the United States. Ms. Parks’ famous ride, Dr. King’s memorialized speech, the passing of major civil rights legislation, and landmark Supreme Court decisions all seemed to close the proverbial book on racial unrest in America, and thus the problem of race had been solved. Throughout the 1970s this brief, yet popular, narrative of the civil rights movement was advocated in public, political, and educational discourse as means to define a specific set of racialized understandings about the law, justice, and discrimination (Peller, 1990). Consequently, a series of conservative Supreme Court decisions and legislative changes pushed through by President Nixon began to roll back many of the advancements made during the civil rights era (Brown & Jackson, 2013; Crenshaw, 2011). At the same time a group of scholars of critical legal studies (CLS), mostly White men, began to challenge

the argument that the legal system was neutral and unaffected by social and political phenomena (Brown & Jackson, 2013). Seemingly, this would open space to challenge the erosion of civil rights advancements made decades before within the court system.

By the early-1980s, CLS made substantial progress in disrupting the hegemony of America's legal system, working against many of the abuses of power initiated by previous administrations. However, the majority of CLS scholars were advocating for an approach to racial justice that adopted a long-term vision of racial equality—essentially repurposing Dr. King's long arc toward justice mantra for liberal, yet non-racialized aims (Crenshaw, 2011). A group of critical legal Scholars of Color felt CLS failed to adequately address the struggles of People of Color, specifically Black Americans in the post-Brown era (Brown & Jackson, 2013). This group, namely Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, Neil Gotanda, Charles Lawrence, and Mari Matsuda, observed what Crenshaw (2011) recalled as the existence of a “frame misalignment,” wherein the tenets of CLS failed to align with the needs of race work and race scholars. Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas (1995) noted,

Because CLS scholars had not, by and large, developed and incorporated a critique of racial power into their analysis, their practices, politics and theories regarding race tended to be unsatisfying and sometimes indistinguishable from those of the dominant institutions they were otherwise contesting (pp. xxii-xxiii).

In the middle of the decade, this group of legal scholars assembled in pursuit of a new theoretical formulation that moved beyond CLS to directly challenge the continued impact of racism and White supremacy in society. Thus, Critical Race Theory (CRT) was born to accommodate this gap in theory and praxis.

**Racism as Historic, Permanent, and Pervasive.** Foundationally, CRT is rooted in the belief that racism is “an integral, permanent, and indestructible part of this society” (Bell, 1992a, p. ix). Over time racism has transitioned from being demonstrated through overt acts of racial violence or discrimination into more covert and engrained attacks towards People of Color; regardless, its presence persists. Morrison (1992) wrote, “Expensively kept, economically unsound, a spurious and useless political asset in election campaigns, racism is as healthy today as it was during the Enlightenment” (p. 63). Founding father of CRT Derrick Bell (1992b) lamented, “Racial equality, is, in fact, not a realistic goal” (p. 363). CRT scholars understand the existing legal system was created to preserve the racial status quo, and as a result cannot be trusted to create racial equality. Therefore, work must be done both within and beyond systems to work for racial justice.

Historically, debate has persisted over the construction of race; however, CRT scholars assert racial identity is socially constructed. Omi and Winant (1994) defined race as, “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (p. 55). Although racial understandings invoke biological features, upon closer investigation these biological divides are “at best imprecise, and at worst completely arbitrary” (p. 55). Haney Lopez (1995) added, “racial formation includes both the rise of racial groups and their constant reification in social thought” (p. 196). Thus, whiteness is perpetually redefined in pursuit of maintaining its position of dominance, superiority, and normality.

**Intersectionality.** Due to the permanence and pervasive nature of racism, CRT scholars are committed to intersectional approaches to challenging racism. Delgado and

Stefanic (2001) defined intersectionality as, “the examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation and how their combinations play out in various settings” (p. 51). Crenshaw (1991) noted the importance of recognizing the various ways that race and gender inform one’s lived experiences and how the world is socially constructed. Race is the lens through which CRT scholars examine all other identities, and their subsequent influence on the individual, on schools, and systems. Intersectionality also insists that we address the ways in which policy and procedure effect the intersections of our identities. Personally, as a queer white woman scholar taking up issues of race/ism, intersectionality is particularly important as I consider how my various identities serve to inform my perspective and my relationships with participants.

**Centering the Voices of People of Color.** An additional component of CRT research is the attention to the voices of marginalized communities and People of Color. Delgado (1995) noted,

The stories or narratives told by the in-group remind it of its identity in relation to outgroups, and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural. The stories of outgroups aim to subvert that reality (p. 64).

Thus, CRT seeks to construct and lift up counter-stories of People of Color or those who are marginalized to establish common knowledge within marginalized communities, challenge master narratives, provide context to lived experiences, and to serve as emancipatory experiences for participants (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) noted that CRT scholars use stories, poetry, fiction, revisionist histories, and parables to define their own reality.

**Interest Convergence.** CRT also asserts that advances in racial justice have only come at convenient times for white Americans, and not as a result of explicit desires to serve Communities of Color, or what Bell (1980) coined interest convergence. Bell (1980) observed, “The interests of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (p. 523). Two historic examples of interest convergence are highlighted in Bell’s (1980) seminal piece. The first refers to Lincoln’s decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, noting that his concern was for preserving the Union and not the humanity of enslaved persons. Second, Bell observed that the 1954 *Brown v. Board* Supreme Court decision, in which de jure school segregation was deemed unconstitutional, instantly raised America’s credibility in fighting against communism in the Cold War.

**Points of Tension within Critical Race Theory.** Not unlike the path of multiculturalism, CRT has become the mainstream approach to examining race and racism within education (Leonardo, 2013). It is widely used by both experienced and novice scholars for whom race/ism is under the spotlight. This, of course, can be seen as evidence of the utility of CRT for educational examinations into race/ism. However, with overuse comes the potential for misuse. Critical Race Theorists themselves have critiqued this phenomenon, warning that the theory has become watered down in recent years, as race work has gained more attention, particularly from white scholars. Additionally, scholars have lamented CRTs undertheorizing of race. Leonardo (2013) critiqued, “It leaves race largely undertheorized, which comes with two consequences: one, it may end up reifying it as natural and perpetual; and two, it does not problematize the dependency between racism and a racially organized society” (p. 5). Essentially, in attesting that race

is a social construction, CRT scholarship has failed to engage in a thorough challenge of that construction. Nonetheless, CRT remains a meaningful frame through which scholars can examine race/ism in education. With the thoughtful and thorough deployment of its constructs, CRT will continue to inform the field.

### **whiteness and Critical whiteness Studies**

whiteness and white supremacy have long been addressed Scholars of Color. Du Bois (1989) exposed the insidious ways whiteness shaped efforts after emancipation to supposedly support ex-slaves in establishing new realities. Others, such as Baldwin (1963) and Fanon (1967) continued to insist whiteness be challenged, checked, and pushed against as the lives and livelihoods of People of Color continued to be subjugated as white folks prospered with the assistance of state and federal assistance programs designed to widen the color line. As CRT blossomed through the 1980s and early 90s, a handful of critical scholars of race began to formally shift their focus to the problem of whiteness. In fact, CRT scholars identified whiteness as an underlying cause of racism. Harris' 1993 article argued that white status provides individuals unique property rights which are unavailable to People of Color, and subsequently renders whiteness valuable. Thus the "holders" of whiteness are afforded rights of disposition, use/enjoyment, status, and exclusion. Harris (1993) contended, "Just as whiteness as property embraced the right to exclude, whiteness as a theoretical construct evolved for the very purpose of racial exclusion. Thus, the concept of whiteness is built on both exclusion and racial subjugation" (p. 1737). Property rights thus render whiteness the ultimate prize in society, for those who 'pass' are eligible for a substantial set of unearned benefits. Bell (1995) observed, "Even those whites who lack wealth and power are sustained in their

sense of racial superiority by policy decisions that sacrifice Black rights. The subordination of Blacks seems to reassure whites of an unspoken, but no less certain, property right in their ‘whiteness’” (p. 7). Whiteness thus affords its holders the right to exclude, include, use, enjoy, and attain. Lipsitz (2006) added,

Whiteness has a cash value: it accounts for advantages that come to individuals through profits made from housing secured in discriminatory markets, through the unequal educational opportunities available to children of different races, through insider networks that channel employment opportunities to the relatives and friends of those who have profited most from present and past racial discrimination, and especially through intergenerational transfers of inherited wealth that pass on the spoils of discrimination to succeeding generations (p. vii).

Simply stated, it literally pays to be white. As a result, a close and critical examination of the influence of whiteness, particularly in education, is necessary.

Beginning with three foundational pieces— McIntosh (1992) on white privilege, Roediger (1991) on the white working class, and Frankenburg (1993) on white women and race—white, modern scholars returned to the question ironically posed to Black Americans by Du Bois in 1904: How does it feel to be the problem? (Leonardo, 2013). In addressing whites and whiteness, this question moves beyond its irony. Racism exists because of the construction of hegemonic whiteness and its insistence on perpetuating deficit notions of Blackness. Therefore, to eradicate racism, we must investigate the construction of whiteness.

whiteness is more than a skin color that happens to be lighter than others.

whiteness is understood in many ways, but here I define whiteness as, an ever-shifting,

invisible, hierarchical, and hegemonic power structure and identity construct that informs the ways in which individuals view themselves and society, and is predicated on dehumanizing and the racial Other (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Frankenburg, 1993; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Leonardo, 2013; Roediger, 1991; Sleeter, 2011). Critical whiteness studies (CWS) focuses upon the system of whiteness to simultaneously decenter whiteness from its position of supremacy. A complicated task to say the least, as any attention on whiteness has the potential to provide even more space to dominant voices and perspectives. Integral to a successful application of CWS is personal reflection and the awareness of racialized power dynamics. As Leonardo (2009) noted, “race was created by and for whites,” and subsequently should be interrogated by whites (p. 69). However, this work must be done in concert, conversation, and alongside Scholars of Color. As Leonardo (2009) noted, whiteness, along with race, “is the structural valuation of skin color, which invests its meaning regarding the overall organization of society” (p. 92).

A critical analysis of whiteness, or critical whiteness studies (CWS), provides a framework to problematize the hegemonic nature of whiteness (Leonardo, 2009; Matias, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014). I acknowledge the complicated nature of directly addressing whiteness. Tatum (1997) observed, “The word racist holds a lot of emotional power. For many White people, to be called racist is the ultimate insult” (p. 10). While I agree with Tatum that most whites detest being named a racist, focusing solely on racism also allows whites to fail to see their positionality within the system of oppression. *After all, I’m not racist, but those other people obviously are.* Therefore, centering attention specifically on whiteness and white supremacy allows research to

“make racial power and its ideology visible to whites, and to help white people see how to work against institutionalization of racial oppression and white supremacy in a way that takes account of it rather than dismissing it” (Sleeter, 2011, p. 424).

Further, rather than centering and thus reifying hegemonic whiteness, CWS seeks to engage white individuals in naming whiteness as the problem and working to dismantle it. Central to an examination of whiteness is the belief that the responsibility of challenging racism does not rest solely on the shoulders of people who are not white. Frankenburg (1993) confessed:

To speak of whiteness is, I think, to assign everyone a place in the relations of racism. It is to emphasize that dealing with racism is not merely an option for white people—that, rather racism shapes white people’s lives and identities that is inseparable from other facets of life (p. 6).

CWS has the potential to “place the spotlight of critical scrutiny on the power of whiteness” to better understand how it can be “interrupted, and transformed” (Apple, 1998, p. x). Again, from Leonardo (2009), “In whiteness studies, whiteness becomes the center of critique and transformation. It represents the most-neglected anxiety around race that whiteness scholars, many of whom are white, are now beginning to recognize” (p. 91).

**Investment in whiteness.** Lipsitz (2006) contended white people are encouraged to invest in, and subsequently perpetuate, whiteness to retain its property value and social positioning. Such work is done both through overt and covert means and at individual, group, and structural levels. As whiteness serves as property for individuals to claim ownership (Harris, 1993), those in the club will engage in whatever means necessary to

retain their investment. Lipsitz (2006) noted that historically whites rewrote and ignored laws, perpetrated countless acts of physical, emotional, and psyche violence, and grew silent to the voices of non-whites all in concert with retaining the property value of whiteness. This “possessive investment in whiteness” is responsible for the racialized hierarchy that defines our society (Lipsitz, 2006). In addition to fighting to preserve the advantages of whiteness, this investment is also predicated on “manipulating racial outsiders to fight against one another, to compete for white approval, and to seek the rewards and privileges of whiteness for themselves at the expense of other racialized populations” (p. 3). Harkening the principle of interest convergence from CRT (Bell, 1980), whiteness continues to problematize society because whites have not identified reasons to benefit from its deconstruction. *Essentially, why should whites challenge whiteness if there is no benefit for whites?*

Complicating the response to this question and the overall challenge of whiteness is the way in which whiteness is observed, or more accurately, fail to see it in all its forms. Mills (1997) argued that keeping society from recognizing the total sum of the destructive impact of whiteness is a philosophical construct known as the Racial Contract. Like Rousseau’s notion of the social contract, wherein individuals are willing to sacrifice individual freedom for the security of the state, the Racial Contract is constructed in such a way to ensure that whites are entitled to well-being at the expense of non-whites. Individuals do not literally sign the Racial Contract, but as is the case with the social contract, signature is not required to reap the benefits of the terms of the agreement. In the case of the Racial Contract, the agreement is not between whites and non-whites, but rather signed at the expense of non-whites (Mills, 1997). Perhaps more

directly, the Racial Contract, as Leonardo (2013) added, is “an actual state of affair that functions statistically as if they had entered into a contract with one another” (p. 606). This Contract, serves the mechanization for what Mills (1997) termed white ignorance. White ignorance, or “a particular pattern of localized and global cognitive dysfunctions (which are psychologically and socially functional), producing the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made” (p. 18). Said another way, the conditions of the Racial Contract make it so whites are so deeply affected by the hegemonic nature of whiteness that they are unable to even recognize its presence.

**Dysconscious Racism.** White ignorance—the assumption that living in white spaces surrounded by white faces, causes all whites to fail to develop complex understandings of not only themselves as racialized beings, but also the ways in which race informs systems and structures in American society—serves to complicate critical analyses of whiteness. The construction of “white as racially oblivious” serves goals of white supremacy as white people are subsequently rendered ignorant to their personal and group investment in whiteness, as referenced above. Said another way, how can whites be racist if they do not even recognize they are benefiting from racism? As stated, this epistemology of white ignorance (Mills, 1997, 2007) is deliberately self-perpetuating. This useful tool of white supremacy leads to the development of a form of racism that blindly and uncritically accepts white norms and privileges.

This dysconscious form of racism, as defined by King (1991) is, “not the absence of consciousness but an impaired consciousness or distorted way of thinking” about race/ism, inequality, and white supremacy (p. 135). Someone who is dysconscious

struggles to accept challenges to established narratives about race relations and inequity and often demonstrates resistance (guilt and/or hostility) to direct requests to internalize a different understanding. Therefore, dysconscious individuals are likely to accept, without question, the assumptions, myths, and beliefs used to maintain white supremacy without recognition that doing so contributes to the problem. Thus, what gets written, maintained, taught, and passed down in white spaces becomes normalized. Over time, this white knowledge becomes known as white common sense, insofar that, what seems normal and natural in society is also that which is historically and ideologically white (Leonardo, 2013).

**white Commonsense.** The construct of white commonsense draws upon the Gramscian notion of common sense in that hegemonic understandings simply become what is expected (i.e., white notions of truth, knowledge, and power become the expectation in pursuit of maintenance of the white racial hierarchy) (Leonardo, 2013). Contemporarily, neoliberal and individualistic approaches to challenging racism have shifted white commonsense to accepting that structural and institutional racism no longer exists, but rather society is filled with racist individuals not systems and policies. Thus, transforming racism and white supremacy into covert operations difficult to witness and even more challenging to refute. The new silence of white supremacy, Lipsitz (2006) noted, indicates,

that racism can be systematic and effective even when unannounced in public;  
that rational considerations of self-interest and preservation of privilege can  
motivate racist behavior just as surely as private prejudice or irrational fear; that  
hypotheses about the nature and extent of white racism that might strike many

whites as paranoid [not commonsense] can sometimes be traced to accurate knowledge about history (p. 170).

Essentially, if something does not “just make sense” to whites, then it cannot be true, valued, or trusted. In the context of education, white commonsense plays out in school discipline, education policy, curriculum decisions, and teacher-student-family relationships (Leonardo, 2013).

**Points of Tension within Critical whiteness Studies.** Without denying a critical importance in doing so, some scholars have expressed concern with attention being paid directly to whiteness. Apple (1998) noted that in studying whiteness, white scholars must be careful, reflexive, and on guard to ensure that this work does not “become one more excuse to recenter dominant voices and to ignore the voices and testimony of those groups of people whose dreams, hopes, lives, and very bodies are shattered by current relations of exploitation and domination” (p. xi). MacMullan (2003) added that a focus on whiteness may disrupt or work against other anti-oppressive engagements (i.e., attention to class, gender, or sexuality issues). Additionally, focusing attention upon the problems with whites and whiteness, may silence the anti-racism contributions of non-whites (Leonardo, 2013). These concerns are valid and should be attended to. Leonardo (2013) lamented,

People of color have every reason to doubt that such an event [whites focusing on whiteness] would take place since few, if any, examples of social change in the world, let alone U.S., history provide evidence of a group in power that willingly gives up that power without an overwhelming demand (p. 86).

Engaging in an analysis of whiteness is critical to repairing the damage enacted over time. However, this critical action cannot occur in white isolation. White folks talking only to other white folks about the ills of whiteness will have a limited impact on the pervasive effects of white supremacy. Therefore, analyses of whiteness by whites must be sure to include the voices, perspectives, and concerns of those most negatively impacted by the effects of whiteness, non-whites (Leonardo, 2013). However risky it may seem to directly focus on whiteness, this process remains a powerful approach to challenge racism, particularly for anti-racist whites.

As previously discussed, attempts at diversifying curriculum and attending to the legacies of racism have largely been rendered unsuccessful through the utilization of multicultural education efforts. The two critical theories of race discussed here—critical race theory and critical whiteness studies—offer a frame through which race/ism and whiteness are pulled directly to the center of examination. Some scholars may suggest that I utilize only one of these theoretical frames; that a single theory should be enough to frame a project. While this can certainly be true, here it is not the case. For me, utilizing these theories in conversation with each other insists that I keep my attention on the impact and influence that whiteness plays in the decisions, actions, and choices of participants and myself. In addition, this theoretical pairing demands that in addressing whiteness, I remain attentive to the stories, experiences, and knowledge of marginalized communities and People of Color. Moreover, in selecting these two theoretical frames, I hoped to engage in/with the dual foundations of criticality, suspicion and empathy (Leonardo, 2013). Suspicion of the presence, deployment, and resistance associated with

whiteness and empathy toward participants' as they work through their experiences and emotions within the course.

### **Enacting Critical Theories of Race: Everyday Anti-Racism in the Classroom**

In this study, I examine the ways in which the theoretical constructs discussed above are enacted, experienced, and embodied within pre-service social studies teachers. Too often, discussions of race/ism are left in hypothetical or theoretical spaces that leave pre-service teachers wanting for “real-world” examples of how to enact racialized teaching. I sought to move from theoretical discussion of race and racism to create an experience more pragmatic in nature that allowed participants to begin to seem themselves “doing race work” in the social studies classroom.

In considering how to move from the theoretical to the more concrete, I dove into the literature of both academic and practitioner writing to find a frame through which this project could be conceived. While rooted in both CRT and CWS, this study also draws upon the practitioner-friendly approach of anti-racism. Broadly speaking, anti-racism calls for us to become active agents against the systemic and systematic deployment of racism and white supremacy. More specifically, Pollock (2008) detailed four specific components to anti-racism, “rejecting false notions of human difference, acknowledging lived experiences are shaped around racial lines, learning from diverse forms of knowledge and experiences, and challenging systems of racial inequality” (p. xx). This work, cannot be done from an apathetic or neutral position within the classroom, as is advocated by the majority of social studies curricula rooted in White Social Studies (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015). As a result, teachers seeking to engage in such practices must be willing to take a stand in their classroom. Sefa Dei (1996) defined this

positioning, or racial standpoint as a, “social and educational agenda is to rupture the status quo through the social and personal commitment to political activism of the anti-racist educational practitioner. To be an anti-racism educator is to be a theorist and practitioner for social change” (p. 26).

A cornerstone of anti-racism is the necessity to move out of the traditional stance of educator neutrality. Neutrality, the classic standby for educators, is impossible when pursuing the overarching goal of anti-racism, that is, to create a just society for all people through the direct challenge of racism and white supremacy (Sefa Dei, 1996). Just as famed critical historian Howard Zinn (2004) quipped that it is impossible to remain neutral on a moving train, we, too, must recognize that to challenge the persistent influence of racism on the lives of our students we must adopt a stance that leans into the theoretical constructs addressed in this chapter. As Sefa Dei (1996) noted, “Anti-racism discourse argues that educators, students and community workers cannot claim to remain neutral in the provision and utilization of educational knowledge. The claim to ‘neutrality’ is itself a value-laden position (see Spivak 1993 on ‘Essentialism’)” (p. 26). Simply stated, if you are not embodying anti-racism you are by default protecting the existence of racism. Therefore, it is impossible to avoid the embodiment of a stance as it relates to race/ism, *why not* push ourselves and future teachers to seek deeper understanding of the ways in which their efforts in the classroom can directly challenge racism. Decades of ignoring the complications of race relations in this country have not resulted in improved conditions for People of Color. Why should we continue to play this

broken record?<sup>9</sup> In the next section, I discuss the empirical research related to race/ism within the context of social studies teaching and learning.

### **Race/ism in Secondary Social Studies**

Across the recent literature, several themes emerge in the representation of race/ism in the context of social studies education. The first two themes represent trends in the research wherein race/ism is attended to through relatively indirect avenues. First, several studies engage with race/ism under the umbrella of multicultural or critical multicultural education (Castro, 2013; Flynn, 2010; Miller-Lane, Howard, & Halagao, 2007; Salinas & Castro, 2010; Wills, 2001). Second, a handful of research studies represent the trend of race/ism being discussed within the context of controversial issues (Journell, 2011; Washington & Humphries, 2011). Debate persists across the field of social studies and educational scholarship regarding this approach toward race related research. The final three themes represent research in which race/ism is at the center of the study either through theoretical positioning or the direct aspect for which the study addressed. A handful of studies examine the influence of racial identity on teaching and learning about race/ism in social studies spaces (Branch, 2004; Caldwell, 2012; Castro, Hawkman, & Diaz, 2015; Davis, 2007; Johnson, 2008; Martell, 2015). Additionally, several studies attend to the role that race/ism plays within the context of K-12 social studies students (Chikkatur, 2013; Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Howard, 2004; Martell, 2013, 2016). Finally, scholars have consistently examined the presence of race/ism within social studies curriculum and texts (Alridge, 2007; Anderson & Metzger,

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<sup>9</sup> As Daniel D’Addario of *Salon* quipped: “The definition of insanity is the most overused cliché of all time” (2013). I wholeheartedly agree. Yet, in this instance, it seems important to remember that we have continued to ignore racial tensions and yet they persist. Perhaps this is time to try something new in the way we talk about race and racism with our students.

2011; Chandler, 2010; Heilig, Brown, & Brown, 2012; King, Davis & Brown, 2012; Lintner, 2004; Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015). This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of research attending to race/ism within the context of secondary social studies teacher education courses.

### **Race/ism Under the Umbrella of Critical Multiculturalism**

Critical multiculturalism (CMC) is a theoretical approach which attempts to engage in “a structural analysis of unequal power relationships, analyzing the role of institutional inequities, included but not limited to racism” (May & Sleeter, 2010, p. 10). As discussed in Chapter 1, this theoretical approach can enable authors to critically examine race/ism within the context of social studies education. In fact, scholars utilizing critical multiculturalism frames have acknowledged the existence of several intersections between critical multiculturalism, race/ism, and social studies education (Castro, 2013; Miller-Lane, Howard, & Halagao, 2007; Salinas & Castro, 2010; Wills, 2001).

In Wills (2001) we find a critique of elementary and middle school social studies curricular representations of interactions between diverse groups in US history. The author challenges liberal applications of multiculturalism that seek to build cultural bridges between groups instead of challenging the persistence of oppression, Wills (2001) argued “this structural, rather than psychological, understanding of racism is a crucial component of a critical multicultural social studies education, one that will better prepare students for active citizenship in our diverse society” (pp. 59-60). The author calls for the adoption a CMC framework to ensure that the social studies curriculum focuses “on the interactions of diverse groups and the history of race and ethnic relations” has the potential to “enable students to develop a discourse of contemporary race and ethnic

relations that would go beyond psychological [individual] to structural understandings of racism and discrimination” (p. 60). Flynn’s (2010) case study of a secondary social studies teacher’s implementation of a critical multicultural curriculum serves as evidence of the potential of this framing to address issues related to race and racism with students. Additionally, in Salinas and Castro (2010) the authors engage with CMC to produce discussion of race/ism in the findings. The authors examined the role of teachers’ cultural biographies on their curricular decision making, as it relates to challenging the official social studies curriculum. Participants, two male Latino preservice teachers, indicated that their previous experiences examining race/ism influenced their decision to include race-related curricular materials to their students (Salinas & Castro, 2010).

### **Race/ism as a Controversial Issue**

Two recent articles address the teaching of race-related content in secondary social studies classrooms through a lens of Hess’ (2009) *Controversy in the Classroom*. Each piece examines teacher and student practices regarding discussions of race/ism and reference two types of issues as discussed by Hess (2009): open issues—those with multiple viewpoints or interpretations and able to be deliberated—and closed issues—those which are generally understood to have one viewpoint, and thus not open for deliberation.

First, in Journell (2011) we find a study seeking to analyze how teachers address “controversial issues related to race, gender, and religion within the context of an ongoing political event” the 2008 presidential election (p. 357). The author conducted interviews and observations of six high school social studies teachers and classrooms across three high schools to assess how teachers discussed race, gender, and religion,

disclosed their own beliefs on the issues, and whether the “diversity present in the election” was presented as an open controversial issue. Findings presented in this study indicate the racial identity of Barack Obama was not viewed in itself as an open issue for his eligibility for the presidency for the students and teachers involved in the study; however, many participants indicated that for some in society, Mr. Obama’s racial identity may be a concern. Additionally, the author added discussions of race as they related to the election only were shallow and sterile at best, often avoiding any connection to racism or white supremacy that undergirded much of the anti-Obama sentiment at the time. Second, Washington and Humphries (2011) examined the sense-making of one rural high school social studies teacher as she engaged in discussions of race with her students. The teacher and co-author, Emma, noted she had not received official professional development in engaging in discussions of controversial issues related to race (e.g., affirmative action, racism, immigration) but that Lortie’s (1975) notion of the apprenticeship of observation, in that teachers teach the way that they were taught as students, had influenced her ability to engage in such dialogue. Further, Emma (a white female), “was confident that as long as she was not preaching to her students, her actions were pedagogically defensible, she felt secure that her administration would support her in the event of any student or parent conflict” resulting from dialogue about race/ism (p. 101). Despite feeling supported enough to engage in controversial dialogue related to race/ism, Emma decided to take “preventative measures” to build a positive classroom climate and establish rather strict ground rules for controversial dialogue.

The controversial issues approach to discussing race/ism remains a common trend throughout the larger social studies literature (Busey & Mooney, 2014; Hess, 2002;

Woyshner & Bohan, 2012). However, while taking a perspective grounded in critical theories of race toward this approach, several problems arise. First, positioning race as a controversial talking point predisposes individuals against engaging in dialogue about the topic. Race, as a social construction itself, is not a controversial concept. Journell (2011) acknowledged this in the introductory sections of the article, “Race, gender, and religion are not innately controversial; however, they underlie many of the controversial issues prevalent in society, such as affirmative action, abortion, and gay marriage” (p. 352). While Journell’s statement is true, continued scholarly insistence that engaging in dialogue around race, or related topics, in the classroom as controversial serves to reify the persistence of white supremacy Leonardo (2009) has long challenged the role that white racial knowledge plays in constructing race talk as controversial. He stated,

Like other academic subjects, race is part of normal classroom discourse: as normal as Newton in physics or Shakespeare in English....When a minority scholar speaks plain talk about race, she may be constructed as militant, as needlessly angry about relations that are, after all, “on their wane” (p. 123).

Conversely, when white scholars and teachers are willing to break the white silence (Mazzei, 2008) regarding race/ism they are often rewarded for their bravery in the face of controversy<sup>10</sup>. Thus, the voices of Scholars of Color are again diminished in order to accommodate the “appropriate” contributions of white scholars. While the existence of white allies is critical to challenging racism and white supremacy, their presence cannot come at the expense of Scholars of Color.

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<sup>10</sup> Including myself.

In both Journell (2011) and Washington and Humphries (2011), the authors reported evidence of what Thompson (1997) identified as non-racist behavior or “the absence of discriminatory intentions” on the part of teachers and students (p. 14). Seemingly a good thing, non-racist teaching has the potential for fueling white commonsense in problematic ways. Of her experience as a college student, which she credited as preparing her for controversial racial dialogue as an educator, Emma noted that when engaging in dialogue around race she never experienced or was witness to any racial tensions. Washington and Humphries (2011) reported, “Emma acknowledged that it is quite possible that those who teach about race tend to find themselves having to be careful about not offending students who consider themselves non-racist, whether they are students of color or white” (p. 100). White commonsense tells us it is better to be polite and protect the feelings of others (whites) than to engage in critical and challenging racial dialogue (Leonardo, 2013). If teachers never have opportunity to engage in challenging dialogue about race/ism, then how are we to expect them to be able to do so with their students?

This, unfortunately, results in non-racist dialogue that only serves to reify the position of well-intentioned white folks (Thompson, 1997; Leonardo, 2013) and fails to make advances toward anti-racist change. Too often these conversations end in agreement that racism is bad, and that individuals should not be racist, and do not see beyond the individual conception of racism. Journell (2011) also noted that when teachers engaged students in dialogue around the impact of Mr. Obama’s racial identity on the outcome of the 2008 election, they overwhelmingly avoided more critical dialogue around the nature of the problem: racism and/or white supremacy. Teachers in this study

failed to consider why the question of Mr. Obama's racial identity was still being raised. Journell's study (2011) acknowledges this gap, yet does not go far enough on this topic, "As a result, these findings offer yet another example of teachers missing an opportunity to engage their students in transformative discussions about White privilege, sexism in the United States, and American attitudes toward non-Christians" (p. 380). Although a discourse on privilege is important, this further promotes individualistic understandings of racism, something that emanates throughout both pieces as well (Leonardo, 2009). Through a lens of *race as controversial*, teachers are less likely to engage in deeper, more institutional and structural discussions of racism. If merely talking about race is deemed controversial we could not expect educators to expand the conversation to more complex understandings the system of white supremacy.

### **Race/ism and Explorations into Identity**

In several studies, researchers examined the influence of racial identity on one's ability and/or willingness to engage in race/ism related teaching and learning in the social studies classroom. These studies can be categorized into two sub-themes: teachers and students. Three studies sought to highlight the influence of identity for teachers in social studies classrooms. In each, the authors (in)directly drew on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) to examine the practices of educators.

In its study of Gerry, an African American woman, Johnson (2008) examined the intersectional influence of racialized, gendered, and religious understandings of character education policies through a lens of Black womanist values. Here, the author shares insights into one teacher as she navigated personal and professional understandings of character education policy and implementation in her secondary social studies course.

Despite being informed by her intersecting identities, Gerry struggled with extending her own experiences and understandings of character beyond the white, middle-class, heterosexual conceptions of character education as advocated by state and school policies. Branch (2004) utilized a grounded theory approach to gain understanding of how teachers conceptualize their role as facilitator of racial and ethnic identity development in their students. Drawing upon observations and interviews with one individual—Kendra Katahira, an Asian American middle school social studies teacher—Branch theorized that pre-service and veteran teachers would benefit from personal explorations into their ethnic identities, as well as discussing race and ethnicity with racial and ethnic Others. Similarly, Martell (2015) featured the journey of a white male teacher’s efforts to better understand the influence of his racial identity on his ability to engage in culturally relevant pedagogical practices in an urban social studies classroom. Across each of these studies, we see evidence of the positive impact the acknowledgement of intersectional identities can have on the teaching and learning of race/ism in the social studies classroom.

In 2007, Davis issued a call for social studies teachers to acknowledge the impact they, and their classroom, curriculum, and pedagogy can have on promoting positive student racial identity development. Davis (2007) argued that social studies teachers can help students to learn about their own racial identities, build relationships across racial divides, begin to historicize their racial beliefs, and encourage personal and racialized reflections amongst students. In two studies, we see examples of this work in action. These studies examine the racial identity development opportunities within the context of elective social studies courses. In Caldwell (2012), a group of middle school students

enrolled in a course titled, *Inquiry into Identity: Race, Class, and Gender (RGG)*, engaged in a semester-long student-led inquiry of themselves and the world in which they live. In this course students learned through discomfort and developed an action-oriented stance toward social justice issues. Similarly, in Castro, Hawkman & Diaz (2015) authors explored the opportunities afforded to high school students enrolled in a course titled, *Race, Gender, and Ethnicity (RGE)*. In the course, students engaged in critical reflection, journaling, and racial dialogues through which they developed a greater sense of self and society. In both cases, authors indicated a necessity to attend to relationships and community building in the classroom.

Across each of these studies, authors attended to the influence of racial identity awareness, development, and introspection within the context of the social studies. Participants engaged in a variety of strategies that evoked a more personal understanding of the ways in which race and racism influenced their views about themselves, their students, and the curriculum. Conversely, findings indicated that students who had the opportunity to explore their personal racial identities within the context of social studies spaces generated a positive sense of self and greater sense of the ways in which race/ism operates in society.

### **Race/ism and K-12 Students**

Several studies examine K-12 students' understandings and perceptions of race/ism in the social studies classroom. First, Howard (2004) utilized CRT to explore student perceptions of race/ism and the role that social studies education can play in facilitating student participation in racial dialogue. In a thoroughly theorized piece, Howard (2004) reported that students indicated that the ways in which race/ism had

previously been discussed with them fueled a sense of silence and mystery around the topic which led to reinforced stereotypical beliefs. Further, Howard (2004) suggested that students saw room for social studies to address race/ism, despite it never having done so in the past, as well as the potential for racial dialogue to increase intergroup relationships in schools. Second, Epstein, Mayorga, and Nelson (2011) studied the effects of culturally responsive pedagogy in an urban social studies classroom on students' understandings of racialized history. The authors reported that by engaging with culturally responsive pedagogy in a U. S. History course, students developed complex understandings of race/ism and examined historical counter-stories (Delgado, 1989) that challenged the traditional master narrative in U.S. History. Despite increased knowledge of racialized history, students also resisted learning complicated narratives of white allyship and history. Chikkatur (2013) examined the challenging practice of teaching and learning African American history in class with varied understandings of race/ism. Utilizing an ethnographic approach informed by CRT and anti-oppressive theories, the author details evidence of the pervasive nature of whiteness which leads to what Leonardo and Porter (2010) refer to as a "Fanonian sense of fear" in multiracial classrooms. That is, a classroom intended to be safe is in fact full of racialized fear as the white student majority can maintain its position of supremacy, thus rendering Students of Color subject to racial psyche violence.

In three studies, we find attempts to shine light on the perspectives of Students of Color as they engage with the social studies curriculum. Epstein (1998) argued that research literature fails to acknowledge the differing historical perspectives of Students of Color as compared to white students in social studies classrooms. Students of Color

internalize and come to understand the racialized history of the United States remarkably different than do white students. In failing to attend to this gap, the field struggles to construct an image that is wide-ranging and complete for all students. Two additional studies from Martell (2013; 2016) respond to Epstein's call to examine the differing perspectives of white and non-white students, as it relates to understanding race/ism within the social studies. Similarly, the author (2016) found gaps in students understanding of whiteness along racial lines. Further, Martell (2013) noted that culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly listening to the voices and concerns of Students of Color enhanced his practice, and thus students developed deeper sense of racialized historical knowledge.

### **Race/ism within Social Studies Curriculum and Texts**

Several articles look into the ways in which race/ism are evidenced in social studies curriculum and texts. A handful of contributions investigate social studies content standards; two more discuss the ways in which Native American histories can be infused in the US history curriculum and textbooks; the third piece uncovers the work of Harold Rugg and Carter Woodson. Across this work, scholars acknowledge that generally, social studies resources represent an incomplete and problematic presentation of race/ism to students.

In Anderson and Metzger (2011) we find a study of the representation of slavery and African American narratives in four sets of state social studies standards. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach grounded in a critical theory framework determined to challenge hegemonic master narratives, the authors reported while there was considerable attention to African Americans from the Revolutionary War through the Civil War,

included content revolved around slavery, and featured unagentic narratives of African Americans. Anderson and Metzger (2011) indicated that not only were the standards shallow and superficial in nature, they also failed to encourage critical thinking related to social conflict or race/ism. Similarly, Shear, Knowles, Soden and Castro (2015) provided a mixed-methods postcolonial examination into the representation of indigenous peoples within the social studies content standards of all fifty states. In this wide-ranging study, Shear and colleagues (2015) found that indigenous peoples are rarely present within content standards, and when they do appear such references most frequently occur prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Standards, particularly social studies standards, often exist as the result (consequence) of a political compromise by standards writers (Placier, Walker, & Foster, 2002). The product generated by politically-appointed writers tends to be the result of placation and a desire to please everyone on the committee—which in turn—pleases no one. As a result, teachers are left with a set of vague standards that offer little guidance. Vague standards often also invite problematic interpretations, as was evidenced in the work of Heilig and colleagues (2012). In an investigation of social studies standards in Texas, Heilig, Brown, and Brown (2012) argued that while on the surface the standards appeared to include content related to race/ism, with a closer, race-based examination, researchers discovered that, in fact, the standards marginalized conversations on the topic. Standards that could have been constructed by standards writers with the intent to foster inclusivity could be utilized to exclude “undesirable content.” While the alternative—overly prescriptive standards—may not be ideal, this method may lead to the

direct challenging of white silence regarding racialized content in the social studies classroom, where unclear standards may not.

Additionally, regarding the shallow nature of race/ism represented in the standards, Anderson and Metzger (2011) noted, “No matter the age of the student, it is disempowering for educational policymakers and practitioners to represent whole groups or historical individuals, even Lincoln, as one-dimensional stock figures in a linear march of social progress on race relations” (p. 409). The myth of a perpetual upward trajectory toward racial freedom is a narrative evidentiary of whiteness in action. When this narrative is promoted it serves to devalue the calls from non-whites that racism and white supremacy are alive and well in America. Consequently, this allows belief whites to stand firm in their assertions that we live in a post-racial society because the trajectory toward justice has been consistent (Leonardo, 2009).

Beyond content standards, social studies education relies heavily on text-based resources to drive instructional methods. Despite persistent research indicating that these texts are often quite flawed, textbooks remain foundations of the social studies classroom. Lintner (2004) observed that quite often social studies textbooks both utilize and perpetuate racially-charged stereotypes in their representations of marginalized communities. Likewise, Alridge (2007) found that these texts often package narrow interpretations of the master narrative seeking to reify white knowledge and understanding of the past. Research examining race/ism within the context of social studies texts demonstrates this fact, but also provides conversations to advance the field forward.

In Chandler (2010) and King, Davis, and Brown (2012) authors ground their investigations into social studies curriculum and texts in CRT. Both articles serve as strong models from which aspiring race scholars can draw inspiration about how to present, theorize, and discuss data related to race/ism. After providing a thorough foundation of CRT and social studies literature, Chandler (2010) paired tenets of CRT alongside potential guiding questions that could be utilized to incorporate Native American histories in the social studies classroom. Weaving CRT and Native American content knowledge interchangeably throughout the length of the manuscript, the author crafted an approachable yet scholarly publication advocating for the increased attention to Native American content knowledge in the U.S. history classroom.

Similarly, in King, Davis, and Brown (2012) we see a response to Woysner's 2009 call for increased attention to the historiography of the field of social studies education. Here, the authors sought to situate the work of Rugg and Woodson, two pioneers in social studies education, in conversation with modern racial theories and understandings of race/ism. Particularly important in this work is the attention to Woodson, a relatively forgotten African American social studies scholar who had been overshadowed by the pervasive whiteness of the field at the turn of the 20th century. Further, King, Davis, and Brown (2012) called for future research which engages in revisionist historiography to explore how social studies education was established, constructed, and evolved within marginalized communities—as the existing history of the field is littered with white faces and white stories. As stated previously, both pieces serve as useful examples of well theorized contributions to social studies race scholarship; with

each offering insights into under examined components of social studies education and research.

### **Race and Racism in Secondary Social Studies Teacher Education**

The scholarly contributions discussed in this chapter have laid a strong content specific foundation for the field to build upon. In fact, with recent calls to examine the development of Racial Pedagogical Content Knowledge (Chandler, 2015), the persistence of White Social Studies (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015), and the nuances between non-racist and anti-racist teaching (King & Chandler, 2016), the field of social studies is well positioned to strengthen its stance within the context race/ism related research. As well as begin to respond to the calls of social studies scholars of the past.

This study seeks to contribute to a field within social studies research relatively absent from the research discussed in this chapter; that is, social studies teacher education. While research on social studies teacher education abounds (Adler, 2008; Crocco & Livingston, 2017; Halvorsen & Wilson, 2010) relatively few studies center upon race/ism within the context of the social studies methods course (Crowley & Smith, 2015; King, 2016). Too often, discussions of race/ism and other equity-oriented foci get lost under the “mainstream” message of citizenship education or within efforts to promote a social justice approach to teaching social studies. In regard to the former, a handful of scholars have attempted to include attention to race/ism within citizenship discourses in the social studies (i.e., Boyle-Baise, 2003; Fickel, 2000). Similarly, social justice approaches to social studies seem to offer potential regarding race/ism within the field as has been evidenced by the work contributors (i.e., Matthews & Dilworth, 2008; Tyson & Park, 2008; Wade, 1999). However, understandings of social justice often vary

and depending on the classroom, context, teacher, or students may or may not include race/ism as a central feature of the work.

What is missing, and what this dissertation hopes to contribute, is a specific, direct racial discourse within the context of social studies teacher education. Again, this is not to say that race/ism is not present in the research of social studies teacher education, however there exists ample room to expand its reach within the field. In the following chapter, I detail the methods and methodology deployed in this case study of six pre-service teachers enrolled in a social studies methods course imbedded with anti-racist principles and practice.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methods and Methodology**

The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of participation in a secondary social studies methods course laced with attention to race/ism and anti-racism on preservice teachers' racialized knowledge, standpoint, and decision making. My research questions are grounded in theoretical constructs associated with critical race theory and critical whiteness studies. To examine the depths to which participation in this course impacted participants' racial knowledge, racial standpoint, and racial pedagogical decision making, a qualitative case study method was utilized. This study was constructed around the following questions:

1. How does participation in an anti-racist oriented social studies methods class influence the racial knowledge base of pre-service teachers?
2. What influence did participation in the class have on the non/anti-racism positionality of pre-service teachers?
3. What influence did participation in the class have on the anticipated racial pedagogical decision making for social studies of pre-service teachers?

In pursuit of uncovering answers to these questions, this dissertation seeks to weave together practices of interpretive, theoretical, and methodological bricoleurs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2010) to assess and examine data gathered/produced in this study.

In the following sections I detail the design of this project, data collection, and analysis. This chapter continues with attention to course design by detailing the process of text selection and decision making around imbedding attention to race/ism within an

existing social studies methods course. Finally, the chapter concludes with attention to my positionality as a teacher-researcher within the study.

### **Qualitative Research Methods**

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) observed, “qualitative researchers deploy a wide-range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand” (p. 4). Qualitative research projects tend to occur within natural settings, are grounded in theoretical understandings, draw on participant and researcher perceptions and experiences, focus on process and outcomes, and depends on calls for researcher interpretation of data which is produced/gathered (Creswell, 2014). As this study is designed to uncover the knowledge, positionality, and decision making of participants, a qualitative research approach provides the greatest opportunity to do so.

Tracy (2010) articulated eight components of quality qualitative research: (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. While the debate over “quality” is lengthy and necessary for the field of educational research to continue, this forum is not intended to engage in it. However, each of these components do inform the design and implementation of this study. Throughout the chapter, attention will be paid to the relationship between each of the eight components provided by Tracy (2010) and the work conducted in this study.

In terms of topic, Tracy (2010) noted that topics at the center of a qualitative inquiry should be timely, relevant, significant, and interesting. A general examination into the knowledge, positionality, and pedagogical decision making of pre-service teachers may

not be particularly identifiable as any of these. However, focusing attention upon a racialized perspective of these concepts situates this topic as worthy for qualitative study. As the field of education continues to struggle with preparing teachers to engage with racialized teaching, direct attention to racialized teacher education is imperative. In addition, as racism and white supremacy permeate all facets of society, particularly throughout the field of education, a case study approach aligns well with Zeus Leonardo's (2013) call for a multifaceted approach to dismantling racial oppression. Case study research methods are, therefore, selected for the design of this dissertation.

### **Case Study Research**

Case study methodology was utilized to study six secondary social studies pre-service teachers participating in a social studies teacher education course infused with readings, activities, and discussions attending to race/ism, whiteness, non-racism, and anti-racism within the context of social studies teaching. Several frameworks or rationales exist when conducting case study research within educational contexts. Yin (2014) provided three considerations for selecting a case study method: (a) the researcher seeks to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) behavior manipulation is not possible or desired; (c) the context of the phenomenon is integral to generating understanding. As previously discussed, this study seeks to understand how participants in this study developed racialized knowledge over the course of the semester and whether the process informed or amended their racial standpoint within and beyond the social studies classroom. Although the syllabus for the course was amended to meet the needs of this study, I did not attempt to manipulate student behavior, participation or actions throughout the semester. Further, the context in which this study occurs is a bounded

system, and unable to be separated from the generation of racialized knowledge, positionality, and decision making of participants.

According to Merriam (1998), case study research is also understood as particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic: *particularistic*, in that it can illuminate both specific instances as well as general problems; *descriptive*, in that it can clarify the complexities of a situation through the presentation of a variety of rich data sources; and *heuristic*, in that case study methods can provide understanding to the failings and successes of a program or evaluate applicability of an alternative. In this dissertation, I draw on several data sources—semi-structured interviews, course materials and assignments, and field notes—to provide the reader with similar insights into the case at the center of the study.

I utilized an instrumental case study design (Stake, 1995) to guide this work as it allowed for me to not only understand the knowledge, positionality, and decision making of the participants, but to also glean insight into the ways in which pre-service teachers, in general, navigate whiteness to develop understanding of how to talk and teach about race/ism in social studies spaces and beyond. Integral to case study research is the selection and definition of the case, or “bounded system,” that is intrinsically “fenced in” (Merriam, 1998). The case at the center of this study is a fall 2016 social studies methods course that was infused with attention to race/ism, whiteness, non-racism, and anti-racism. This course, *Secondary Social Studies Methods III*, featured two instructors (one graduate student and one associate professor) and sixteen undergraduate students pursuing middle or secondary social studies certification. Purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998) was deployed after the conclusion of the course to select six student participants

for this case study that represent the maximum variation of participation within the entire class (Glaser & Straus, 1967).

### **Contexts of the Study**

This dissertation is situated within the fall 2016 semester, in which the six participants were enrolled in the third of three social studies teacher education courses in their undergraduate program. Sixteen students were enrolled in the class and all agreed to various levels of consent in the larger study.

**College of Education’s Teacher Education Program.** The social studies teacher education program is housed within the Central University’s College of Education. The College is home to approximately 1,000 undergraduate students pursuing various degrees in PK-12 teacher education. According to data presented in the fall 2016 semester<sup>11</sup>, the majority of students enrolled in the College identify as white (88.5%) and women (77.1%).

*Social Studies Teacher Education Program.* Students admitted to the social studies teacher education program at Central University were called by College faculty to be, “culturally and socially responsive; instructional and classroom managers; and a professional educator.” Unlike most program areas in the College of Education, potential social studies students were required to participate in an interview day in which they responded to questions related to social studies knowledge, professional dispositions, and career and personal interests. Interview responses are then coupled with student grades, references to select a new cohort of students, annually. The students enrolled<sup>12</sup> in the

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<sup>11</sup> 2016 Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Annual Report

<sup>12</sup> Two students in this course were middle school social studies education majors. Due to programmatic differences, this was only their second class together with the larger group.

class at the center of this dissertation had also taken two previous social studies methods courses, for which I served as one of the main instructors.

In the first class, *Secondary Social Studies Methods I*<sup>13</sup>, students engaged in/with activities and readings related to classroom instructional processes and the teaching of social studies content, constructivist teaching methods and strategies for instruction, lesson planning, scope and sequence, citizenship, anti-racist pedagogy, culturally relevant pedagogy, geography, human rights, literacies, social justice, and world history, and teaching historical thinking and critical thinking. Students were tasked with engaging in weekly reflective journaling, creating lesson plans in global/world history and global justice, and exploring the master narrative (Swartz, 1992) that typically populates social studies content, curriculum, and pedagogy. The semester concluded with students responding to a “Call to Action” in which they defined their goals for future personal/professional development beyond the classroom. Beyond the classroom, the campus community experienced a very public protest calling for attention to the experiences of marginalized students on campus, particularly Students of Color, as discussed in Chapter 1. My co-instructor and I provided space for students to explore these events, and provided additional contextual, historical, and racial content to aid students in racialized sensemaking. In addition, all students in this class completed a twenty-four hour field experience at the local alternative-setting high school. During this experience students worked with the same cooperating teacher within a World History class.

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<sup>13</sup> This class was taught during the fall 2015 semester.

The second class, *Secondary Social Studies Methods II*<sup>14</sup>, built upon the foundation established in the previous course by calling on students to engage in/with activities and readings related to classroom instructional processes and the teaching of social studies content, classroom and instructional management, developing relationships with students, lesson planning, utilizing visual and multimedia tools, website and technological resources, primary and secondary sources to facilitate student learning. In addition, students were asked to construct lesson plans that utilized constructivist teaching practices, analyze textbooks for bias and connection to the master narrative (Swartz, 1992), participate in a critical pedagogy book club, and build a unit plan that challenged the White Social Studies (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015) representations of marginalized peoples, communities, or narratives. For the book club, students chose one of two texts to read in groups over the course of the semester: Either Au, Bigelow, & Karp (1994) *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice, Volume 1*. OR Bigelow, Harvey, Karp, & Miller (2004) *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching Equity and Justice, Volume 2*. The semester concluded with students responding to their previous “Call to Action” and setting continued goals for future personal/professional development. In addition, students completed a twenty-four hour field experience at a variety of placements throughout the surrounding school district.

Finally, the third class, *Secondary Social Studies Methods III*, was the academic context in which this study took place. As stated in Chapter 1, with the change of formatting for my dissertation I decided to move out of the instructor role and serve as a researcher during the semester. During the summer leading up to the fall 2016 semester I

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<sup>14</sup> This class was taught in the spring 2016 semester.

edited the existing syllabus associated with the course to include direct and prolonged attention to race/ism, non-racism, and anti-racism within course readings and assignments. In pursuit of designing a course attending to the complexities of whiteness and white supremacy while simultaneously advancing the goals of anti-racist research, I sought out several examples of critical and racial pedagogies from which to draw inspiration.

Critical pedagogy is understood as the examination of schools and schooling, both historically and contemporarily, with an acute focus on issues related to power, politics, culture, economics, dominance, and equity (Freire, 2000; Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 1994). Seemingly a powerful framework for assessing forms of oppression and injustice, many race scholars grew frustrated with the lack of attention critical pedagogues gave to racial issues. Ladson-Billings (1997) lamented the inability of critical pedagogy to spark substantial change, or even dialogue, around race and racism. A theoretical or pedagogical frame that seeks to address all forms of oppression, such as critical pedagogy, is reminiscent of the big tent of the Republican Party. The tent is supposedly so large to include everyone, that it includes no one, except for the stakeholders; who tend to be straight, affluent, white men. On the relationship between whiteness and critical pedagogy, Allen (2004) observed that whiteness has insidiously normalized critical pedagogy in such a way that attends most strongly to issues related to class and economic inequity. Allen (2004) assessed,

Historically speaking, critical pedagogy has constructed an illuminating political discussion around concepts like hegemony, domination, empowerment, and solidarity... These are all concepts that are vital to organizing struggles against

white supremacy. However, critical pedagogy itself has not taken the next step and applied these terms to a significant race-radical project (p. 122)

In 2016, Matias and Mackey built upon Allen's (2004) critique and detailed their efforts at "pedagogizing" critical whiteness studies in teacher education. Building from the purported goals of critical pedagogy and those of race critical scholars, critical whiteness pedagogy (CWP) insists on a direct examination of whiteness with preservice teachers.

As the majority of preservice teachers are white women, this work is of particular importance as engaging white folks in analyses of whiteness is the first step at dismantling the system of white supremacy. Reminiscent of Baldwin (1963), there is no Blackness without whiteness; therefore, we must utilize pedagogical stances that require the redefinition of white investment (Lipsitz, 2006) on the part of pre-service teachers. Or, as Matias (2013) put it, "Only when society rightfully redistributes the burden of race off People of Color's shoulders and to those who benefit from our subjugation, can pain be alleviated" (p. 5). Such is the work of CWP.

Matias and Mackey (2016) suggested that an impactful method of anti-racist pedagogy is to tie instructional strategies and activities to specific iterations of whiteness and white supremacy. These strategies should be rooted in emotionality and self-reflexivity. In attending to the emotions of white preservice teachers, Matias and Mackey (2016) stated, "If one is not emotionally-prepared to undertake antiracist teaching practices, then it stands to reason s/he will not be emotionally secure enough to engage in long-term racial justice in her/his teaching" (p. 36).

Prior to the beginning of the fall 2016 semester, I met with the co-instructors of the course. At this meeting, the co-instructors (one faculty member; one graduate student)

discussed their goals for the course, while I discussed how I envisioned racialized content overlapping with the course requirements. This course built on the existing framework students were exposed to which was grounded in constructivist teaching and critical social studies pedagogy, while calling on students to directly attend to issues of race/ism within the context of the secondary social studies classroom. Students were tasked with constructing constructivist lesson plans and assessments, engaging in weekly racialized reflective journaling, and participating in an anti-racism oriented book club, as they read the text *Everyday Antiracism*, by Mica Pollock (2008). Pollock's text was selected because it featured practitioner-friendly chapters easily accessible and digestible for pre-service teachers. Pollock (2008) noted that the reader-friendly chapters in the text explore the "everyday acts" of teachers, such as,

how we talk with our students and discipline them; the activities we set up for them to do; the ways we frame and discuss communities in our curriculum; and the ways we assign students to groups, grade their papers, interact with their parents, and envision their futures (p. xviii).

As stated, my hope in selecting this text was to provide students with an approach to anti-racist teaching that seemed manageable and appropriate for their future social studies classroom (see APPENDIX A for the course syllabus). As this class had changed a great deal since my original dissertation plan to teach an entire course on anti-racism, I took great heed in infusing anti-racism in the existing course syllabus. I wanted the class to remain a social studies methods class; therefore, I selected readings and activities that approached race/ism alongside social studies. Additionally, I sought to infuse texts that, if read by students, would serve to counter some of the known forms of resistance presented

by white teachers when talking about race/ism. Students also completed a twenty-four hour field experience at a variety of placements throughout the surrounding school district.

**Participants.** Purposeful sampling was deployed to select the six participants for this study. Merriam (1998) contended purposeful sampling aids in the researcher's quest to "discover, understand, and gain insight" into the experiences or phenomena at the center of the study (p. 61). Maximum variation sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was deployed to include participants in this study that reflect the vast variety of knowledge, positionalities, and decision making that was exhibited by students in the class. All six participants in the study completed the first two courses in the secondary social studies methods course sequence of which I served as a co-instructor and consented to participate fully in the study. As a result, the participants had at least a cursory exposure of the foundations of critical pedagogy, critical multiculturalism, and social justice within the context of social studies teaching and learning.

The six participants were: Conor, Danielle, Hannah, James, Madison, and Russell<sup>15</sup>. Conor identified as white gay man in his early 20s from a middle/upper class suburb of a large Midwestern city, located approximately 120 miles from Central University. Conor attended majority white public schools that participated in a voluntary desegregation program in cooperation with the neighboring urban (mostly non-white) school district. In addition to his formal academic studies, Conor served in the leadership of the campus' LGBTQ student-ally organization and facilitated equity and diversity trainings for other student groups, on campus and in the community. Conor also shared a

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<sup>15</sup> Pseudonyms are used for all participants.

personal/professional passion of his, thematic curricular design. During the frame of the study, Conor was working to develop a justice-oriented thematic redesign of social studies instruction. According to Conor, the traditional, chronological, approach to social studies teaching reinforces the assumption that racism and discrimination are things of the past and are no longer in need of discussion. On his work to engage in thematic instruction, Conor stated:<sup>16</sup>

My big thing is if we can look at how we design our curriculum in a way that isn't chronological, what we do is we escape every pre-existing preconception of what history classroom should be. And then, we are escaping criticisms of why we are not reinforcing racism. Because if you accept the premise that the traditional chronological approach is rooted in racist teachings, then not teaching that is an excuse for not teaching racist pedagogy or not teaching racist content.

In class, Conor frequently engaged in both small and large group discussion and demonstrated a strong sense of critical pedagogy, diverse content knowledge, and an orientation toward justice-oriented social studies teaching.

Danielle identified as a white Jewish straight woman in her early 20s from an affluent “very liberal” suburb of a large upper-Midwest city. Danielle attended a large suburban majority white public high school for which she stated was “predominantly Jewish” student population. Danielle added that the school was often, “preaching acceptance and tolerance. Well more-so acceptance than tolerance.” Danielle noted that prior to attending Central University, she had few encounters or observations of racism or discrimination. Anti-Semitic events and personal interactions during her first few months on campus evoked feelings of surprise in Danielle,

I think even just the first few days at being at Central, I encountered lots of strange talk, at least to me, about Jewish people.... And so, of course, the day that

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<sup>16</sup> Although APA, 6<sup>th</sup> edition calls for block quotes to maintain double spacing, here I am deliberately switching the voices of participants to single spacing. This will aid in readability as you engage with their words.

I told everyone [I am Jewish] I definitely relished in that. Because I was like "Ha," and the shock in their faces was like, "What?" But even just making a big deal about my religion. I think that was always something that really upset me too, because I'm me. I'm not defined as much by my religion as I am by the things that I do and my work ethic and my character.

Swartz' (1992) concept of the master script really resonated with Danielle, as it seemingly became her catchphrase throughout the course. Despite having attended public schools that felt welcoming and inclusive, Danielle admitted that she little social studies knowledge that spanned beyond the traditional White Social Studies discourse.

Hannah identified as a white straight woman in her early 20s from a suburb of a mid-size Midwestern city that was "90% white" and approximately 120 miles from Central University. Hannah attended majority white public schools and noted that race/ism rarely came up in her high school experience. However, after transferring to Central University upon receiving her Associates Degree from a local community college, her eyes were opened a bit to racial realities,

I came here to Central there was obviously a lot of racially charged issues here that have come up, and I've stayed up with more in the social media where like it's everywhere. You can see it [race/ism] in everything, and then I also didn't really notice it as much until I started dating an African American male, and things that I never thought were still existing just it came out like I had no idea.

Hannah approached class from a position of quiet inquisitiveness. Always prepared for participate, Hannah thrived in small group discussion where she could flesh out new racialized understandings of her approach to teaching social studies.

James identified as a white straight man in his early 20s from a suburb of a mid-size Midwestern city filled with "McMansions with big lawns and such" approximately 120 miles from Central University. James attended majority white public schools, where race/ism was not a frequent topic of discussion in class or society,

I mean, I came from a white suburban setting. So, a racial identity for most of my life wasn't a thing because it was mostly white people. It's not like there were no Black people or minorities, but you don't think about it too much when you're part of the majority. And yeah, I don't know. It is difficult to wrap my head around all of that.

*Wrapping his head around all of that*, succinctly describes James' approach to the class.

Each week, and in our interviews, James engaged the content with his existing racialized knowledge to resolve the cognitive dissonance he felt as a future social studies educator. He asked questions, respectfully challenged himself, his classmates, and his instructors during his pursuit for greater understanding of how to teach about both social studies and race/ism.

Madison identified as a white straight woman in her early 20s at the time of this study. She is originally from a large Southwestern city, and attended a Catholic elementary school before completing her K-12 education at affluent public middle and high schools. Madison described her high school experience as not being very diverse as she noted the only Person of Color she remembered befriending was a "diplomat's son." And yet, Madison shared that she, "craved diversity." Madison noted that she felt society is often caught up with trying to identify people and groups,

Our society is obsessed with categorizing people. When things are not easily categorized or understood, people get frustrated and hurt. By using racial identifying words/labels people are insistent on organizing the world into socially understood categories. But if people do not use the identifiers, they are diminishing someone's identity, as well as the generations of history that lead them to where they are today. I personally think it is important to identify oneself. I believe that it mentally motivates people to want to learn and understand themselves and their past. Once society stops categorizing people, and let's the lines blur, then the world will be free to confidently identify however they would like.

As this quote indicates, and as will be discussed in later chapters, Madison ebbed in and out of post-racial beliefs over the course of the semester. In addition to the field

experiences assigned to the teacher education program, Madison engaged in several self-initiated mission-style trips wherein she served as an educator or tutor in low economic communities, often populated with Students of Color.

Russell identified as a white straight Christian man in his early 20s from an affluent suburb of a large Midwestern city, approximately 120 miles from Central University, where he attended majority-white public K-12 schools. An introspective student, Russell noted that he looked forward to engaging in racial dialogue with his future students,

I'm all about serious conversations and just heart-to-heart stuff. Getting real, talking about these current events that are happening, like the Black Lives Matter movement, or even in--what is it? I don't know much about this issue, but the All Lives Matter movement, I don't know if it's opposing or if it's similar, but discussing the differences between those two. And then, how do people feel about it? What are some misconceptions you may or may not have about these two different movements, and why aren't they similar in this aspect? And just having those kind of thought-provoking, in-depth discussions is what I mean about getting real. And I just--I love those. They're so fun.

Already a reflective pre-service teacher, Russell demonstrated persistent concern for the feelings, thoughts, and emotions of his classmates and future students during the semester. He wrestled with the emotionality of the racialized knowledge he developed and how to engage with the “heart-to-heart stuff” both in and out of the classroom. The summer before this project Russell participated in a teach abroad program located in South Korea, that provided international context to his understanding of race/ism over the course of the semester.

### **Data Production/Collection/Analysis**

Tracy (2010) noted that high-quality qualitative research features rich descriptions and explanations that are grounded in a variety of data sources, theoretical constructs,

context, and evidence. In addition, qualitative researchers must consider several questions as they evaluate and utilize data produced/gathered in the study: *Are there enough data to support significant claims? Did the researcher spend enough time to gather interesting and significant data? Is the context or sample appropriate given the goals of the study? Did the researcher use appropriate procedures in terms of field note style, interviewing practices, and analysis procedures?* As stated, in addition to theoretical framing discussed in Chapter 2, four data sources inform this study: Semi-structured interviews, Race Consciousness Journals (RCJs), Enacting Anti-Racist Lesson Plan, and field journals. The following section details the four types of data utilized in this study as well as the analysis process through which I engaged (See Table 1 for data production/collection timeline). I also detail the process through which I attempted to ensure trustworthiness within this project.

**Table 1***Data Collection and Production*

Participant	Conor	Danielle	Hannah	James	Madison	Russell
<b>Race Consciousness Journals</b>						
RCJ #1	X	X	X	X	X	X
RCJ #2	X	X	X	X	X	X
RCJ #3	X	X	X	X	X	X
RCJ #4	X	X	X	X	X	X
RCJ #5	X	X	X	X	X	X
RCJ #6	X	X	X	X		X
RCJ #7	X		X	X	X	X
RCJ #8		X	X	X	X	X
RCJ #9	X	X	X	X		X
RCJ #10		X	X	X	X	X
RCJ #11	X	X	X	X		X
RCJ #12	X	X	X	X	X	
<b>Semi-Structured Interviews</b>						
Pre-Interview	8/25/16	9/2/16	8/31/16	9/1/16	9/2/16	8/26/16
Mid-Semester Interview	10/6/16	10/20/16	10/12/16	9/22/16 10/13/16 11/16/16	10/28/16	11/3/16
Post-Interview	12/12/16	12/13/16	12/21/16	12/15/16	12/13/16	12/15/16

*Note.* An open invitation was issued to all participants regarding the opportunity to engage in additional dialogues. James initiated two additional conversations beyond the three semi-structured interviews associated with the study.

## Data Sources

As case study research methods dictate, this study draws upon multiple data sources: semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, coursework, and field notes.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** At the beginning of the study, participants were asked to engage in pre-semester and post-semester semi-structured interviews. Merriam (1998) contended semi-structured interviews allow for flexible interactions between participant and the researcher, while still allowing for continuity of data across and within participant interviews. The overarching goals of these interviews were to gain insight into participants sense of general racial knowledge and their understanding of the relationship between race/ism, anti-racism, and social studies teaching and learning. Although I entered each interview with a set of questions, I approached the sessions more as an opportunity to dialogue with a former student. Each question from the survey protocol was answered, to some extent, but so too were questions asked of me by the participants. In the moment, I could not separate myself from the role of educator, from the role of their educator, to be specific. To sit and ask participants questions about such challenging topics and not respond to their genuine requests for guidance in how to move forward seemed disingenuous and dangerous. Of this feeling, I wrote in my field journal,

In that moment, I decided to serve in both spaces and speak from the position of an anti-racist researcher-educator. If I am hopeful that this project will encourage participants to teach from such a position, then I should embody such practices during our conversations.

The “objectivity” traditionally thrust upon researchers was less important to me than the goals of enacting anti-racism. Rather, I found it more important to remain true to the

sincerity with which I approached this study. While I never sought to provide the answer for the right or wrong way to go about teaching social studies, I was willing to reflect, engage, and provide thoughtful response and suggestion to participants when they solicited clarity in their thinking.

The pre-interviews were constructed to assess participants' general sense of racial knowledge, race/ism within the social studies classroom and curriculum, and their willingness/openness to engage in racialized teaching. Additionally, during this interview I inquired about participants' prior experiences learning about race/ism both in and out of traditional social studies spaces. As the semester began and I engaged with students as a participant-observer within their weekly class sessions, I realized that the weight of racial knowledge they were being tasked to develop was quite heavy and may require additional space to debrief. Therefore, I added a mid-semester semi-structured interview protocol in which I provided space for participants to speak openly about the information discussed in the class, their racialized encounters in the world, and returned to some foundational questions from the first interview to check for deeper understanding. At this point in the semester, I also extended an open-door invitation to all students in the class needing additional space to talk, debrief, or process the racialized content they were engaging with in the classroom. Only one participant, James, took me up on this offer. At his request, we met two additional times beyond the three scheduled interviews. Finally, a post-interview was conducted at the conclusion of the semester. In this final discussion, I asked participants questions designed to gather a sense of their racialized knowledge, their sense of pedagogical decision making, and general thoughts about the class as a whole (see Appendix B, C, and D, for interview protocols).

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed utilizing a web-based transcription service. Once the transcriptions were returned, I reviewed the text files while listening to the audio from the interview. This process served two purposes. First, this allowed me to verify the accuracy of the transcription text. Second, this process allowed me to become re-familiarized with the interviews, the participants, and the emotions associated with the study.

**Course Assignments.** As previously stated, the course syllabus contained a mixture of readings and activities from previous iterations of the course and those activities for which I added in relation to this study. Two assignments are examined in this study: Race Consciousness Journals and Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan.

*Race Consciousness Journals (RCJs).* An essential component to building preservice teachers' racial competency and literacy is the use of racial reflective prompts to elicit personal engagement in racial discourses (Milner, 2003; Matias & Mackey, 2016; Peller, 1990; Pewewardy, 2005). Personal and professional reflections are an integral part of becoming an effective classroom teacher. As such, Milner (2003) observed, it should be a natural extension to engage preservice teachers in a series of racial reflective questions in pursuit of developing feelings of racial competency. Therefore, in this study I examine the use of emotionally-charged, self-reflective, racial reflective prompts with preservice teachers to foster a deeper understanding of whiteness and white supremacy in teacher education students. Milner (2003) stated, "When race reflection occurs, pre-service teachers begin to reflect authentically on past experiences beyond the walls of the classroom to address the idiosyncrasies that prevail in classrooms" (p. 195). Said another way, when teachers place their past experiences in conversation with racialized

understandings about the world, particularly about their understandings about social studies teaching and learning, they begin to see teaching and learning in new, more complex ways. Milner (2003) defined race reflection as an inquiry-based process that can be used to process hidden values, norms, and biases, based in non-linear, yet persistent, deliberative thought.

Informed broadly by critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and critical whiteness pedagogy (Allen, 2004; Matias & Mackey, 2016), these weekly assignments within the course asked participants to reflect upon their racialized knowledge and respond to a series of prompts or questions. Often, these prompts were etic in nature, having been constructed at the beginning of the semester with theoretical connections. Other prompts were more emic in nature, having been constructed in response to discussion that occurred in the class. These prompts are specifically designed to engage students in critical self-reflection related to whiteness and white supremacy. The second component of this assignment asks students to embody racial consciousness. Students were asked to record in their Racial Consciousness Journal (RCJ) any racialized encounters, situations, feelings, and/or epiphanies they witnessed or are a part of. Contributions to the RCJ were only shared between students and myself—however prompts were discussed in class and students were free to share as much or as little of their response. This flexibility allowed for the RCJs to serve two purposes: first, RCJs provided space for students to respond to issues or concerns previously addressed in the research literature; second, students were given space to follow up on conversations that were cut short due to class constraints or address concerns that they were not ready to bring up in the full class session (see Appendix E for RCJ Prompts).

*Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan.* The Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan was the third of three required lesson plans assigned to students. In these lessons, students were asked to draw on an anti-racist pedagogical approach as defined by Pollock (2008) to construct a social studies lesson plan. In the final pages of Pollock's book (2008) *Everyday Antiracism*, that students had been reading throughout the semester, Pollock summarizes the entire text by providing a list of twenty-one potential approaches to anti-racist teaching, each with specific examples of each approach in action (see Table 2). The specific challenge of this assignment was to call on students to racialize a social studies topic that has not historically been racialized. And then, to construct a lesson that not only addresses race/ism but does so from an anti-racist standpoint. In addition to creating the lesson, students were asked to articulate what about the lesson, in their opinion, made it particularly anti-racist in nature (See Appendix F for assignment description).

**Table 2**

*List of Everyday Antiracism Teaching Strategies\**

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Remember That Racial Categories Are Not Biological Realities

Get Ready To Talk About A Racialized Society

Remember That People Do Not Fit Neatly And Easily Into Racial Groups

Remember That People Are Treated As Racial Group Members And Need To Examine That Experience

Emphasize Individuality

Remember That Students Experience Racially Unequal Expectations About Their Brainpower

Counter Racially Patterned Skill Gaps

Help Students Gain Fluency In “Standard” Behaviors While Honoring The “Nonstandard” Behaviors They Already Have

Defy Racially Based Notions Of Potential Careers And Contributions

Analyze Racial Disparities In Opportunities To Learn

Create Curriculum That Invites Students To Explore Complex Identities And Consider Racial Group Experiences

Create Curriculum That Analyzes Opportunity Denial

Create Curriculum That Represents a Diverse Range Of People Thoroughly And Complexly

Create Curriculum That Discusses History Accurately And Thoroughly

Investigate Learning Experiences In Your Classroom

Spearhead Conversations With Students about Racism In Their Lives And Yours

Talk Thoroughly With Colleagues About Race and Achievement

Analyze, With Colleagues And Students, How Your Race Affects Your Teaching

Inquire Fully About Home Communities

Discuss Parents’ Experiences of Racially Unequal Opportunity

Struggle To Change A System That Is Unequal, While Working Within It

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\*Note: Amended from Pollock (2008).

**Field Journals.** Merriam (1998) outlined the responsibilities of researchers while crafting field journal entries, in that they must,

- Pay attention
- Shift from a wide angle to a narrow angle lens
- Look for key words in participants' remarks
- Concentrate on the beginning and end of conversations
- Mentally play back remarks (p. 105)

Throughout the duration of the study, I maintained field journals in which I attempted to embody these practices. These notes were taken before, during, and after each class session, interview, and debrief session that occurred. I made note of participant engagement in course discussions, reactions of instructors and classmates to racialized discussion topics, body language, as well as my own thoughts and feelings. Also, I attempted to make note of connections to the theoretical concepts driving the study and outlined in Chapter 2. In keeping with the attention to the ways in which whiteness permeated the space, I also logged demonstrations of distancing behaviors (Elder & Irons, 1998). Distancing behaviors are those actions deployed by white students seeking to avoid direct engagement with race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy. In addition, my field journal served as home to any “spark”<sup>17</sup> that spontaneously appeared throughout the study, beyond the “traditional” research process.

### **Data Analysis**

In case study research, there is no “official” data production, collection, or analysis method (Merriam, 1998). Rather, the researcher should feel implored to draw on

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<sup>17</sup> You know, those sudden moments when you wake up in the middle of the night and need to scribble something down before you forget.

a variety of data sources, literature, and theoretical constructs to present a thick description of the phenomenon within the case. To that end, I deployed an eclectic coding (Saldaña, 2013) to allow for the analysis of a variety of data sources through differing and overlapping methods. Through each of the layers of coding I drew upon tenets of critical race theory and critical whiteness studies, as discussed in Chapter 2, to guide my interactions with the data. I utilized the qualitative analysis software, NVivo to engage in this multi-layer coding process. NVivo was used for the first two rounds of coding as this platform aided in the complexities of the process. I considered engaging in coding entirely in printed paper form, but found this much more manageable. Throughout the coding process I maintained analytical memos to keep track of trends, “ah-has,” and connections to the etic and emic issues of the study. The process of memoing aided in my ability to see both within and beyond each data piece to generate codes and themes for the study.

Structural coding (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Saldaña, 2013) was conducted in which data was labeled as it related to the research questions associated with this study. At times, individual data were tagged to multiple questions, which indicates the close relationship between racialized knowledge, stance taking, and pedagogical decision making. This process, Saldaña (2013) noted, “both codes and initially categorizes the data corpus to examine comparable segments’ commonalities, differences and relationships” (p. 84). As the entire scope of this class and project are not included in this dissertation, structural coding allowed for me to specifically target data that was relevant to the issues at hand in this case study.

After structural coding was completed, I revisited the data to perform initial coding. Initial coding allowed me to go into the project with a wide-eyed attention to the issues, concerns, developments, and understandings developed over several data sources (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Saldaña, 2013). This second layer of coding also provided me with “analytic leads for future exploration” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 101). A foundation to grounded theory, initial coding allows the researcher to move quickly through data pieces while engaging in a constant-comparative process. Although this study did not deploy a grounded theory technique, initial coding allows for the researcher to take a wide approach at the data while also attending to the theoretical demands of racialized research. I was drawn specifically to the ways in which whiteness was deployed and protected by participants, both knowingly and unknowingly. During this process, I drew on both etic (e.g., theoretical constructs, trends in research literature, personal biases) and emic issues (e.g., participant resistance, emotionality, disconnects between words and actions, unplanned racialized experiences) that persisted within and across data sources and participants.

Finally, on a third review of the data, I engaged in what Charmaz (2006) identified as focused coding. I printed the dual coded interview transcripts to assist in the visioning of larger categories that might emerge across data sources. Focused coding (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2013) was conducted to develop categories because of an analytic review of the structural and initial coding process (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2013). Through this process, I uncovered the most significant and frequent codes based on the theoretical foundation of the study as well as the stated research questions. From

there, I continued with the data analysis process and began to move from code generation to theme production.

### **Trustworthiness**

As Tracy (2010) noted, the need for trustworthiness, by this or any other name (e.g., credibility), is called for across qualitative research. In search of establishing credibility within the work, qualitative analysis features a thick description, triangulation across data sources, and multivocality. Thick description, Tracy (2010) noted is one of the most significant components of high-quality qualitative research. According to Geertz (1973), “because any single behavior or interaction, when divorced from its context, could mean any number of things, thick description requires that the researcher account for the complex specificity and circumstantiality of their data” (qtd. in Tracy, 2010, p. 843). Such is particularly the case when examining the racialized knowledge, positioning, and decision making of pre-service teachers. Race talk devoid of context is problematic. Simply stated, context matters. Thus, throughout this dissertation, and particularly in the discussion of the findings represented in Chapter 4, I sought to provide rich description as it related to the context and complexity of the data I represent in this project.

Triangulation was pursued through examining the themes that emerged within and across data sources. Stake (1995) noted that data source triangulation is the process of examining whether the phenomena presented within the case remains the same or changes across data sources. After the preliminary codes were generated from participant interviews, I sought to validate participant responses by examining three other categories of data: Race Consciousness Journals, Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plans, and my field notes. This process sought to illuminate consistencies and inconsistencies across data

sources to bring to light the complexities of constructing racialized knowledge and positioning in the classroom (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 2002; Tracy, 2010). As Patton (2002) noted, such inconsistencies should not be interpreted as a weakness within the study, but rather the opportunity for closer attention to the issues at hand.

Building out of providing a thick description and of triangulation, the process of multivocality requires the researcher to attend to the significance and meaning of participation within the study. Tracy (2010) noted,

Qualitative researchers do not put words in members' mouths, but rather attend to viewpoints that diverge with those of the majority or with the author.

Multivocality also suggests that the authors are aware of cultural differences between themselves and participants. Differences in race, class, gender, age, or sexuality can be the basis for very different meanings in the field, and credibility is enhanced when the research evidences attention to these possibilities (p. 844).

When considering the racialized experiences, knowledge, positionality, and decision making of participants, I remained mindful of the differences between participants and between participants and myself. Although whiteness impacts all our lives, it does so differently. We are all at different journeys through unpacking this influence and as a result this study seeks to represent that our identities, experiences, and knowledge all shape our perspectives and decision making differently. Multivocality calls the qualitative researcher to acknowledge this when presenting the findings of their work. Essential to this process is the understanding of the ethical positioning one must take as a qualitative researcher engaged in race work.

## **Ethics and Positionality in the Classroom**

The ethics of conducting qualitative research is both a personal and political endeavor (Christians, 2011). Tracy (2010) noted four typologies of ethical concerns to which qualitative researchers must attend: procedural ethics, situational ethics, relational ethics, and exiting ethics.

### **Procedural Ethics**

First, having served previously as a course instructor for the participants in the study I sought to be clear of my positionality within the classroom. The two instructors for the course would not be cleared via the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to know information regarding the participants in the study and I would not have access to student grades. This information was detailed in both the written consent form as well as in my verbal recruitment script.

Once consent was obtained, I contacted each of the participating students and requested that they share all their course submissions (lesson plans, assignments, and RCJs) with me via a password-protected Google Drive folder. This allowed for each participant to share their materials at their own choosing and beyond the scope of the instructor. As stated in the consent form, participants could at any time choose not to share their course materials with me. At the end of the project, all shared data was downloaded and stored, along with interview audio files and transcripts, on my personal password-protected private server, in keeping with IRB-approved regulations.

The ethical barrier between myself as researcher and the two course instructors was paramount as the instructors, grades, and class activities often came up in interviews with participants. I sought to protect the anonymity associated with our interview space

by ensuring that no information would be shared. To date, the course instructors have not been informed of the consenting student participants.

### **Situational Ethics**

Similarly, having served as the former instructor of the students I was unsure of how to proceed in the classroom space. I came into the study intending to remain as only a researcher-observer as I did not want to infringe upon the teacher-student and student-researcher relationships in place in the classroom. Situational ethics (Tracy, 2010) calls for the researcher to approach each situation aware of the persistent ways it can change or evolve. Therefore, when in the classroom space I stayed predominantly silent, only contributing to dialogue when directly asked to do so. Most of the time I spent keeping field notes about the course, discussion, and participant behavior. Obviously, the topic threading through the class—race/ism—was one of interest and relative expertise for me, and I wanted to engage with student dialogue as much as I could. As stated though, when I interpreted the situation to warrant my involvement by providing a clarifying remark, offering resources or specific examples, or comforting a concerned participant I was willing to engage in such practices.

### **Relational Ethics**

The relationship between myself and the two instructors was one that was tenuous, at times, to navigate. One instructor, a graduate student, had previously taught the first two semesters of methods courses with me. Although driven to teach from a justice-oriented framework, her focus is not on the teaching and learning of race/ism. Similarly, the second instructor, taught the second course alongside me, and serves as my doctoral advisor. Though grounded in a justice-oriented approach to teaching, he does not

draw on the same theoretical framing as do I. It should be noted that our established relationships are what allowed for this study to take place. However, at times, it was difficult to sit from the outside as the two co-instructors navigated the course, for the first time together. It was clear that the duo did their best to deliver their best interpretation of the racialized course content. As Tracy (2010) noted, the researcher should always respect the participants, their positionalities, needs, and desires to contribute within the study. In retrospect, I wish the three of us could have spent more time planning for pedagogical moves that could have aided in deeper student connection to the content and conversations. In future projects, I will explore the ways in which relationships and relational ethics can both strengthen and inform research with students and colleagues.

### **Exiting Ethics**

The end of data collection does not conclude the era of ethical responsibility for the researcher. This study has the potential to have real-life implications for its participants. For me to turn my back on the individuals so willing to engage in this process once it was formally ended is a disservice to our relationship, to the participants, and to their future students. As a result, after the final interview I informed students that my theoretical door would remain open in that if they ever needed to process, debrief, or discuss a racialized event that occurred within their classroom I would be happy to do so with them. Moreover, I also volunteered to assist with any lesson planning that might draw on the concepts addressed within the class, during their semester of student teaching. I admitted to students in our final interview,

This work [anti-racism] is complicated, and there is no way that we could teach you everything you needed to know about anti-racism in one semester. I wish we

could have given you more opportunity to engage in anti-racist praxis in class, but some things are not possible given the constraints of a methods course. That said, hopefully you've gained the foundation to continue to explore this work during student teaching. If at any point you need help, want some suggestions, or would like me to observe as you try anti-racism, please contact me.

My hope when issuing this statement to participants is that they would see the spring semester of student teaching as the opportunity to explore tenets of anti-racism, with relative safety. I remain invested in this work and in the professional success of the participants in this study, therefore exiting is inaccurate and even insincere term. I positioned the end of the semester as more as a transition to the next phase of our social studies relationship.

### **Researcher-Teacher: My Positionality within the Study**

As a queer white researcher committed to racial justice, I have thought extensively about why I made the decision to focus on race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy instead of research devoted to LGBTQ issues in education. Even over the course of this study, I have envisioned new ways to approach this work from a more intersectional framework. Nonetheless, membership in the “in group” would afford me a different perspective to write about this work than a white person writing about race may be afforded. While the LGBTQ community is certainly something I am invested in, and care a great deal about, I feel a strong connection to race work and racial justice. As Maxwell (2006) articulated, “Somewhere along the line, it just clicked for me. I saw myself in one social identity as the recipient of discrimination and then, as a white person, the recipient of privilege” (p. 155). When my sexuality came into consciousness,

I began to experience discrimination due to my queerness and these connections became even more evident. Although racism and homophobia are embodied performed in systematically different ways—my coming out experience “allowed me to see my whiteness in a different way” and subsequently move toward becoming an anti-racist educator and researcher (Maxwell, 2006, p. 155). As I began to see myself more fully I have also come to terms with the ways in which my relationship in/with whiteness has impact me and the world in which I live.

All educators, particularly white educators who are directly implicated in the white supremacy that has historically guided the educational system must accept this truth and examine their own experiences with race/ism before they can adequately uncover and disrupt the structural and institutional forms of racism they [inadvertently] perpetuate. Borrowing the words of James Scheurich (2002), “Thus, I think that if racism exists, anyone, **everyone** should be **compelled—spiritually, morally, ethically, and democratically**—to work to remove it” (p. 3). This is how I view my responsibility to examine race/ism and white supremacy in myself, my work, and the field of social studies education. Teaching and researching teacher education students at a PWI insists that I remain mindful of the ways in which whiteness permeates our classroom experiences. While traversing this study, I attempted to consistently engage in the process of self-reflexivity. I articulated to participants the complications associated with my own coming to grips with the depths to which whiteness has informed my experience and world view. I shared with participants my own struggles and successes both personally and professionally as it relates to articulating a complex understanding of race/ism and whiteness as well as my process moving toward becoming an anti-racist educator. It was

important for me to indicate to participants that I did not believe that participation in this class would give them all the answers to how to teach and talk about race/ism from an anti-racist standpoint. My hope in sharing this racial realism (Bell, 1992) with participants echoes those shared in Galman, Pica-Smith, and Rosenberger (2010),

We hope that by examining how we have fallen short, giving voice to our collective aspirations, admitting the inadequacy of good intentions, and critically excavating our own White racial knowledge and privilege, we might renew our efforts, deepen our engagement and critique, stand up, dust ourselves off, and try once more to, as Leonardo (2008) writes, find a balance between aggressively challenging racism and tenderly navigating the individual, emotional lives involved (p. 226).

Rather, by informing students that I too am “in progress” toward becoming an anti-racist social studies educator, they would see their participation in this study and course as the continuation of a conversation we began together in the fall of 2015, that we furthered in the spring of 2016, and that we were deepening together now.

The final three chapters of this dissertation present the findings and contributions of this research study. Tracy (2010) noted that high-quality qualitative research should be presented with meaningful coherence, insofar that the research methodology and theoretical framing lead the researcher toward achieving their stated purpose, with fidelity to who they are as a researcher. In Chapter 4, I detailed the results generated from this case study, in relation to the first research question examining participants’ racial knowledge. This chapter intends to serve as a framing discussion of the entry points of participants so that Chapter 5 can be understood with greater context. Chapter 5 served to

continue the presentation of findings through an analysis of the three racial standpoints presented by participants during the study. This discussion sought to situate these findings within theory and relevant scholarly literature. Although it is impossible to produce formal generalizations from this case study, in Chapter 6 I discussed the naturalistic generalizations (Stake, 1995; Stake & Trumbull, 1982) that emerged from the work. Across the final chapters, I also seek to push the field of social studies teacher education to reimagine the ways in which they prepare pre-service teachers to teach about race/ism.

## **Chapter 4: Starting Where You Are—Understanding Racial Knowledge**

*“White racial knowledge is an epistemology of the oppressor to see the extent that it suppresses knowledge of its own conditions of existence” (Leonardo, 2009, p. 110).*

*“No matter how much I individually confront the issue of White racism, I cannot escape being White” (Scheurich, 1993, p. 9).*

This chapter explores the findings of this study related to the development of racial knowledge evidenced by participants. As I immersed myself in the data, I realized that the three concepts at the center of investigation—racial knowledge, racial standpoint, and racial pedagogical decision making—did not develop in a linear direction. It became clear that the development of racial knowledge, a racial standpoint, and racial pedagogical decision making cannot be understood as a finite equation to create pre-service teachers prepared to enact anti-racism. In addition, although this study was originally conceived and implemented with a pre/post examination of participants, it became impossible to capture the experiences of the students in the course. Rather, due to the perpetual influence of whiteness on knowledge and experiences, participants embodied varied depths of racial knowledge, racial positioning, and pedagogical decision making throughout the semester.

However, in this chapter I seek to provide a discussion of the racial knowledge evidenced by participants at the beginning of the semester. As was expected, every participant presented a deeper understanding of racialized knowledge because of

participating in the class. This was evidenced, generally, with more specific racialized language and an ability to see the world (and social studies) from a perspective, slightly more attuned to the existence and influence of race/ism in their lives, broadly. This is not to say that every participant demonstrated the same racial knowledge, or that they “figured out” how to enact anti-racism in their future classrooms. In fact, the depth and criticality of said knowledge did vary throughout the semester, within and across participants. However, borrowing from Milner (2010), participants started where they were, but did not stay there the entire semester.

As this case study does not attend to the specific events occurring in the class that may or may not have contributed to participant knowledge development, I reiterate my intention for these results not to be understood as a presentation of pre- and post- racial knowledge. But rather, this chapter attempts to serve as a snapshot of the various levels of racial knowledge that students possessed as we began this journey. As you will notice, I center the voices of participants in the sections that follow. This is intentional and serves several theory-related goals of the project. As a white scholar drawing on critical theories of race as I work with white students, I should be clear, in that, I would not consider this work to be a gathering of counter-stories, as the participants in this study are white. Even if participant responses are reflective of a whiteness that is not anti-Black in nature, to call such a “counter” narrative a counter-narrative, would be a misappropriation of the tenets of CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001). However, I utilize narrative text representation to allow participants to voice their own thoughts about race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy. As Chase (2011) noted, this form of qualitative data representation serves as,

meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, a way organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time (p. 421).

To these ends, this chapter serves as a foundation to the results discussed in Chapter 5. In our first interview, participants responded to a series of questions that afforded them the opportunity to share their own definitions and thoughts about the racial topics that would guide our time together for the coming months. Ladson-Billings (1998) observed, “the use of voice or ‘naming your reality’ is a way that critical race theory links form and substance [in] scholarship” (p. 12). Therefore, if a goal of this project was for me to engage with participants as they (hopefully) challenge the influence of whiteness on their lives and approach to teaching social studies, then we must begin with their narrative description of their racial knowledge. In the sections that follow, I draw on initial interviews to provide the context of participant racial knowledge and understanding at the beginning of this dissertation.

### **Starting Where You Are: Foundational Racial Knowledge**

In our first interviews, scheduled the first weeks of the fall 2016 semester, I asked participants to respond to a set of questions that called on them to define and discuss their understanding of particular racialized concepts or approaches. As Picower (2009) noted of her examination into the racial knowledge of nine white women pre-service teachers, participants in this study drew on their identities, prior experiences, and encounters—or lack thereof—to provide context to form their sense of racial knowledge and understanding. At this early stage, participants had not yet begun their discussions of

non/anti- racism in the course so I was seeking to gain insight into their prior knowledge, as it related to race/ism and whiteness. Responses varied widely across the data.

### **Race, Racism, white Supremacy**

The first block of questions asked participants to share their feelings and knowledge relating to race, racism, and white supremacy. These questions were asked of participants so that they might enter the dialogue on their own terms by defining for themselves what these concepts mean. Questions included: *When you think about race what comes to your mind? Why? What comes to mind when you think about racism? What experiences, if any, have you had with racism? (These can be personal experiences or experiences you have observed.) What comes to mind when you think about white supremacy?* These questions were grounded in the theoretical constructs driving this study as I sought to glean insight into the depths of participant knowledge and understanding of race/ism related issues. From these questions, participants demonstrated a wide-ranging understanding and of these racialized constructs.

**Race.** Across the research, scholars have long indicated white pre-service teachers have a limited understanding of race (King, 1991; Milner, 2010; Sleeter, 2001). Such is certainly the case for the participants in this study. Participants responses were indicative of a sense of race grounded in a Black/white binary, one that drew upon aspects of the “race as culture” argument and featured outright avoidance to acknowledge race, all together.

In terms of sharing their personal thoughts related to race, three participants referenced the notion of a Black/white divide. According to Conor,<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Unless otherwise articulated, participant quotes in this chapter are drawn from the first interview.

What immediately comes to my mind [when thinking about race], is, by that white-Black divide. I know it's a secondhand thought, obviously, there's more racism than just white, Black, but I think that's the most predominant one, especially in the world of binaries that we live in. It's often white/Black.

Despite recognizing the simplistic and problematic nature of this binary, participants struggled to see beyond it. James suggested that this binary can cause conflict between racial groups,

I think about how divisive of an issue it can become when people talk about it. I think—I don't want to say both sides—but white people and Black people whenever they talk about it because generally when we talk about race, that's what we mean. Both sides seem to have a disconnect between what the other side is thinking about, and I mean that's not necessarily just race. I think that's a lot of arguments. But, particularly with race, I think people kind of assume what the other side is thinking and react to that, and it can kind of muddy the conversation up.

Here, James referenced the racial binary, while also positioning the two sides of the binary in opposition with each other. A Black/white binary, coupled with racial understandings grounded in white ignorance, can lead to a perpetually “muddy” conversation in which no one involved in the conversation are able to elicit clarity or deeper understanding.

While referencing a Black/white binary when thinking about race and racism, Madison also rebuked the argument that race/ism should be continued to be examined. She drew upon the notion of white ethnic identity to discuss her understanding of race. Madison expressed,

I just don't have a lot to say about race itself. I just know that race stems from ethnicity and, basically, our society is trying to put people in boxes so when you're checking the form ethnicity, that's in itself, just our society putting us in boxes, essentially.... Yeah, well, like I said, I think it's like our societal norms is putting people in boxes. So, our ethnicity is like our entire historical heritage. So then, when it comes to our government and other organizations trying to do

statistical analysis, it's like, "What is your race? What is this long-standing historical background?" And nowadays on forms, you'll see ethnicity, most likely. You'll never see race because it's such a harsh word because it comes from our system where it's like they're putting you in boxes.

Perea (1997) argued that race as a Black/white binary has been adopted in mainstream [read white] spaces, thus serving to reify simplistic constructions of race and reinscribe whiteness as good and Blackness as evil. This limited understanding of race, obscures from sight the process of racialization that allows whiteness to evolve over time.

The three remaining participants called upon notions of culture and physical attributes to provide insights into their understanding of race. Hannah commented,

I'd say with race, a lot of it is skin color and some aspects, culture. Obviously, there's some flexibility there because, you know, just being a race doesn't necessarily make you a part of a certain culture or having a certain skin color doesn't necessarily make you part of a certain race or a culture. That's generally the general consensus is that your skin color correlates with your race.

Having just returned from a teach-abroad trip to South Korea, Russell's explanation of race was influenced heavily by recent encounters abroad. He stated,

When I think about race, immediately the first thing I think about is different backgrounds and different orientations of ethnically—where people are from. You have Europeans, Southeast Asians, Northern Asians. Just different physical characteristics that identify, help me identify initially race.

Although drawing on cultural groups, Danielle also expressed her understanding of the social construction of race. In response to my question about her initial thoughts about race, Danielle replied,

Kind of all these different cultures and having some type of unique traits that set them apart and that could be physical attributes, sometimes cultural. But I think social construct comes to mind also just of things we've talked about in our classes before, but so being to a degree something we have to acknowledge and accept, and not just tolerate but also understand.... As in, we as humans like to categorize in ways that kind of simplify this huge human race, right. What makes

us different? And so, the social construct being race in general as one being the caucasian race, the Black race, the Jewish race, I mean you can keep going, Asian race, just like a bunch of different things that society has put in place to make more sense of it.

Here, Danielle offers a conceptualization of race grounded in the performativity of race—through physical and “cultural” characteristics. Further, she articulates a need to celebrate and “tolerate” the differences across racial groups, and to focus on the notion that we are all a part of the “human race.” This approach to engaging with race is reminiscent of non-racism, insofar that she is willing to acknowledge the continued existence and importance of race, yet is unwilling to articulate a need to be critical of it or of its relationship to racism. Across all understandings of race shared by participants, responses appear to be bound and informed by whiteness. Discussions of a racial understanding defined by a Black/white binary serves to protect the supremacy of whiteness as it forces individuals to delegitimize or ignore the racialization of other groups (e.g., LatinX Americans, Muslim Americans, Asian Americans) (Omi & Winant, 1994; Sefa Dei, 1996). Moreover, this binary also promotes the understanding that race resides in Blackness, not in whiteness (Dyer, 2005). If whites do not embody a race, then seemingly they are not implicated in racism; thus allowing one’s investment in whiteness to be a safe one.

On the limits of white racial knowledge, Leonardo (2009) stated, “As an epistemology, whiteness and its hirsute companion, white racial knowledge, seem to contain little hope. They are bound up with a white ideology that simultaneously alludes to and eludes to a critical understanding of racial stratification” (p. 109). As young, white adults having spent the majority of their time in predominantly white spaces, each participant shared understandings of race that were to be expected from individuals educated in a system constructed to reinscribe whiteness. Even for Conor—who

advanced arguably the most in-depth and critical sense of racial knowledge—despite hinting at knowledge of race/ism as a complex system of classification used to discriminate, participants struggled to demonstrate an embodied understanding of such beliefs. Such is also the case of their knowledge and understanding of racism, as discussed in the next section.

**Racism.** Research on white pre-service teachers' knowledge of racism is quite consistent in demonstrating white pre-service teachers have little-to-no stated knowledge or understanding of racism. Simply put, Sleeter (2001) noted, "Most White preservice students bring little awareness or understanding of discrimination, especially racism" (p. 95). Although the depth of participants' knowledge of racism is reflective of what Sleeter detailed above, when asked to share what came to mind when they thought about racism, variation was present across participants.

Two participants identified specific and overt examples of racism-in-action, most likely informed by their experiences with White Social Studies. Conor reflected,

I immediately go back to history—which I guess is telling in itself. What happened then, does happen now. I do think historically, like slavery, and even being denied service at bars [lunch counters], things like that. Kind of like overt, really angry, hostile attitudes and actions that people take because they don't like someone solely because of the color of their skin.

Conor went on to state that his time at Central University has deepened his knowledge of the less overt iterations of racism. Conor added,

And then secondly, as in les [sic] overt, like things I learned through college. That's like things like microaggressions. The attitude and those unconscious biases that we have, and the way—Even just the way we talk about race, right this interview, or the way that we treat other people. I know especially sometimes, for those who think they get it, they try so hard to walk a fine line that they end up being more uncomfortable for the other person, the person of a different race than they would just being authentically them.

Conor articulated an understanding of the unconscious/covert iterations of racism. His reference to both the overt examples to which he was exposed through years of White Social Studies as well as to microaggressions and unconscious biases demonstrates his understanding of the covert and complex ways in which racism persists and influences us today. Conversely, Russell relied on limited racial knowledge informed by White Social Studies to articulate their initial thoughts about racism. Russell, an avid fan of movies and music, referred to a popular film, *Remember the Titans*, to provide context to his discussion of racism. He commented,

I think about, it's funny, I think about—its' not funny—but what I think about is funny because it's from a movie... the scene where Denzel Washington gets his house, a rock smashed through his window and he comes out with his shotgun... And then I think about Dr. King's speech, the I Have a Dream speech, which I can only say three lines of, but then it comes back to KKK....

Unlike Conor who followed up his initial response with one grounded in more complexity, Russell's first thoughts about racism are reflective of a shallow sense of racial knowledge that relies heavily upon the knowledge generated through White Social Studies.

For Madison, racism stemmed from prejudice related to one's ethnic identity. In response to my questions seeking clarity related to her knowledge of racism, again, she pushed back on the necessity to examine the influence of race/ism,

I think about people who use people's ethnicity to feel like they can have some sort of superiority to them. So, based on skin color, that would be... So, I think when we think of the major situations, like the Holocaust, we're looking more at probably ethnicity than that, but then race would be more like slavery, I think. Because ethnicity would be you are—the history of your family, and your background and everything. But race is—So, with racism it's more like skin color I think versus the other things that you identify, like your religion and stuff like that.

Madison's insistence to draw back to ethnicity when asked directly about race/ism is reflective of the power of white racial knowledge to inform whites as to how to talk about race/ism without explicitly doing so. This whitespeak (Moon, 1998), "can be understood as a racialized form of euphemistic language in which what is *not* said—or the absences in language...is often far more revealing than what *is* said" (p. 188). Insisting that race is not real and that ethnic discrimination is the true culprit also signifies an attempt to embody a post-racial epistemology (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Leonardo, 2013).

Participant responses also evidenced the emotions they encountered when thinking about or examining racism. Emotions are integral to the understanding of race/ism and whiteness (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Spanierman & Cabrera, 2015). In alignment with the Racial Contract (Mills, 1997), emotionality allows white people to demonstrate concern for overt acts of racism, and thus be rewarded for their position as a "good white person" (Sullivan, 2014; Thompson, 2003). To that end, Danielle noted that thinking about racism, "Kind of gets my blood boiling, just like thinking about it." As evidence of how she developed these feelings, Danielle noted that her boiling blood, as it relates to thinking about racism, was influenced by experiencing and witnessing the calls for racial justice across college campuses the previous fall. In terms of racism, Danielle added,

But when I think about racism, I think about the unfair treatment of a race because of those unique traits that make them obviously unique, and something special to understand, and to think about and those that can't tolerant and won't accept and refuse to understand and are ignorant of that in that sense that's racism to me.

The racially charged calls for justice on college campuses echoed throughout participant responses during the study. Hannah noted that although she did not see/experience racism

prior to attending Central University, the events of 2015, coupled with dating a Person of Color, heightened her understanding and awareness of racism around her. She reflected,

I grew up in an area that was primarily white, like ninety percent, so I didn't really notice a lot of it [racism] growing up, but then as I got older, I came here to Central and there was obviously a lot of racially charged issues here that have come up, and I've stayed up with more in the social media where it's everywhere. You can see it in everything, and then I also didn't really notice it as much until I started dating an African American male, and things that I never thought were still existing just it came out like I had no idea.

In responses from both Danielle and Hannah, we see evidence of an influence of the environment in which they live. The events of 2015 on college campuses and personal relationships encouraged both women to reconsider their thoughts about race/ism. Where the two responses diverge, is in depth and specificity. Danielle's response lands firmly in the space of respect, politeness, and tolerance—cornerstones of white racial knowledge (Leonardo, 2009; Mills, 1997). Hannah, however, articulates an acknowledgment of the depth to which whiteness informs and shapes society.

Finally, rather than drawing on evidence learned through his experiences in a social studies classroom, when probed about his initial thoughts about racism, James drew on conceptions of ignorance to explain racial discrimination that persists. Across the research on whiteness, ignorance is commonly referred to as a defense mechanism deployed by whites which allows them to claim “innocence” in terms of understanding the structures and iterations of race/ism that persist (Leonardo, 2009; Lipsitz, 1998).

James stated,

I think about people who—people who are racist, generally, tend to not actually know that many people who are of the race that they're discriminating against. And any preconceived notions they have about that group, they see one small example of it. And what is that? Is that confirmation bias? Right. They see one little thing, they're like, "Okay. I guess I was right," and yeah. I think a lot of

people can not play into stereotypes, but neither side really helps, I don't think, that much in actually getting rid of racism. Not as much as they could, at least.

In addition, James again drew upon the juxtaposition of the white/Black binary he referenced in his statements about understanding race. He added,

Some Black people assume that a lot of white people are racist, which is true, but whenever they assume that all white people are racist, it becomes an issue. Whenever all white people, or white people, assume that all Black people are inferior, for whatever reason, that obviously is an issue. And I think each side kind of does things that don't help the conversation about...that we're just kind of people on a planet, trying to live.

James' juxtaposition of the racialized experiences of white and Black people as equivalent is grounded in what Castagano (2013) defined as powerblind sameness. Powerblind sameness is often deployed by whites engaging in racial explorations. Through this perspective, individuals generate a sense of false equivalency when speaking across the racial binary discussed here. While participants in this study indicate an awareness that the lived experiences of whites and People of Color are different (i.e., not wholly colorblind in nature) they failed to articulate that in positioning the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of whites and People of Color as the same serves to ignore the structural, more covert influences of race/ism and whiteness on both whites and People of Color.

**white Supremacy.** In deciding to inquire about participants' thoughts regarding white supremacy, I was interested in determining whether they see this construct as historic or as a living, breathing component of their lives today. Ladson-Billings (2001) reminded us that most white pre-service teachers rarely consider themselves as racialized, "Notions of Whiteness are taken for granted. They rarely are interrogated. But being White is not merely about biology. It is about choosing a system of privilege and power"

(p. 81). Therefore, it can be expected that white pre-service teachers' knowledge of white supremacy is also bound by this limited racial understanding. Such was the case for several participants here for when asked to discuss what came to mind when thinking about white supremacy most participants drew upon white commonsense understandings of the construct.

Participants shared memories of learning about overt acts of white supremacy from their high school social studies courses. Reference to the Ku Klux Klan, Jim Crow Laws, and Neo-Nazis were prevalent in the responses of all six participants. As a result, participants indicated their understanding of white supremacy as a historical concept that is individualized in its iteration, seemingly disconnected from their current context. As James reflected,

I think of how it's definitely been pushed out of mainstream culture in the last 50-60 years. Like Jim Crow Laws were a thing. It was out in the open. And now, if there is white supremacy it's at the very least, guarded and it's not acceptable to publicly be a white supremacist. You get scorned if you express that opinion and I think that's generally a good thing.

When asked what he believed to cause this shift in public opinion around white supremacy, James went on to add,

I think—this is a big question, but I think a lot of it has to do with the success of the civil rights movement. And the integration of, not just schools, but to some extent culture, between white people and Black people and other minorities. It's still not—we're still not fully integrated. But it has gotten much, much more so.

A bit more nuanced, Russell offered a response that both identified historic examples of white supremacy, while also drawing on pop culture for additional context. Russell noted,

Skinhead, not skinhead. I'm thinking neo-Nazi, and Nazism, and Adolf Hitler, and I also think about, again just another movie reference....*Horrible Bosses*. Kevin Spacey's character, like that horrible, just like elitist white, CEO-looking—just

really talks down to everybody. I also think that is kind of like a white supremacist undertones. Like, you know, “I’m superior to you.”

Here, Russell provides a typical, historic embodiment of white supremacy when discussing Nazism. However, it is unclear if he considers skinheads and neo-Nazism as a current iteration of white supremacy or something rooted in the past. Even in his connection to the film *Horrible Bosses*, white supremacy remains rooted in the individual and not something larger, more institutional in nature.

Some participants articulated a knowledge of white supremacy that stretched beyond the historic or individual iterations prevalently permitted in White Social Studies and as discussed above. Two participants articulated at least a vague sense of the fact that white supremacy is more than an individual ideology, mindset, or preference and is a “political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources” (Ansley, 1997, p. 582). To that end, Conor asserted that white supremacy is, “not just the state of mind,” commonly referenced when discussing the Ku Klux Klan. But rather, for Conor white supremacy is an,

...institution. So, I immediately think like this big building, that's how I visualize an institution, in our society. I understand institutions to be like financial banking systems, education, schools, the government, right?

So, I understand white supremacy as being those institutions built to cater to white people, and to actively dissuade people of color from benefiting from those institutions. So as if there were a bouncer at that building, and they would only let in white people. Or people who participated in white supremacy. But they could be a person of color, but they don't—they have internalized racism, and so they would perpetuate that.

Here, Conor both acknowledges the specific social studies example of white supremacy by referencing the KKK, but also addresses the systemic nature of white supremacy that continues to inform society. Similarly, Hannah observed,

Obviously, there's your textbook white supremacy, where you see a lot of anger and KKK kind of stuff. But then there's the underlying white supremacy in society where it's just very white dominant. It's definitely a white person's world, and so that's also an element of that.

Not surprisingly, participants demonstrated varied levels of knowledge and understanding of white supremacy. Participants acknowledged the historic, overt iterations of white supremacy in their discussions of the KKK, and Neo/Nazism, and in two instances acknowledged the institutional nature of white supremacy. As Ross & Mauney (1997) observed, “While the old Klan and new Nazis are still abhorrent to the vast majority of the American people, their sentiments have been embraced by the public when presented in a more sanitized fashion and disguised as nationalism, patriotism, and family values” (p. 552). However, at the time of the first interview, it remained unclear if participants distinguished the evolution of white supremacy into 21<sup>st</sup> century iterations.

### **Non-Racism and Anti-Racism**

As this study sought to examine the non-racist and anti-racist racial standpoints of participants, in our first interview I asked a series of questions attending to these concepts. Questions included: *If you were to think about something or someone being non-racist, what comes to mind? Why? What about within the context of social studies curriculum and pedagogy? If you were to think about something or someone being anti-racist, what comes to mind? Why? What about within the context of social studies curriculum and pedagogy?* Understanding the foundational knowledge of participants related to non/anti- racism was paramount for examining the ways in which they embodied racial standpoints during the semester, as discussed in Chapter 5.

**Non-Racism.** As discussed in Chapter 1, King and Chandler (2016) defined non-racism as “a racially liberal approach to race that favors passive behaviors, discourses,

and ideologies and that rejects extreme forms of racism” (p, 4). Through a lens shaded by whiteness, this may be interpreted as an unproblematic or even favorable position that acknowledges specific forms of racism and insists that progress has, in fact, occurred. Thus, leaving teachers able to feel as though they have addressed the existence of racism in an “appropriate” fashion. However, as Brown (1985) lamented, this “Racist Non Racism” ignores the remaining systemic and institutional iterations of racism that continue to plague the classroom and society today.

Conor, Hannah, Danielle, and James offered the clearest sense of non-racism in their first interviews, respectively. Conor drew on his earlier reference to colorblindness to construct his understanding of non-racism,

Someone being non-racist I think would be what I was describing earlier, when people who are colorblind would say that they're colorblind and they don't see race. People who pat themselves on the back for not calling someone the n-word when they make them mad, or I think it's a lot of people who like—even during the protests last year, with Black Lives Matter...It's non-racist to me when those people who were saying “Alright I get what you're saying, but let's hear from the other side too like let's make sure everyone is being heard all at the same time.”

When to me, I think there's times where like let's talk about this issue that needs to be brought up and then a week later we can have another time. And then we can kind of reflect on both and then come together. I'm also conflicted because like you can't ignore some things - you know other parts of the issue. Like if you talk about race you can't not talk about gender, equality, religion. If you talk about religion you can't not talk about other things.

I think it's like the people who like you need to respect all opinions no matter what and then what they're really trying to say is, "I don't agree with you, but I want you to listen to me." But then they're not willing to listen to the other person. But if they think that they are, but actually they're just waiting for their turn to talk. That's non-racism.

In perhaps the most thorough response to this inquiry regarding non-racism, Conor again drew on the recent events that occurred on college campuses the previous fall, and the

subsequent response from his fellow Central students, as context for understanding non-racism.

Without prompting, Hannah brought up the idea of non-racism early in our first interview when asked to discuss what she had learned about race/ism while taking classes in the College of Education. In addition, she observed that she views non-racism as a relatively passive position in that, “You acknowledge racism exists but you don't really do much about it.” Danielle’s response seemed to teeter on the boundaries of non-racism as she drew on the idea of passivity as well as hinted at both the problematic nature of colorblindness and a necessity to celebrate racial differences in her response. To that end, Danielle observed,

Non-racist as in, I think people will tiptoe around anything that has to do with race. And they'll tolerate every race, there won't be a comment, but there also won't be a comment on any good parts of that race either. Once again, everyone, it's uniquely different and each race is the same, in that sense, they each have their own attributes that make them special, so to ignore that, I don't think that would be right, but to be non-racist I think you would ignore those special qualities about them too.

Prior to our interview, James had read the assigned text in which the notions of non-racism and anti-racism were introduced. As a result, James had the opportunity to refine his understanding of this concept,

I didn't have a complete understanding of what they meant initially. I figured non-racist would be like objective more so, and anti-racism is more telling them not to be racist I guess. But as I read the piece, it definitely changed. What they said about anti-racism was not what I was expecting them to say. But part of me thinks that they were saying that non-racism is condemning the extremes of racism, while not necessarily condemning racism in general, while not teaching about the history of institutionalized and systemic racism that we have.

Although it remains evident participants are still working through the development of their racial knowledge around the concepts of non/anti- racism, these four participants

demonstrated understanding of the foundations of non-racism; that is, an approach to examining race/ism that centers on colorblindness, minimizes the influence of race/ism in contemporary contexts, and avoids discussion beyond examples of racism that span beyond being housed within a set of unconnected “bad” individuals.

On the contrary, the remaining participants evidenced a vague understanding of non-racism. Russell and Madison appeared to conflate non-racism with anti-racism in their responses as they laced back and forth between the two constructs. In sharing his thoughts about the meaning of non-racism, Russell observed,

Non-racist. So, the first instinct I have is that everyone should be the same. Which isn't possible, because some people have medical conditions that require more, like IEPs, or special education plans.... It's just like no one has any preconceived notions or ideas of someone else that isn't backed up with personal experience. Or not personal experience but knowing that individual at all. No preconceived biases I guess would be a non-racist world. Yeah. Does that make sense?

This dance back and forth can be best understood through an exchange I had with Madison during our first interview:

Andrea: So, if you were to think about something or someone being non-racist, what comes to mind?

Madison: I would say like what I was saying, that you're not afraid to have conversations because I feel like people that are racist—not racist, but, yeah, see racist is just such a hard word. I almost say like non-empathetic and empathetic. In a sense, so people who are non-empathetic and that don't want to learn those are the people who I guess are deemed as not racist. So as someone who is...sorry, racist. But those who are not racist are constantly thriving to advocate, and thriving to learn is just the big thing.

A: Okay. So, then kind of stepping forward a bit, what comes to mind when you think about something or someone being anti-racist?

M: Okay, yeah, then probably that, more so. Okay, yeah, sorry—

A: Okay. It's ok.

M: Yeah, I forgot about anti-racist. Yeah but non-racists would be more like, "You're talking about like oh yeah, like here are the facts." Some people will obviously immerse themselves in this but versus anti-racists who are actively against having this conversation till morning and then kind of teaching the kids versus non-racists would be more like fact giving, I think. I don't know, that was really unclear when we did that lesson the other day. So, I'm still not totally clear on the difference but anti-racist, I think is more so like you're combating it versus non-racist which is just like—I think both need to have that conversation in order to fall into these categories but anti-racist it gets more like really combating it in the classroom.

At the beginning of the semester, participants presented varied levels of knowledge and understanding of non-racism. While the majority of participants could vaguely articulate an accurate representation of the concept, two individuals were unable to do so. At times, participants demonstrated an inability to recognize that their own words were in fact contributing to or evidence of the beliefs/concepts they were attempting to critique. The same can be said for participant responses to questions about anti-racism.

**Anti-Racism.** In Chapter 1, I drew on King & Chandler (2016) to define anti-racism as, “an active rejection of the institutional and structural aspects of race and racism and explains how racism is manifested in various spaces, making the social construct of race visible” (p. 4). Similarly, Pollock (2008) articulated four components to anti-racist teaching, “rejecting false notions of human difference, acknowledging lived experiences are shaped around racial lines, learning from diverse forms of knowledge and experiences, and challenging systems of racial inequality” (p. xx). Participants were asked to share their thoughts about anti-racism immediately after being asked about non-racism, in attempt to allow each individual the opportunity to define for themselves the complementary construct. This decision proved integral as participants often revisited their responses to each question as they responded to the other.

Similar to the exchange between Madison and myself around non-racism, Russell struggled to articulate a clear sense of anti-racism in our first interview. As stated above, Russell viewed non-racism as the absence of “pre-conceived biases.” I went on to ask Russell about his thoughts regarding anti-racism. The lack of clarity in his previous statement continued in his response here,

Anti-racist? Probably not TV. Gosh, I think it's just anything without some kind of...okay. My dog. My dog is not racist, because she's blind as a bat. So, when I think of something or someone that is not racist, my dog is not racist, because it doesn't know anything about our culture, doesn't know any of the grossness of our culture, can't notice any differences. Maybe smell, but again, she's really blind, deaf, mute and smell-resistant, so, you're not numb, it's not someone who's numb to everything. It's someone who's super—you know, again uneducated, just like super educated and in tune with the societal changed and understands the flow of, you know, what's considered important or newsworthy. Like someone that can, I don't know, I don't think anyone is not racist. Again, we have these unconscious biases that we have and I'm still trying to figure mine out, which is going super slow, but unless we—you know, until we find those we can't address them and do a lot of self-reflection as to why I feel the way I do. So, again, I guess the only anti-racist, or excuse me, non-racist being that comes to mind is my dog, because she just is blissfully ignorant.

Russell's response to my question is riddled with inconsistencies, incoherencies, and inaccuracies. He is unable to provide any meaningful representation of the concept and therefore loses himself in his own story. Throughout this excerpt, Russell moves from considering his dog anti-racist to concluding with its identity as non-racist. This dialogue is representative of the ways in which white people are trained to talk about race/ism without talking about race/ism. The exchange continued as I asked Russell if he could think of any examples of anti-racism. He replied,

Okay. Someone who has a better understanding of self and what that means. Someone who really understands the cultural background that they come from and their identity, are pretty strong in their identity, whether that's their faith or

their hobbies or whatever makes up an identity—that's a whole other conversation—and it sees the world in this gross way, because some of it is definitely horrendous [and] is actively seeking out a forum of some kind to spread the message of like, "Hey, this is wrong and let me hel..." Not this is wrong, but, "These atrocities are happening. Let me tell you why they're happening, and then let's all work together to make sure this doesn't happen again." Or like, "Let's all work together to end this, because it's hurting so many people."

I feel like that's someone who's anti-racist, they're just...dying to the world and giving it all. Really just spending all their energy to try to fight these negative messages that are perceived in media, or that's like movies, comedy.

Through this dialogue, Russell appears to settle on a description of anti-racism that is not entirely wrong; though very little of it is right, either. Individuals that enact anti-racism may attempt to fight negative images and depictions of People of Color that are represented in media. However, anti-racism is much more complex than indicated in Russell's response.

As was the case with their responses to questions dealing with non-racism, Conor, Danielle, Hannah, and James offered a bit more nuance in their responses to questions about anti-racism, than did Russell and Madison. Danielle noted,

I think, in terms of what we were talking about with non-racist, with it being how the curriculum is now, I think anti-racist would be, hopefully, what it leads to next with our next generation really talking about race, talking about those good and bad things about each race, and how they interact with one another, and how big of a deal it is...I think that's definitely the direction that the teachers should be headed in. Open communication in this anti-racism. Again, it generates understanding. So, to educate others on what race is, how you can get along with others despite being different, I think that anti-racist outlook is the most optimistic thing you can look towards in this next generation of teachers.

Although still rather vague in terms of articulating specifics of anti-racism, Danielle does offer at least a cursory understanding of the goals of anti-racism, despite still settling on positive contributions rather than challenging oppression. As was also the case with most

of Hannah's interview responses, she offered a succinct response to my questions regarding anti-racism. Hannah stated,

This is more of a-- you acknowledge racism exists, you acknowledge the big events of racism but you look at it kind of on a bigger scale and your more active about trying to break down that system of racism. It's more active in tackling the issue.

Both James and Conor drew on their pedagogical knowledge of anti-racism to respond to my questions. James considered,

And I can't help but think that you can still teach about that stuff [that you do with non-racism], and at the same time not tell your students overtly that racism is bad. And—because I just feel like telling them something isn't as beneficial as coming to that conclusion themselves. So, I'm thinking that maybe educating them on what has happened in the past, having these conversations with other people, other perspectives, hopefully, hopefully they will come to the conclusion themselves that they shouldn't be racist. I think that it'd be a much more beneficial way of doing it to the students than having a curriculum designed to make them think that racism is bad. If that makes any sense.

Although not referenced directly in this interview, in the past, James had voiced concern regarding the ability or possibility of indoctrinating his students. Thus, his willingness to “plant seeds” of anti-racism with the hopes that students will come to their own conclusions that racism is bad. From the viewpoint of white commonsense, this approach to anti-racism seems reasonable. If you give students the evidence they will naturally draw the conclusions you hope they will draw (i.e. that racism is bad). However, like Danielle's statements about moving toward the direction of anti-racism, this leaves a large space for whiteness to continue its influence over student learning and the reproduction of White Social Studies.

Conor also articulated belief that students should come to their own conclusions that race/ism is more complex than had previously been taught to them. However, he

specifically draws on student-centered, constructivist-oriented pedagogical approaches in his response. Conor reflected,

I think what comes to mind is people in, a... first of all, what comes to mind is a discussion with a lot of people talking. It's not just a professor telling you, "Here's what you need to know. Here's what you should think." I think, kind of, the anti-racist is not just that with the "banking," is what we called it—where the professor just dumps it into their head. So, I think it's very discussion-based, or maybe just the lesson plan should be a lot of thinking and reflecting and then conversing with other people... Of course there's not just one issue that caused it, there's multiple ones, but I think having only students think about race and racism in the 1960s, or even not talking about after slavery, during the civil war, students think that it's a resolved issue.

I think the anti-racist pedagogy would be making sure that you connected to the world around, and that they can see. In having those discussions, make sure they hear voices and perspectives of people that aren't like them. If there's no students of color in that class, or there's just one or two, you bring in like TED Talks or you bring in articles or passages from memoirs, so that students can get those perspectives.

It remains clear that at the beginning of the semester, participants were still in the early stages of developing their sense of what it meant to embody non-racism and anti-racism.

In many instances, they conflated or confused the two constructs as they engaged in dialogue with me.

### **Chapter Conclusion: Understanding Racial Knowledge in the Social Studies**

#### **Classroom**

Much has been written to examine how white teachers and pre-service teachers construct knowledge of race/ism and white supremacy (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Milner, 2006, 2010; Picower, 2009; Sleeter, 2004). Leonardo (2009) noted, that seemingly basic, low levels of racial understanding in whites is to be expected, as any evidence of racial knowledge only serves to benefit whites,

As beneficiaries of racism, whites have had the luxury to neglect their own development in *racial understanding*, which should not be confused with *racial knowledge*. Whites forego a critical understanding of race because their structural position is both informed by and depends on a *fundamentally superficial grasp* of its history and evolution (p. 110).

Said another way, racial knowledge is not the same as racial understanding. A critical racial understanding comes through the analysis and questioning of one's racial knowledge, or perceived ignorance. The racial knowledge discussed in this chapter is reflective of the white racial knowledge of many pre-service teachers involved in teacher education programs across the country (Sleeter, 2004). Informed mostly by a whitescape filled with white commonsense, little to no incentive to adopt an anti-racist stance, and White Social Studies, participants struggled to articulate, with specificity, a nuanced and critical understanding of the constructs discussed here. The racial knowledge possessed by participants is grounded in dysconsciousness (King, 1991) and calls us to draw upon "forms of pedagogy and counter-knowledge that challenge students' internalized ideologies and subjective identities" (King, 1991, p. 131).

To that end, the social studies methods course at the center of this study sought to engage participants in two simultaneous explorations: anti-racism and social studies teaching. As a result, our interviews also reflected this goal. Each participant stated that they believed, wholeheartedly, that the social studies classroom should be a place to engage students in discussions and investigations into race/ism and white supremacy. Participants shared that their memories of learning about race/ism in the social studies classroom were constrained by the limits white racial knowledge developed through their

experiences with/in White Social Studies. Each participant in this study observed that as high school social studies students, their exposure to race/ism and white supremacy was presented in limited and disconnected spurts—slavery, Civil War, and the civil rights movement—themes commonly found in social studies classrooms (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015; King & Chandler, 2016).

### **Non-Racism and Anti-Racism in Social Studies**

King and Chandler (2016) argued that social studies education broadly, “has accepted and promoted a societal discourse of non-racism, which favors the conceptualism of racism that equals prejudice, serving to mask the power of institutional racism” (p. 6). As a result, the ability of social studies spaces and teachers to challenge existing understandings of race/ism and white supremacy are vastly limited. When turning the conversation toward non-racism and anti-racism in the social studies classrooms, students’ thoughts were similarly constrained by the limits of their white racial knowledge developed through experiences with/in White Social Studies. In fact, each participant identified their experiences in high school social studies classes as non-racist in nature. Asked to provide an example of non-racist social studies, Hannah reflected,

Yea, this was a lot of the education I feel like I got. Where we talked about the civil rights movement, but it was just an open and closed case. We didn't talk about how there are still issues of segregation going on today, in a different way. It was more a closed kind of concept. It wasn't applied today's world.

Conversely, when asked to provide examples of potential anti-racist social studies, Hannah added,

What first came to my mind was when we talk about slavery, we don't just talk about it as, "Oh, all these people were forcibly from their homeland and brought here." Slavery, just kind of like the bland description we're often given, and

actually go into the stories of it and talk about how certain systems have impacted the way things are today. Another one that I thought was really good was when we talk about urban planning in the suburbs, talk about how that has created a lasting impact and talk about how we can maybe deal with some of these issues. Just kind of talking about how to approach problems that may have happened way back when and how to deal with them today.

Although her examples of the civil rights movement, slavery, and segregation, are consistent with White Social Studies-appropriate conversations about race/ism, Hannah draws upon pedagogical approaches to distinguish her conceptualization of the difference between non-racism and anti-racism. Her desire to explore “lasting impact” as well as historic and contemporary responses demonstrates a willingness to enact anti-racism in the social studies classroom. Thus, pushing beyond the non-racist, traditional approach to covering these topics.

Danielle observed that her experiences both as a student and pre-service teacher were filled with examples of non-racist social studies teaching,

I think a lot of topics [are non-racist]. I think that's how it's approached now, at least from where I was from, with this underlying idea that of American exceptionalism, learning about the white male, wealthy, land-owning population. And we don't really talk about it like that. We don't say, "Every President was white", and if anyone ever mentions, "Obama was our first Black President", it makes me cringe sometimes because how could we have had so many presidents, so much history, and now this is our first President with a different race. And so, I think that's non-racist in a way. We don't really talk about how it's been just whites. That we talk about in books, that we talk about and vote for in elections; at least, for presidential elections. I think that's the whole curriculum right now is non-racist, if anything.

Unlike Hannah, who articulated a potential example of anti-racist social studies teaching, Danielle was unable to share her conception of what anti-racist social studies teaching might actually look like at this early stage in the semester. Though Danielle added she has hopes for anti-racist teaching within the next generation of social studies teachers,

I think anti-racist would be, hopefully, what it leads to next with our next generation really talking about race, talking about those good and bad things about each race, and how they interact with one another, and how big of a deal it is. Because it is such a big deal, and no one talks about it, except us, but we're cool, so [laughter]—so, being anti-racist, I think that's definitely the direction that the teachers should be headed in.... So, to educate others on what race is, how you can get along with others despite being different, I think that anti-racist outlook is the most optimistic thing you can look towards in this next generation of teachers.

Similar to the thoughts shared by James regarding the potential of anti-racist teaching inherent in her generation, here Danielle alludes to the assumption that with “new blood” in the profession, the field will naturally evolve into anti-racist teaching practices.

As was the case with their responses to questions defining non-racism and anti-racism, Russell and Madison struggled to indicate their understanding of these constructs as defined in Chapter 1. Russell surmised that non-racist social studies teaching would be less focused on the contributions of the United States. He observed,

Yeah, I think it's definitely less US-centric. It's definitely learning, again, about more cultures and more struggles that those cultures have had and look at how far we've come, instead of just like "US, secede from Britain, check. World War I or slavery or... Civil War, World War I, II, Cold War, Iraq, Afghanistan", instead of—again those are important; I don't want to downgrade the importance of those. But I would like to focus less on them and more of like, "Okay, here's what happened in Jerusalem during post-World War II, 1967. Here are the tensions and here's why it happened. And here's South Africa after Great Britain left, and here's Australia, what they went through and here's the progression of the Far East and..." you know, more focused around... then also incorporating more non-white famous people would be huge more, I feel especially, Asian Americans, I feel like we don't cover, or Native Americans, definitely.... But more non-European American, European-centric historical figures.

In describing her thoughts about what non-racist social studies might be, Madison drew on the concept of bias to contextualize her response. Madison noted,

I guess, non-racist would be mostly talking about slave results that are smaller or talking about showing that picture of the milkshake thing [segregated lunch

counters in the civil rights era]. So, showing both sides of an extreme situation or showing the little things, like, talking about Native Americans whenever they were not mentioned at all. So, I guess injecting it more into the curriculum is just non-racist. You're a little bit more-- you're removing your bias. You're trying to educate the whole country as a whole. Well, anti-racist would probably be showing those pictures but then having a deep conversation about how it applies to society our today.

Again, a limited sense of white racial knowledge may have lead both Russell and Madison to struggle with developing a deep understanding of non-racism. After all, with a quick, uncritical look at a word like non-racist, for many, it does not evoke negative feelings. Racism is bad, therefore the negative of racism, non-racism, must be a positive good.

Conversely, when asked to share examples of anti-racist social studies teaching, although he was unable to name specific current iterations of such pedagogical approaches, Russell entertained the idea of adding an additional required course to the high school social studies cannon in which students would explore the intersectional nature of oppression in society. In this proposed class, Russell stated that students could explore the origination of discrimination within and between cultural and social groups, in both contemporary and historical time frames. As the discussion continued, Russell admitted that the course not need standalone and that these conversations could occur within traditional social studies courses as well. With excitement in his voice, Russell added that at the core of his anti-racist teaching would be an emotional dialogic experience,

And where did this hate come from? Where did this malcontent originate? You trace that back and hopefully realize, "That was so stupid why did people believe that?" And then you talk about all these examples of the first semester abroad just to kind of warm them up to the idea of how this is still prevalent in the world and then hit 'em home with, like "Here it is in the states!" And then BOOM! You just

blow their minds and you just have these really in-depth conversations.... You just talk about and you have all the answers and it would just be euphoric and you'd be crying and laughing and it would just be freaking beautiful. That's what I want. I just want that.

Although much variety exists in the racial knowledge and understanding evidenced by participants in this chapter, we can assert that each has been largely impacted and informed by whiteness and White Social Studies.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the ways in which participants engaged with and built upon their racial knowledge to generate racial understanding through the embodiment of three racial standpoints over the course of the semester.

## **Chapter 5: But Don't Stay There—Racial Standpoints and Pedagogical Decision Making**

*“I initially said that I thought my generation is less racist than past generations. To some extent this is true, but not entirely. My generation is really just much better at concealing racism than previous generations” (James, RCJ #7).*

*“It's like The Matrix where you take the red pill...it's like you see all the crap now. And it sucks” (Russell, Interview #2).*

In Chapter 4, I discussed the foundational racial knowledge evidenced by participants at the beginning of the project. In this study, I am concerned less with who knows what as a result of participating in the class and more so with the ways in which racial knowledge interacted with the racial standpoint and pedagogical decision making embodied by participants. This chapter continues the discussion of findings generated from the data produced/collected in this study. Specifically, here I discuss the development of racial standpoints and racial pedagogical decision making of participants in this study.

### **But Don't Stay There: Learning in the Swimming Pool of whiteness**

As I write this dissertation, two days a week I find myself at the local swimming pool where my one-year-old daughter, Marin, is enrolled in swim lessons. A swim class designed for infants and toddlers is not overly complicated, yet I give credit to her coach for being able to manage six infants and their guardians, all at very different skill and

confidence levels.<sup>19</sup> During each session, Marin and her poolmates splash around the pool as they demonstrate the skills they have acquired and those that they are still working on. As my wife and I help Marin participate in the class, I cannot help but to observe that from session to session, and at times within a single session, the little swimmers' skill demonstration ebbs and flows like the water of the pool did as they splashed around it. Sometimes a little one will show great excitement as they kick and scoop through the water, all the while, minutes later they are screaming and trying to climb out of the pool. The coach and guardians each try to support and prompt the swimmers to participate and learn new techniques in the pool. Yet, regardless of how much attention each swimmer gets from their coach or guardian, it is ultimately up to each little one if they choose to draw on their prior knowledge and experiences to participate. After all, it is fun to watch the lifeguard walk back and forth, or to blow bubbles, or to sit on the ledge, or to chomp on a pool toy—*who needs swimming?!*

The water of the swimming pool can also assist us in understanding the themes generated from the data that was produced/collected in this study. whiteness has been described as the water in which white people swim. As Owen (2007) observed, “whiteness infuses and infects all aspects of the lifeworld. Its effects are not restricted to one domain or another; instead, we are immersed in whiteness, as fish are immersed in water, and we breathe it in with every breath” (p. 214). white folks cannot see whiteness, but it surrounds them, and they struggle to live beyond it. As Maxwell (2004) noted, “The water is whiteness. It is all around you yet it is illusive” (p. 153). Here, I borrow the metaphor of a swimming pool to discuss the three positions embodied by participants

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<sup>19</sup> My daughter is of course the most advanced swimmer in her class!

over the course of the semester-long conversation around race/ism, anti-racism and social studies education.

A few considerations before I begin. First, every participant in this case study demonstrated behaviors reflective of each of these positions throughout the duration of the project. Even those participants presenting a strong sense of anti-racism moved in and out of such positioning at times. This jockeying is reflective of the complicated and sometimes disruptive relationship white pre-service teachers maintained with whiteness. Their sense of truth, reality, and what it means to be an educator was challenged throughout the semester. In discussing each position, I draw on data generated by all participants to provide evidence and a thick description. There are many more examples generated by participants that could have been selected for inclusion here. The goal is not to see which participants embodied the “best” position at the end of the semester; but rather to illuminate the varied positions students may encounter within as they attempt to engage in similar work.

Similarly, participants also demonstrated overlapping positioning in that they might be engaging in behaviors similar to two positions at once. Just as the little swimmers in Marin’s swim class, at any point throughout the semester, the participants occupied one or more of these positions in the swimming pool of whiteness. Additionally, participants in this study moved back and forth between positions in a short window of time. This fluctuation represents the depths to which students were informed by whiteness. Just as they began to grapple with one of its impacts, another factor of whiteness may cause them to recalibrate their position within the pool. As Leonardo (2009) observed, even “anti-racist whites may still be caught up in the contradictions of

their own positionality and the privileges that come with it, but they can actively use their advantages responsibly to create an alternative racial arrangement that is less oppressive” (p. 98). These contradictions, Matias and colleagues (2014) contended, serve as evidence of a white imagination at work, in that white pre-service teachers struggle to acknowledge the ways in which their behaviors are contradictory because these contradictions are normalized through whiteness. All they know is whiteness, so it remained difficult for them to see beyond its boundaries. In what follows, I draw on data, literature, and theory to discuss the three racial standpoints embodied by participants over the course of the semester.

### **Braving the Deep End**

As one develops their skills in the water, one of the biggest tests of confidence is moving out into the deep end. This can occur in two ways. The swimmer can slowly walk across the pool, from end to end, as the water level quickly rises and they are no longer able to touch the bottom while keeping their head above water. Or, the swimmer can jump from the side of the pool crashing quickly into the deep. With either approach, the swimmer experiences a wave of emotion as they figure out whether they possess the knowledge and skill appropriate to remain in the deep end.

At this position within the swimming pool of whiteness, participants embodied five elements: examining the racialized, intersectional self; understanding race/ism and whiteness in education; internalizing an anti-racist stance toward teaching social studies; engaging in attempts at anti-racist pedagogical decision making; and moving past mistakes toward anti-racist action.

**Examining the racialized, intersectional self.** Examining race/ism and whiteness through a lens of intersectionality remains a bedrock of critical race theory analyses (Crenshaw, 1991, 2011). Drawing on this construct, Sefa Dei (1995) called for an *integrative anti-racism*, wherein we acknowledge our “multiple, shifting and often contradictory identities and subject positions” and “calls for multiplicative, rather than additive, analyses of social oppression” (p. 55). Such an approach, Sefa Dei (1995) added, encourages us to see, “a common link between all oppressions in the material production of society; all forms of oppression establish material and symbolic advantages for the oppressor” (p. 56). At this position within the swimming pool of whiteness, participants acknowledged the intersections of their own identities and how such intersections may inform their work with future students.

In the first RCJ for the course, students responded to a series of questions that called them reflect upon how they self-identify: *When did you first realize your racial identity? What does your racial identity mean to you? How does your racial identity interact with/inform your other identities (e.g., gender, sexuality, ability, religion, class, etc.)?* At this early stage in the course, several participants acknowledged that they had not given much thought to their racial identity prior to the course and reflected the thoughts Russell shared in his first RCJ, “Growing up, my racial identity didn’t personally mean a whole lot to me.” Similarly, Hannah noted that as a younger person her racial identity had little meaning, but overtime that had changed dramatically. Hannah reflected in her first RCJ entry that her understanding of her racial identity had,

transformed a lot since I was a kid. Being white didn’t really mean anything to me then because I didn’t realize the weight it held, but after years of history and diversity themed classes, that’s changed. I have struggled with the things whites have done to other races. I’ve empathized, I’ve felt guilty, and even in some

instances, I've felt ashamed. But, I've come to terms with the reality that my actions are my own. That while the past cannot be ignored, I can be white and still be an ally to other people of other races.

Hannah went on to state, however, that an experience earlier in her coursework at Central University left a specific spark in her to know more about the impact of her racial identity on her life.

I had no idea my race meant as much as it does. I believed I had the same advantages and struggles as anyone else. Learning about what whites had done throughout history, as I mentioned before, shook my understanding of my racial identity, but [a required diversity education course] was what really changed everything. The readings and the discussions we had in the class changed my mind set, but the most impactful thing to me was the privilege walk. As the class was asked to take a step forward or backwards based on prompts of life situations, I found myself standing among the most privileged in class. I, a middle classed white female, stood next to white males. An Arabic-American, Islamic female was the least privileged in the class, and it wasn't white people who stood near her. It wasn't white people who were faced with systematic disadvantages. It was people of color. The situation was completely life changing, and it redefined what it meant for me to be white. I realized for the first time that white equaled privilege, something that only cemented itself more as I began dating an African American male.

In our final interview, Hannah again acknowledged the role that her personal identities play on her interactions in the classroom and with students. She noted,

There are so many different identities and they all influence who you are as a person, how you interact with people, how you talk to interact with people, so it really has a big influence on almost everything you do.

Hannah's acknowledgement of the ways in which her and her students' identities influence their interactions in the classroom echo those shared by James in our final interview. James admitted,

So, one thing that I always need to be cognizant of is that when I'm dealing with a racial topic, I am an upper middle class white kid from the suburbs. So, I need to be cognizant of how I might accidentally or unintentionally harm somebody in my

classroom or like reinforce... what's the word I'm looking for? Like reinforce some sort of racial stigma or hierarchy maybe, I don't know. I can't think of the word. But like have to be think of how my actions might affect a Black student in my class, because I'm not a Black student, I'm not a Black teenager. I don't know what that's like. So, and I can't know what it's like, but I still have to think of what it might be like and how my actions might affect someone like that.

Across these responses, participants indicate an awareness that their identities are connected and collectively inform their perspectives, biases, approaches, as well as how they are interpreted by their students.

In his first RCJ, Conor also noted that while he realized whiteness provided him with white privilege, he had not given much analysis to what that actually meant in his life. He wrote,

I have never sat down to reflect upon my racial identity, although I have known this fact for a while. In other words, I've been told that it is a privilege that I do not have to my race and its intersections with my other identities in every space that I inhabit; and still I have not taken the time to consider it. This is an instance (or a pattern, I guess) of recognizing my privilege but never acting on that recognition.

Despite paying relatively little attention to the impact of his racial identity, Conor added that identity is something he often considers broadly within his life,

Most of my identities come with a lot of social privileges: I am male and cisgender. I do not have a disability (aside from poor vision!), I was raised as a Christian, my family is middle-class. I do identity as gay, which is an identity that comes up a lot in my life, because I choose to think about LGBTQ issues and their intersections with other issues. As a white gay male, I would consider myself privileged within the LGBTQ community. My identity as gay was a catalyst to my introduction into social justice and those spaces on campus, which has informed me a lot about my other identities. Still, the more I learn about social justice in general and on campus, the more I recognize the privilege most of my identities take.

Conor echoed this sentiment when we spoke in our final interview on December 12, as he discussed the role that his identities play in the classroom. He acknowledged that one of the first things teachers should do is to get to know themselves. Conor stated, that doing so was necessary for,

you have to recognize the way that your own personal identity has shaped your beliefs, and have given you a frame to view your experiences and to understand your experiences, and so you should be able to recognize that ways in which your identities have influenced you. And take that recognition when you enter into a classroom, when you collaborate with colleagues, and you talk to students and be open-minded how their identities, their various identities have changed—are different than yours. And so then, you might interpret ideas, events differently from them.... So if you want that true equity you have to approach it with an open-mindedness to how other people's identities have shaped their views and their viewpoints. And not just make it accessible to people who are like you, but make it truly accessible to people who aren't like you as well.

Conor also acknowledged that the identities of his students inform his work with them in the classroom,

I think the identities of my students should be a main factor in the curriculum that I'm teaching. I don't know if there is.... Obviously, you can't teach everything in the semester, and I think some information is more pertinent to certain individuals, certain students. Whether you agree with me or not I think, objectively, you could go to different classrooms with different demographics of students and reevaluate their curriculum and realize that they're teaching different stuff.

Although not specifically referencing racial identity, Conor embodies a willingness to reflectively assess the ways in which his varied identities inform his perspective on teaching, learning, the curriculum, and his students. Conor's awareness of the ways in which his identities are both marginalized and privileged, are indicative of an attempt at Sefa Dei's (1995) concept of integrative anti-racism insofar that he is mindful that one who is oppressed can simultaneously serve as the oppressor, yet his identity as white gay

cis-gender man allows him to see racial oppression from a different angle. Sefa Dei (1995) declared, “One needs to know the self in order to engage in political [racialized] action. But change cannot happen simply from knowing oneself.” (p. 59). Conor’s pursuit of intersectional self-awareness subsequently informs his approach to classroom instruction, curriculum design, and interactions with students.

In our first interview, as discussed in Chapter 3, Danielle articulated her racial identity,

So, I racially identify and I'm not sure that everyone agrees with Judaism or being Jewish is a race but, just in the sense that I've learned about it, I identify as a Jewish Caucasian woman. So, I think those two things are the important when it comes to race at least from my own identification.

Similarly, in her first RCJ entry she was asked to discuss identities that were salient to her, Danielle referenced events at Central University wherein she experienced discrimination due to her identity as a Jewish woman. Danielle wrote,

Nowadays, I feel as if my own marginalized experience, and occurrences that followed the first, only strengthened my connection to my racial identity as a Jewish Caucasian.

Continuing this thread, in her third RCJ entry, Danielle discussed the relationship between whiteness and her Jewish identity,

While my identity as Jewish has oftentimes been difficult, especially in lieu of the past few years away from home, I feel as if my identity as a Caucasian is not troublesome at all. In fact, I sometimes feel guilty for the privileges that I was born with, just because the light complexion of my skin gives me an advantage over my darker-skinned counterparts in the U.S. This advantage has rarely been evident in my daily life, as it does not negatively affect my routine--I am not stopped by police frequently due to “suspicious behavior”, my work ethic and character is not immediately questioned, and my needs/wants are typically met relatively easily at the Central University, among other institutions.

In our final interview, Danielle referenced,

Okay so the people that I am like, white people, you know, I'm Jewish, so that like makes me a little bit different, but when I think about my identity the first thing that comes to mind is probably white. But white people, we don't have to think about our identities all the time, you know, Black people might because it affects them.

As a white Jewish student on a college campus filled with predominantly white, Christian students, Danielle's experiences uniquely attuned her perspective to develop understanding to the ways in which individuals and groups are racialized. Although she sees the racialization and discrimination toward People of Color differently than that directed at white, Jewish people, it is clear that Danielle's intersectional understanding of herself has shaped her perspective on race/ism.

Across each of the statements from participants, we see evidence of their acknowledgement of the influence that their identities play on the interactions with students and decisions they make in the classroom. Although a central component of *Splashing in the Shallow End*, to be discussed later in this chapter, even participants at this racial standpoint struggled to articulate their racial knowledge and understanding in specific and concrete terms. While it is difficult to know to what extent participants will go to ensure they remain cognizant of the intersectional influence their identities play on teaching and learning, awareness is a first step toward informed anti-racist action.

**Making connections between race/ism and whiteness in education.** Appearing to stem from their acknowledgement of intersectionality, participants *Braving the Deep End* stepped further, deeper, into the water by also critiquing the role of race/ism and whiteness within social studies education, and in some cases, attempted to engage with anti-racism in their field experiences and lesson plans.

In the first week of class attending to race/ism in the social studies,<sup>20</sup> students discussed their thoughts related to Chandler and Branscombe's (2015) concept of White Social Studies. The dialogue began with small group discussions in which students worked through their definitions of racial terminology. Moving back and forth between small and large group discussions, students shared their definitions with each other as the instructors maintained an evolving set of definitions, as to establish the collective racial knowledge for the group. Although the discussion featured various levels of comprehension amongst both students and instructor, four study participants voiced a clear attempt at uncovering the connections between race/ism, whiteness, and social studies teaching.

According to my field notes from the class session, on the connections between whiteness and White Social Studies, James observed, "White Social Studies is really imbedded in American exceptionalism. It presents the narrative that the US was virtuous and pure. And even though we may have done some bad things in the past, it doesn't really talk about them." Danielle referenced a concept discussed in previous social studies classes, the master narrative, in her description of the relationship between whiteness and White Social Studies, "Social studies focuses predominantly on whiteness. white history is *THE* history. The master narrative has not changed. It is integrated not only in an academic sphere but also a social one as well." Pushing a bit further into a direct challenge to whiteness, Conor defined White Social Studies twofold as it, "Denies the existence of and the actions taken against and to reinforce, white supremacy... While also ignoring the impact of white supremacy on all people."

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<sup>20</sup> Class session was held on September 12, 2016, after each participants' initial interview.

Building upon the statements of James, Danielle, and Conor, Hannah added that White Social Studies serves to instill white values in our students lives. She stated, “We are showing are students what is important. Not other peoples’ stories, but, ‘white Tales’.” Figure 1 is a photo of my field journal from this interaction.

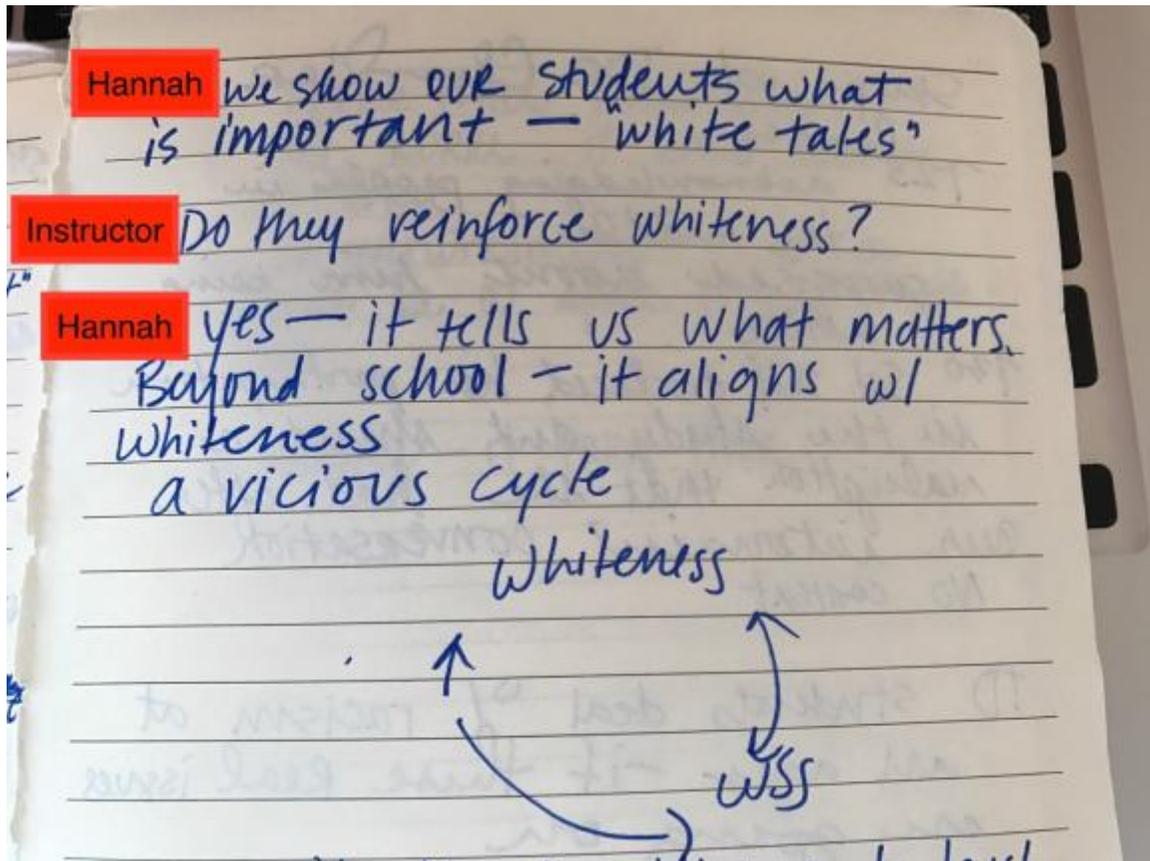


Figure 1. Hannah’s description of the relationship between whiteness and White Social Studies

As indicated in Figure 1, a course instructor pushed Hannah to clarify how she envisioned the relationship between whiteness and White Social Studies. She went on to state that the connection between whiteness and White Social Studies is “a vicious cycle” in that whiteness informs White Social Studies which then reifies whiteness as “normal.”

Two observations can be drawn from the contributions of Conor, James, Danielle, and Hannah in this course dialogue. First, participants see connections between critically-

oriented social studies teaching and anti-racism. In the first two semesters of social studies methods courses, students were exposed to a variety of critical interpretations of social studies curriculum and pedagogy. The direct references to American exceptionalism and the master narrative, both discussed in prior social studies methods course, indicate that participants have begun to conceptualize criticisms of “traditional social studies” as White Social Studies. Second, Hannah articulates the inseparable relationship between the teaching profession and whiteness in her discussion of the “vicious cycle” of whiteness and White Social Studies. Her acknowledgement of the intertwined relationship between whiteness and White Social Studies is a direct challenge to the white ignorance and white commonsense typically represented in the imaginations of white pre-service teachers (Matias et al, 2014). Awareness of this relationship is imperative to engaging in pedagogical decision making informed by anti-racism; for it is difficult to enact pedagogical approaches intended to challenge the persistence of whiteness and white supremacy if is not aware of the insidious way in which whiteness has informed what is done in the social studies classroom (Pollock, 2008; Sefa Dei, 1996).

**Internalized sense of anti-racism.** An additional component to “Braving the Deep End” is the evidence of participants beginning to view anti-racism a part of their personal identity. Simply put, it is one thing to draw on racially-just language or observe the influence of whiteness on others. It is an entirely more complex level of commitment to embody anti-racism as a part of oneself.<sup>21</sup> When asked in her mid-semester interview what she had learned thus far in the class, Hannah noted,

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<sup>21</sup> Talking the talk AND walking the walk.

I'd never heard of non-racist versus anti-racist before, so that has really changed my perspective a lot. I find myself using it when I talk to people. When I'm with my Mom I'm like, "No Mom, that's a non-racist aspect. You've gotta' look at it more proactively." I definitely see myself noticing things more.

Hannah went on to share in later conversations that although she and family view the persistent impact of race/ism differently; she has taken it upon herself to challenge those she cares about to see things from varied perspectives. In her second RCJ, in which participants were asked to examine the emotions of engaging with race/ism, Hannah wrote that racial dialogue is now imbedded within her lived experience beyond the classroom. Hannah reflected,

Until recently, I didn't talk seriously about race with my friends, family, or peers, but now it seems like a weekly occurrence for me. With the national attention racially charged events have been getting in recent years, it is something I talk to my parents, boyfriend, and friends about frequently.

She added that even with a complicated family relationship with race/ism, she felt it necessary to help her family members to see the larger, structural issues with racism that persist,

My father is a police officer and has been for 30+ years, so events concerning police brutality always perk the interest of my family members, especially my mother. She often gets frustrated by the people who place blame on police for these events, saying my father has never acted that way towards anyone, and I have to be the one to remind her that they aren't necessarily placing blame on my dad, but rather the system as a whole.

Engaging with family members about the complexities of race/ism is never an easy task, and one that many white folks often avoid doing. The politeness dictated by white commonsense informs many white people that engaging in dialogue with family around issues such as race/ism, religion, and politics is impolite and is discouraged (Castagno, 2008, 2013). Castagno (2013) stated that often whites, particularly white liberals, will

ignore racial issues that they talk about amongst their peers when engaging with close family in an attempt to “just get along it becomes necessary to maintain this politeness in the face of often-times obvious and explicit marginalization and systemic oppression” (p. 113). Hannah’s persistence to engage in race talk with her family is evidence of her willingness to break the barriers that whiteness constructs around her.

The embodiment of anti-racism was directly put to students to explore at times in the course. On November 14<sup>th</sup>, the social studies class featured a panel of scholars and practicing teachers invited to discuss the teaching and learning of race/ism and anti-racism in secondary social studies classrooms. In the midst of the thoughtful dialogue, a panelist—a Black male scholar who’s work centers on the teaching of Black history—posed a question to the entire group, “Is there an on and off switch for white allies when it comes to antiracism?” This question caused an immediate pause from the group of students as they struggled to construct a response. Interpreting this silence as a need to push students to engage in exploration beyond the classroom, I constructed the next RCJ prompt around this question. The prompt featured two open-ended questions for students to respond: *Dr. Jones asked of us, "Is there an on and off switch for white allies when it comes to antiracism?" What is your understanding of this? What does it mean to be a white ally?* Upon review of their RCJ entries<sup>22</sup>, it was clear that my decision to give them space to reflect on their embodiments of anti-racism was critically important.

Danielle offered the least introspective response to the RCJ prompt. Drawing heavily on the vagaries associated with white commonsense, she noted,

I would hope not, but I know this is not the case--even for me. What I believe Dr. Jones means is that when a racial group is the majority, oftentimes the minority

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<sup>22</sup> Madison did not complete this RCJ entry.

racial groups' struggles are ignored, because they are not experienced by the majority group...As a White individual, I did not grow up with many obstacles that oppressed me. Instead, I took more note of oppression as I saw others that differed from my own racial identity as struggling with daily events--even as simple as interactions with the police force. While I am deeply saddened by the fact that not all identities are treated equally, I also feel fortunate not to have to deal with oppression so frequently. In fact, I did not even realize that I was being favored in society until the end of high school when I began seeing racially-charged incidents on the news. Even then, I was oblivious to most of the issues that seem to affect the lives of minorities daily.

Here, Danielle offers no evidence of how this concept of an on/off switch is a meaningful component of her approach to teaching or interacting with others. Although she acknowledges the privileges she has received due to her whiteness, a sense of embodied anti-racism is absent. As Leonardo (2009) noted, and Danielle acknowledged, "Privilege is granted even without a subject's cognition that life is made easier for her" (p. 75). To acknowledge the existence of privilege is important, though only the beginning.

The question posed by Dr. Jones was in reference to a dialogue initiated by Russell. In the session, Russell shared with the group that his deepened sense of racial awareness, as a result of the class, had caused him to feel a depth of white emotions. Seeking a reprieve from the overwhelming feelings he was encountering, he asked the panelists about how they handle the "fatigue" of anti-racism. In his RCJ, Russell noted that he continued to struggle with these feelings,

Honestly, this is something that I have been struggling with for a while now; do I see an end to my racism perception in the near future? Will I revert to the blind white ignorance that I've been so accustomed to since my upbringing? And with all of this thought and conversations I've had I can only come up with one answer: no. I will not be able to stop noticing the racial disparities that surround my experience or my friends of different ethnicities. I know that I mentioned this in our recent panel with guest speakers (one of which being Dr. Jones himself), but I feel like I've taken the red pill from *The Matrix*: I am unable to go on being just another ignorant white person.

Yet again, Russell generates racial knowledge through the use of popular media. In the 1999 film, *The Matrix*, main character Neo, played by Keanu Reaves is called to decide whether or not he wants to be aware of “the matrix.” Morpheus, played by Laurence Fishburn, stated,

The Matrix is everywhere, it’s all around us. Even in this very room. You can see it when you look out the window. Or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work. . . .It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.

Neo is given the opportunity to take either a blue pill or a red pill. The blue pill allows Neo to remain ignorant and unaware of the existence of the matrix in which he and the rest of the world operates within. The red pill exposes Neo to the depths of the matrix, no longer allowing him to ignore the ways in which the matrix influences and terrorizes the world around him.

Drawing on this film reference, Russell stated that his experience at Jackson’s as well as participating in this class/study, have impacted him just as the red pill in *The Matrix* impacted Neo. Russell indicated that he feels as though he is no longer able to stay silent and ignore the ways in which racism and whiteness continue to influence himself and the world in which he lives. However, he also articulated a challenge with what that actually means for him, as a white man, attempting to become an ally to People of Color,

I believe that being a white ally means you have to address racism whenever you can create a safe space. After my conversation with Dr. Jones, I thought about this concept a lot; does being a white ally mean I have to talk to every butthole that says something racist? My initial response is to yell back “shut the hell up!” but I realize this approach wouldn’t be very effective. Instead, I believe that I

should combat this during a conversation with someone that I am at least acquainted with; but I also see the merits of having a discussion with some rando [sic] on the street. While I'm not 100% sure about this approach, I believe (for the time being) that only engaging in intentional conversations about race or racism is the only effective way to combat this in a face-to-face sphere.

Through this exchange, we see evidence of Russell acknowledging the world is more racialized and informed by whiteness than he had previously considered. And instead of retreating to the Shallow End, he admits that he feels compelled to use his positions of privilege to advocate for racial justice.

After consideration, Hannah too, embraced a firm response to Dr. Jones' question.

She noted,

This really got me thinking about my own behaviors. Am I capable of turning off the antiracist switch? Is this something I'm guilty of doing? I can't speak for others, but I know for me, I don't think it's possible to turn off my antiracist thoughts. I'm constantly aware of and recognizing race and racism when it occurs around me. I am often very vocal about these things as they happen. That being said, while I don't think that my switch can turn off, I admit, sometimes I don't challenge what people say. I wrote briefly about this in my last observation chart. A white male took a "colorblind" approach to the conversation I was having, and I chose not to say anything. I recognized it, but I chose not to take action. For this particularly incident, I wouldn't say that I turned my antiracist switch off, but rather, I chose to pick my battles.

Conor also acknowledged that the concept of an "on and off switch" was something he was contemplating in great detail,

I have been struggling. It is a conflict between how often one should be working to dismantle the systems of oppression vs. when someone can "take a break." I've heard of people talking a lot about self-care when it comes to ally work, but what does self-care look like when it isn't just retreating from the oppressive systems and just ignoring the oppression? Some people are total proponents of self-care meaning you can take entire days away from campus and people. Some, who I more agree with, believe self-care must come in a balance with social expectations and responsibilities. The work is never done, but of course people cannot fight forever without taking a break and re-strategizing.

Conor went on to add,

Is taking a break a manifestation of privilege? I don't think having privilege inherently makes someone a bad person, but rather what that person does with their privilege defines them. Do they use the stage that society gives them to uplift voices of the ignored and marginalized? Or do they use it to amplify their own voice? Is recognizing that other people are more willing to listen to a White person than a person of color mean that amplifying your voice *can* be ally work, if you are saying what people of color are saying? Is that true ally work if you aren't uplifting people, just their words?

To conclude, Conor admits that he is still unsure that a clear, unmessy response to Dr.

Jones' question exists,

So is it okay for White people to take a break from ally work even though people of color cannot take a break from being oppressed? I cannot, with a clean conscience, say yes. But that is a reality many people experience. White people cannot do a lot of ally work if they cannot feed themselves, if they cannot maintain social relationships, if they have no clout in the system. Perhaps taking a break from ally work can refocus White allies on what they are working towards. But that doesn't mean it's fair.

Similarly, James noted that he still was unsure of whether a switch existed or if one should. He reflected,

On one hand, I would say no, we don't get to take breaks from confronting something like racism. I have this thought for all forms of (what I perceive as) ignorance. That I should confront it whenever it comes up for the public's interest. If I see racism online, I confront it and call it out making sure to use a tone that won't enflame and piss off the other person. I do the same (perhaps more militantly) with climate change denial.

Echoing Conor's concern with self-care, James added,

On the other hand, is it really possible to confront *every* instance of something like this? If someone commits themselves to this, at what point are they putting too much strain on their relationships as well as psychological well-being. The amount of stress to come of this zealous approach would be taxing to the extreme and I don't know that you can really ask someone to go that far *all* the time.

Across each of these responses to Dr. Jones' prompt, participants demonstrated increased awareness of the ways in which race/ism and whiteness influence their lives. Moreover,

participants also acknowledged that with such knowledge also comes a need to act in racially-just ways.

The on/off switch of white anti-racism is at the heart of a critical analysis of whiteness (Leonardo, 2009, 2013; Matias, et al., 2014). Eluding to the question posed by Du Bois (1985), is it ever possible for whites to escape being the problem? Simply put, no; whites will forever be tied to whiteness. whites that say they are able to step beyond the boundaries of whiteness at all times are most likely ignorant to the depths of its impact or how the Racial Contract permits such assumptions. Additionally, concerns related to self-care should not go overlooked either. In keeping with Dr. Jones' response to the issue of white self-care, we should consider what self-care means to Communities of Color, in order to understand the depth to which white supremacy influences People of Color. In contrast, to the consistent concern of the burdens of ally work on white folks.

**Attempting anti-racism in the social studies.** All participants were tasked with constructing a lesson plan that utilized an anti-racist pedagogical approach (see Table 2 and Appendix F). This lesson was the third of three lesson plans to be created and the only one specifically calling for anti-racism. According to the instructions for the assignment, students were expected to, “clearly incorporate an anti-racist pedagogical approach, as provided in *Everyday Antiracism*,” as well as write, “a brief narrative (1-2) paragraphs of your topic selection, your pedagogical approach, and how this lesson attends to the goals of anti-racist teaching.” Due to the constraints of field experiences, participants were not required to teach such a lesson in the field. However, in some instances, participants sought out the opportunity to do so.

Two participants, Hannah and Conor produced lesson plans most closely aligned with the goals of the assignment and those of anti-racism. In advance of this activity, students were also asked through interview, class discussion, and RCJ whether they saw connections between anti-racism and social studies teaching. As represented in Chapter 4, participants indicated a shallow understanding of the connections between the two, at the start of the semester. However, as time went on, for several participants, the connections became more clear. In her second RCJ entry, Hannah observed,

I think race and racism can be talked about in almost any aspect of social studies. The mistreatment of racial minorities has been around for centuries, and their stories are always there to be discussed with students. Even the very foundations of the curriculum—what stories students are required by the curriculum to learn—can be turned into a lesson about race.

To that end, in her Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan, Hannah chose to focus on the Haitian Revolution. This topic, Hannah noted, was selected for quite personal reasons,

One, which was entirely personal, was because my boyfriend's father immigrated from Haiti, and I have spent the last couple years getting to know more and more about the culture and difficult conditions of the island country. Secondly, I feel like the Haitian Revolution, for being such a striking example of black empowerment during a very unlikely time period, is harshly undercovered in social studies classroom. In addition to that, Haiti's status in the world today is no coincidence. The events that have taken place since its independence and the mass abandonment it faced because it achieved its independence under a slave revolt have shaped Haiti into what it is today. Racism has molded Haiti into the poorest country in the western hemisphere, and I think it's time that the United States and the rest of the world acknowledge that. While I walked away from high school knowing nothing of our Caribbean neighbor, I hope that someday I can help students understand the complex nation known as Haiti.

When examining the folder submitted via Google Drive by Hannah, one finds a thoroughly constructed lesson plan. Hannah stated that she selected a pedagogical approach listed in *Everyday Antiracism* called, "Create Curriculum that Analyzes Opportunity Denial," as this approach, according to Hannah, "encourages educators to

teach critical analysis of systems of racial oppression, include critical popular culture in curriculum, and engage youth in participatory inquiry across differences.” In the lesson, Hannah draws on student prior-knowledge to guide students through a discussion of the impact of the revolution on Haiti. On how this lesson meets the demands of anti-racist teaching, Hannah wrote,

This lesson meets the goals of anti-racist teaching in that it not only teaches Haiti’s history (which is already largely forgotten in history classrooms), but it also allows students to see the bigger issues of racism going on. It connects an “isolated” historical incident to long lasting and reoccurring oppression. This lesson acknowledges that the Haitian Revolution, no matter how courageous and powerful, ultimately fell prey to the racist system that continues to run the world to this very day.

In our final interview, I asked Hannah to recount what she thought made the lesson anti-racist in nature. She first stated, and successfully evidenced her attempt to connect historical events of Haiti to the present state of Haiti. To do so, Hannah drew on a variety of sources (e.g., primary sources, secondary sources, video clips) to, “kind of show how Haiti, the conditions were today and kind of not only connecting it to the history and also gave that visual effect where students were actually faced with the issues.” Hannah was unable to teach this lesson over the course of the semester, so it is difficult to speculate whether her stated anti-racist aims would be possible in the classroom. However, through her topic selection and lesson plan design it is clear she had exhibited deliberate anti-racist intentions.

Secondly, in Conor’s submitted lesson plan for the Enacting Anti-Racism assignment, he articulated the specific pedagogical approaches he utilized in the lesson. Conor’s lesson focused on the influence of racism on the education system. Specifically, he drew upon three pedagogical approaches provided in *Everyday Antiracism*: analysis of

racial disparities in opportunities to learn, creating curriculum that analyzes opportunity denial, and engage in dialogue about how race/ism influences students' lives. Conor stated, "I think one of the best ways to get students thinking about the effects of racism in their lives (whether they are Students of Color, white students, or multiracial students) is to make it explicit to their lives." In our final interview, Conor provided additional context to his lesson for this assignment,

I did my anti-racist pedagogy lesson plan on race and education. And so that was a lot of like, "Oh, yeah, the assimilation schools that Native American children were like forced to go to. Oh, yeah, funding inequity. And then we can explain learning outcomes; the differences in learning outcomes between urban and suburban schools and rural schools."

And it's a lot of things that you're like, "Huh, that makes sense." My ideas about race and how that's affected people around me, my misconceptions was, "Oh, like those are-- those differences are inherent to that race," whereas, "No, that's not true. My framework has been dismantled. Here is the real reason-- or a better reason." It's like, "Oh, no. Inner city schools have lower learning outcomes because of a lack of resources, teachers—a lack of—you know, it's like more—they have a disproportionately high novice teacher enrollment they have more disciplinary punishments." It's more, what do you call it like, it's not like restorative justice, it's like...punitive justice. They just *have* to have more law enforcement officers in the school. They just have more.

And all those things, you put them together and you get deficit thinking, you get lots of expectations, you just get racism in schools. And then you say those schools are bad because there are Black kids in them versus these schools are nice and good because of the white kids in them. Whereas you know that it's a whole realm of factors...Just under the surface where people can't see it. You can't see until someone tells you, "So the reasons are here, here, here." And so that's what I was trying to get out with my lesson was to- with the race and education was, "Hey students, these differences exist. I'm not going to deny that, but they exist not because of the reasons that you think they do."

In this dialogue, Conor discussed his attempt to challenge the white commonsense beliefs that populate popular discourse associated with the opportunity and achievement

differences that many students maintain. As he observed, these beliefs are often grounded in deficit and racist beliefs about Students and Communities of Color. Sefa Dei (1995) noted, “anti-racism is an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address the issues of racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (p. 13). In keeping with the action-oriented call of anti-racist teaching, Conor’s lesson calls students to conduct an “Analytical Report” of the “current state of race and education in our 12<sup>th</sup> grade US history classes.” These reports would then be sent to school and district leaders in effort to instigate conversations about racial justice within the community.

In both Hannah and Conor’s lesson plans, we see a clear articulation of anti-racist pedagogical approaches and attempts to directly challenge students’ understanding of race/ism. Both lessons present an unarticulated, yet present, critique of the ways in which whiteness has influenced racial knowledge and understandings of the status of Haiti and on the education system, respectively.

**Admitting mistakes and moving forward.** Adopting an anti-racist racial standpoint cannot happen overnight and with the first attempt. This process takes time and a willingness to persist despite setbacks. Despite this reality, often, white teachers state a fear of failure as reason to discourage engaging with race/ism in the classroom. One chapter in *Everyday Antiracism* that was assigned to students featured commentary from teachers who had attempted to engage in “race work” and were unsuccessful, at first. In the text, Wyman and Kashatok (2008) offered,

Teachers should expect to make mistakes, to be laughed at for their fumbling efforts, to encounter rejection, and to wrestle with ongoing questions about the racial positions of themselves and their students. This process takes time, and we

strongly encourage teachers not to retreat back into their comfortable triangle paths too soon (p. 303).

This quote was also featured in the RCJ for October 17th, in which students were asked to reflect on their process toward learning how to enact anti-racism in the classroom.

Hannah shared a story of her experience teaching about the civil rights movement in a previous semester of field work. Hannah reflected on her feelings of awkwardness in the moment,

Sometimes it's difficult to talk about race, especially as a white person, because you're afraid of offending people. Last year I was teaching about the Civil Rights Movement and referenced something my boyfriend had said, and I struggled to say, when addressing a black male student, "my boyfriend, who's also black..." I don't know what it was, but I felt like I was singling out the student for being black with my statement, but I now realized that struggling with the statement made it more awkward than anything else. I expect that I'll fumble many more times before I become completely comfortable talking about race in front of a class. But, I've learned from the experience and plan to apply it to my next lesson over race.

Always the fan of self-depreciation, Russell also wrote,

With this sentiment in mind, in order to address this quote from Wyman and Kashatok, it is important that we learn not to take things so seriously. That (just like I stated above) our ignorance to others perception or point of view directly impacts the way our interactions are perceived within the community. As a teacher preparing to teach about race and racism, we need to accept the fact that we are going to make mistakes. And chances are that those mistakes will be targeted by parents or (God forbid) students, which will make us the bud of a joke. When this happens, instead of responding with anger or bitterness, we should laugh at it like the rest. That way it doesn't seem like we're as affected as others think because guess what: we're human! I just know I am going to make so many mistakes and it won't be funny every time, but if I take a moment and humble myself I won't stress every little thing. Not to say that accepting mistakes and not trying to prevent them are two different messages. I believe that when we make a mistake talking about race, we should include outside speakers or community leaders in order to give our students a better overall perception: especially in an area where we are unfamiliar.

Both Hannah and Russell make some important distinctions between accepting mistakes and attempting to prevent them in the future. It is hard to see a white teacher who consistently makes mistakes and appears to never learn from them. Here however, an essential caveat is included: making mistakes, learning from them, and attempting to limit them in the future.

In response to the quote from Wyman and Kashatok (2008), James drew on his previous conversations with me to contextualize his thoughts,

When I read this quote, I immediately reflected on my past RCJ's. Some of the things I have written have been (in hindsight) flawed in the thinking behind them, and it's interesting to look back and see how much my views have changed so far. One thing I can specifically think of is: I initially said that I thought my generation is less racist than past generations. To some extent this is true, but not entirely. My generation is really just much better at concealing racism than previous generations. This is arguably a step in the right direction, because at least we won't have overt blatant racism. However, this isn't as much progress as we could make, and the work is certainly not done.

Similarly, in the first self-scheduled mid-point interviews, James again chose to reflect upon his sentiment that by chronological positioning, millennials were inherently less-racist. On September 22, we engaged in a dialogue wherein James sought to “revisit” his previous statements. James noted, “I remember saying, ‘I think our generation is less racist than previous generations.’ So, I want to revisit that.” As he wrote in his RCJ, James admitted that his conceptualization of the presence of racism has evolved over the course of the semester. As the conversation continued, James went on to articulate his perceptions of modern day racism:

James: So to some extent, I guess it's kind of true. But also, I think it's—racism is just more underground. Pushed more underground than it's...it's not publicly acceptable at all to be racist. But, one of my friends the other day—we were joking—he said, “Well, white people are generally more racist when they're

around their white friends." And that got me thinking. Well, that's pretty true. And whenever I'm around, it's not just conservative people, but white people are just less not racist around people who have similar opinions.

A: Okay.

J: So, then I'm thinking what does that? Why is that? So, I'm thinking about what makes it publicly unacceptable. Political correctness, essentially. You can't publicly be racist, or else someone's going to call you out. And you're going to lose social standing.

A: Okay.

J: So, you're going to be fired. People aren't going to like you, etc. But, I'm wondering how effective that is if the effect is just to push the racism underground. You know?

In these admissions, James simultaneously critically examines the influence of whiteness while drawing on whiteness for generating racial understanding. First, he acknowledges the post-racial argument he eluded to in his first interview was inaccurate by wishing to revisit his claim that discrimination can be inherently lessened by chronological distance from overtly racist eras in history. In so doing, James also recognized the ways in which the embodiments of racism have changed in the recent past, from over to covert in nature. Moving from an attitude of relative *racial optimism* when we first spoke to an attitude more closely related to *racial pesoptimism* (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), James seems to acknowledge a sense of racial knowledge more rooted in racial realism (Bell, 1992) than previously articulated.

**Veering into treading water.** The confluence of white racial knowledge and critical whiteness as evidenced by James above bubbled up across several conversations we held over the semester. This back and forth demonstrates that James was teetering between the Deep End and Treading Water in his pursuit of racial sensemaking. Later in

one of his self-scheduled follow up interviews, James brought up the white commonsense argument against political correctness in his processing of the continued presence of racism and white supremacy today. In this conversation, James revisited his thoughts about the evolution of racism in contemporary contexts. He then turned to a discussion of how best to respond/challenge these confounding iterations of racism. To that end James posited,

It's almost like those things [overtly racist acts that have occurred recently] are a rebellion against the establishment for those people, so the establishment is saying, "You have to be politically correct." And they're saying, "Well, fuck you. I don't want people telling me what to do." So, they act out in a racist way, you know?

Focusing his attention on the argument of political correctness as a barrier to anti-racism should be explored further. Crawley (2007) noted that political correctness has been referenced in a variety of contexts. Notably, in recent spaces critiques of political correctness have been invoked by the political right (and alt-right) to “to facilitate the demolition of American liberalism by attacking the idea that rules are necessary for achieving a fair and just society,” as well as by conservatives seeking to, “dismiss debates about multiculturalism, and cultural pluralism, leaving European particularisms as the basis for translation into absolute universal standards for human achievement, norms and aspirations” (p. 498). The context of James’ comments led me to believe that he was not attempting to dismiss the importance of multiculturalism, cultural pluralism, or even anti-racism, but rather seeking to understand or even reconcile the cognitive dissonance he was experiencing.

In response to my pursuit of additional clarity surrounding his utilization of political correctness as, “coded language for ‘not letting me be racist’,” James went on to share more of his thought process, relating to his critique of political correctness,

It's a pickle. Because on one hand, you can't just say, "Hey, it's socially acceptable to be racist." But in some points, I think the fervor maybe is the right word behind political correctness as I've described and other people do can kind of take it really far to a point where they're accusing people who actually aren't being racist of being racist because they used one politically incorrect term and they kind of ignore the gist of what they were saying. And I think in some ways when people are scared of using a word, or speaking their mind because they think someone might call them out for it, they're less likely to talk about it. So, the discussions about race that we need to have to get rid of racism in my opinion, are in a lot of ways held back by this political correctness.

This dialogue serves as evidence of how individuals move about the pool of whiteness. At times, they can be approaching the Deep End, ready to acknowledge and engage in anti-racism. Then suddenly, individuals can veer back toward Treading Water as they struggle to process the new knowledge and understanding they are developing. In this exchange, James acknowledges that racism is harmful and that engaging in racist acts is problematic. And yet, for a white man to authoritatively articulate what is and is not racist, assumes that he is able to see beyond his whiteness, or that his sense of what “counts” and what does not is objectively true—i.e. resting on white knowledge and white commonsense to determine what is and what is not an appropriate response to racism. Moreover, Gilborn (2009) argued that drawing on political correctness as a barrier to the first amendment-protected right to free speech, is grounded entirely in whiteness’ notions of fairness, rationality, and freedom. Gilborn (2009) quipped, “the problem is that genuinely free speech is an impossibility in a context where “common sense” (what is rational and irrational) is determined by, and for, White people” (p. 555).

James is “free” to critique political correctness as a barrier to anti-racism, while the victims of the racist hate speech are unable to move about “free” from racism.

### **Treading Water**

Treading water is one of the foundational skills associated with learning to swim. The process allows for the swimmer to maintain a vertical position and keep their head above water. However, the swimmer expends copious energy by using their arms and legs to remain in a relatively static position. Above water level, the swimmer may appear calm and assured in their position, yet beneath the surface they are working hard to merely to stay still. Experienced swimmers may be able to maintain such a position for extended periods of time; however, without assistance, beginning swimmers struggle to retain this position for more than a few minutes.

At this position within the swimming pool of whiteness, one embodiment is evident: a wrestling with what to do with this evolving sense of racial awareness. Participants situated at this position were willing to engage with and revisit their prior understandings of race/ism directly. Often without prompting from me, these participants sought to “revise the record” so to speak in terms of their prior knowledge. Participants also demonstrated an attempt to manage the emotionality associated with breaking through the barriers of whiteness. This process often left them feeling unsure of how to proceed, but knowing that they must continue kicking in order to stay afloat. In that, they were unsure of how to reconcile their new knowledge with their previous sense of reality. Finally, as they wrestled to keep their heads above water, individuals at this position considered what it would mean for them to adopt a position of anti-racism in their future

classroom. Often citing the benefits of such work, participants also highlighted the depth of concerns they maintained if they chose to embrace anti-racism completely.

**Wrestling with the emotions of an evolving racial awareness.** Developing new racial knowledge that directly challenges the white ways of knowing that previously protected your psyche well-being can cause cognitive dissonance within pre-service teachers (DiAngelo, 2011; Matias, et al, 2014; Matias & Mackey, 2016). Throughout the semester, participants evidenced this development quite frequently. This “white fragility,” according to DiAngelo (2011) is a result of an “insulated environment of racial protection builds white expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress” (p. 54). For many white people, white fragility causes white folks to resist and even turn away from discussions related to race/ism that challenge their sense of white normalcy. Being raised in, around, within, and by whiteness can lead white folks to assume that they have a strong sense of the racialized world.

Often, this confidence is rooted in white commonsense notions of a colorblind meritocracy and a dysconscious sense of how their lives and actions are racialized and in some ways problematic in nature. When this sense of reality is challenged and the wall of whiteness is penetrated, white folks struggle with generating a response. For some, such experiences will lead individuals seeking a life preserver that would guide them down a road seeking to understand more about their racial other and racial systems of oppression. For others, this disconnect may lead to a life preserver to get back to the shallow end of the pool, so that they might re-trench themselves within the safety of whiteness.

The wrestling involved in encountering white fragility is difficult to capture within a research study for several reasons. First, participants must be willing to articulate the fact that they are encountering racialized cognitive dissonance; something not common in or advocated by white commonsense and white emotionality (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Matias & Mackey, 2016). Second, this wrestling is often temporary—as it occurs when individuals are moving from other positions within the pool of whiteness. Through examining two exchanges from James and Russell, we can begin to see a four-step framework for this wrestling emerge: Awakening racial reality; Acknowledging the existence of a racial lens; Questioning what to do; Feeling white fragility.

*James, the n-word, and the white man's burden.* At the end of the semester, students were tasked with creating a lesson plan embedded with anti-racism. When James approached this process, he settled on a lesson that sought to examine the impact of American imperialism. At the center of the lesson was a poem by Ernest Crosby, “The Real White Man’s Burden,” a satirical response to Rudyard Kipling’s, “The White Man’s Burden.” Prior to submitting his lesson, James reached out to course instructors and myself via email soliciting advice regarding whether or not he should censor or remove the racially insensitive word from the text prior to showing to students. In the email,<sup>23</sup> James walks through his thought process and shares additional concerns he has regarding the lesson:

My lesson plan incorporates a poem, The Real White Man’s Burden, that uses the N word, and I was grappling with whether or not to censor it. The piece uses it to criticize the concept of white man’s burden and racism.

My lesson plan is done, but I might teach this lesson in the next few weeks, so I’m still tinkering with it. I chose to not censor the word in one set of copies of the

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<sup>23</sup> Received December 3, 2016.

poem and I gave students the option to choose a censored copy of the poem if they felt uncomfortable. I have it censored as “n\*\*\*\*\*”.

Before I give students the poem, I plan on talking to the students on why I have consciously chosen to keep the word. I want them to know I think it’s important to deal with these kinds of things in the open than let them sit under the surface. That to censor something is to not discuss it and deal with it.

On the other hand, I never really know how all of my students will react. I hope that offering them the choice is enough, but I can’t really be sure. I’ve thought about offering an alternate assignment, but I don’t know of any other sources that would work with these quotes. Is keeping the word something I should talk to parents about before doing?

Also, when I introduce the poem, I will be modeling the first two stanzas. To me, this is a great opportunity to talk about it contextually with the students. One problem is, I’m not sure how to read the poem out loud without saying it, but not sounding awkward or out of touch. Do you have any advice?

One other issue I’ve run into, is that the poem is written by a white man from New York. Plus the class is majority white, with maybe only a half dozen non-white students. His race wouldn’t necessarily matter to me based on the way he’s using the word, but I’m not sure if the same will be true for all of my students. Do you think this is worth discussing with them?

This email is indicative of great deal of wrestling on James’ part. First, his topic choice is indicative of James’ understanding that America’s imperialistic efforts were grounded in white supremacy and racism. He shares his concern for not contributing to the whitewashing of history, typical of White Social Studies teachings of this topic. James’ email also demonstrates his awareness of the complicated position he maintains as a white man attempting to teach with about troubling racial language to a group of predominantly, but not entirely, white students. In the anti-racist rationale he provided with his lesson, James wrote,

The poem I chose, *The Real White Man’s Burden*, is a critique of the imperialist justification of “civilizing” native peoples. The poem uses the N word to criticize racism. I feel the use of the term is necessary to confront to ugliness that is racism in all its ugliness. To censor it is to whitewash history in the worst way.

His acknowledgement of the racialized lens he takes toward teaching—as well as those of his students toward learning—reveals that James’ is attempting to reconcile his positionality through a challenge to White Social Studies. More broadly, this email is also representative of James questioning “what to do” with insensitive racial language. He articulates a desire to expose students to this word, and to discuss its relevance historically, but is considering what this means for him as a white, straight man to do so, causes him pause. In our final interview, I asked James to define what he felt made the lesson anti-racist in nature. He noted,

I think the biggest thing would be using the poem that uses the N word in that discussion about the N word. The rest of it is, I thought it's not really anti-racist but it's still kind of anti-aggression because it's confronting like the oppression of imperialism. So, I mean not only just using the poem that is ridiculing imperialism but pulling actual quotes from actual people that are pretty screwed up. So, I think just presenting those facts as they are and then letting kids see the, "Hey, they're not, yeah, so, I don't know, I think, it's not like," I don't know how active it is against racism or oppression but it's kind of so. Do you think it is?

Finally, in this discussion, James articulates his anti-racist rationale for lesson and he still struggles to interpret the racialized standpoint embodied within the lesson. While not demonstrating fatigue, per se, James’ question is reflective of his uncertainty of whether his approach (e.g., racial standpoint) was grounded in anti-racism.

*Russell, Jackson’s, and the temptations of whiteness.* Midway through the semester, Russell wrote about and discussed a racial encounter that caused him to reevaluate his racial reality. As discussed in Chapter 3, RCJs consisted of two components: response to specific questions provided to students and to catalogue racial encounters they experienced or witnessed during the week. In his third RCJ<sup>24</sup>, Russell shared a recent racialized event he encountered during a shift at his part-time job as a

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<sup>24</sup> Submitted on September 19<sup>th</sup>.

cashier at a local, large retailer. In his journal, Russell captured the event and his resulting emotions from the experience:

While I was working at Jackson's, as a cashier this past Sunday, I began to notice this trend among our shoppers. I was the only white male working along with an all black female cashier crew; I began to take note of just how many customers of different ethnicity I received. I didn't think of taking notice until a coworker of mine asked me, "How come you're so popular with the white women? You aren't even that handsome." While I laughed it off (and cried a little inside) I did begin to wonder just why I had received so many young, college age white women in my lines. As I began to notice this trend, I also found that I didn't really get many black men to enter my line: even if I didn't have a customer to help. I remember this time specifically when I called out to a black guest and offered my service, to which he blatantly ignored me. And the one guy I did check out didn't make eye contact with me or talk to me at all. Maybe he was having a rough day, but I could tell that he was very tense in my line, compared to his friends who were joking with the other cashiers. He even loosened up and joked with his buddies after he left my line, so I don't think I was imagining this feeling. On the flip side, the white college age women always stood in my line: even if it was a little longer than my black coworkers.

As I took note of this, I felt kinda bummed because there was this (what seemed to me) racial wall in Jackson's of all places. I was wondering what I could do to be more accepting or inviting to other shoppers so they didn't feel uncomfortable with me. I even went as far as to not engage in conversation with others besides the typical greeting! I did all I could, and still couldn't overcome this divide between shoppers of different race and my own ethnicity. Now my observations aren't absolute; there were exceptions to the rule of course (white college age women went into other lines and I helped a few black families). So maybe I was hyper analyzing the situation, but as I continue to work at Jackson's I will take note of how my actions can be perceived as off-putting and work to correct them.

In Russell's retelling of this racialized observation and encounter, he acknowledges a sense of racial awakening. He notices, in real-time, the racial/ist preferences and decision making of white patrons at Jackson's. It is worth stating that his acknowledgement of these preferences were not salient to him until a co-worker (presumably a Woman of Color) remarked about the racialized trend she observed. Nonetheless, with this help

Russell went on to consider “what to do” with his new perspective, including reflecting on the way he positions himself in Jackson’s.

This encounter and racial awakening evoked a lot of emotion in Russell, as indicated in his RCJ entry. In our mid-semester interview, Russell went on to further discuss his emotions related to this encounter,

That was real discouraging, just noticing little instances like that, either my personal life or at work. It gets exhausting, having to see that all the time and being consciously aware of okay is this racism, or is there something else going on, like over thinking the smallest interactions. I am just so emotionally drained, and I think you notice on my RCJs, it's gone from ending more positive, I'm becoming super pessimistic, like there's no way we can beat this. This sucks. The world is a piece of S [shit]. It's super exhausting.

Through this layered exchange, Russell’s sense of racial reality and white fragility are challenged by the observations of racial preferences of his customers at Jackson’s. On his processing of the racialized observation detailed above, in our second interview, Russell added that accompanying white fragility came the temptation to revert to the sanctity of white ignorance,

I’ve definitely felt that temptation [to give up], but I don’t feel like I can anymore because of this program. I’ve taken off these blinders and I can’t put them back on. Even if I would want to go back to blind ignorance and not worry how good I’ve got it, there is no way that I could ignore this.

Feeling compelled to explore anti-racism in more depth, the continuation of Russell’s remarks indicate that he is still to working through—Treading Water—how to best articulate his thoughts about race/ism. Russell stated,

These people that need help—not these people. I'm not racist. But people of different ethnic origins that need—they don't need but it would be appreciated if more people helped them in regards to anti-racism. That was borderline racist right there.

As Russell acknowledged his problematic word choice and relative incoherence in describing his hopes for the impact he can play in challenging racism, I offered him the opportunity to restate/rephrase his thoughts. He added, “I just want to be an advocate for equality within societal measures.” As scholars of race/ism and whiteness have argued, when white people engage in race talk, with each other or with People of Color, their dialogue is often riddled with contradictions that reify whiteness (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013; Picower, 2009; Matias & Mackey, 2016).

Regardless of whether a swimmer is in the shallow or the deep, at any point they can encounter a feeling of uncertainty or racialized cognitive dissonance in relation to their racial knowledge, understanding, or desired pedagogical decision making. Their foot may slip on the pool floor, they may grow weary from treading water for too long, or they may not be comfortable staying in the deep end. Supporting students as they engage in the four steps of wrestling—awakening racial reality; acknowledging the existence of a racial lens; questioning what to do; feeling white fragility—may help them find their way into the Deep instead of retreating to the Shallow End.

### **Splashing Around in the Shallow End**

Every swimming pool has a shallow end that serves several purposes for swimmers. For inexperienced or young swimmers, the shallow end can provide solace from the depths of the deep. Marin loves the shallow end because she can stand up and play with the water toys without fear of getting swept up by the ebb and flow of other swimmers. Sometimes though the Shallow End is populated by swimmers who are not really interested in swimming, but feel forced or persuaded to get in the water. They go along with the motions of being in the pool but are uninterested in moving beyond the

most basic iteration of the being in the water. At times, these swimmers may play along with more advanced swimmers. While at other times, they occupy space that obscures the path or even skill development of others pursuing space in the water. They make waves, splash around, but avoid any focused attempt at developing their skills in the pool.

At this position in the swimming pool of whiteness, participants “played along” with the racialized components of the course, but maintained distance from the emotionality and practicality of engaging in anti-racism. In addition, at times, participants’ behavior echoed the contributions of a Monday Morning Quarterback or Armchair Coach, individuals maintaining this position around the swimming pool of whiteness purport to have figured out the *best* path toward enacting equity oriented teaching in the classroom. They acknowledge the existence of whiteness, and at times, critically engage with it. However, often participants embodying this position rested on the benefits of their whiteness to exist and persist in the space. Three features were evident in participants: drawing on racial language yet demonstrating an unwillingness to engage in related actions, the deployment of distancing behaviors (Elder & Irons, 1998), and a lack of evidence of connection between anti-racism and social studies education.

Not unsurprisingly, every participant indicated a relatively vague understanding of the role that race/ism and whiteness play in education, as evidenced in Chapter 4. Having engaged in decades of schooling designed to protect the interests of white communities, students were only recently beginning to pull back the curtain on this insidious fact. In our first interviews and early RCJs, participants struggled to articulate the differences between non-racism and anti-racism and offered few examples of anti-racist social studies in action. However, for most participants, the responses to these

questions evolved to demonstrate greater sense of critical clarity over the course of the semester as previously evidenced. And yet, in some instances, this evolution was less clear.

**“Talking the talk” but not “walking the walk.”** The Racial Contract (RC) for which all white people are stakeholders in, normalizes white acknowledgement of the continued influence of racism in the school system (Mills, 1997). The RC permits that participants in this study would verbalize their acknowledgement that racism is bad (non-racism) and justify their participation in this research study. The RC allows for participants to shallowly engage in and with racialized content over the course of the semester, and even, at times utilize racially-just language in course-generated materials or in interviews. This acknowledgement, or “talking the talk” of whiteness, allows them to take credit as being a “good white person” without insisting they follow up their talk with informed, anti-racist action. At times, participants *Splashing in the Shallow End*, demonstrated a racial standpoint rooted in a lot of talking and little walking.

As I examined the data produced/collected throughout this study, I grew hopeful that participants began to consider ways in which their future teaching could be linked to or informed by anti-racism. From RCJs, to interviews, and class observations, I saw evidence of increasing racial knowledge and understanding and voiced calls for anti-racist teaching. And yet, upon review with analysis of the *Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan*, my hopes were dashed as several participants who had talked their talk of anti-racism, demonstrated little to none direct attention to race/ism or anti-racism in their lesson. whiteness had allowed me to accept a hokey-hope (Duncan-Andrade, 2009) as I accepted the voiced and written statements of participants until this point.

According to the instructions for the assignment, students were expected to, “clearly incorporate an anti-racist pedagogical approach, as provided in *Everyday Antiracism*,” as well as write, “a brief narrative (1-2) paragraphs of your topic selection, your pedagogical approach, and how this lesson attends to the goals of anti-racist teaching.” Upon review of the documents submitted with each participants’ lesson plan, no evidence of meeting these requirements was present in either Danielle or Madison’s documents. In fact, the assignments appear to barely be completed. Perhaps this was a result of an overloaded schedule at the end of a busy academic term; it is hard to distinguish where the depths of whiteness end and procrastination begins.

When examining the folder submitted via Google Drive by Danielle, the lesson plan is a stark, bulleted list of activities to be completed by a teacher. A list for which any practicing teacher would struggle to enact, as little information is provided. The accompanying PowerPoint presentation only has one slide, a title slide, with no supporting information. There is a handout as well, that includes the most information of all the documents included in Danielle’s submission. The worksheet is titled “U.S. Constitution” and features a table with “Virginia Plan,” “New Jersey Plan,” and “Great Compromise” across the top and “Proposal,” “Slavery & Representation,” “Rationale of Proposal,” “Supporters of the Proposal,” and “Opponents of the Proposal” in the first column. There are no instructions provided on the assignment sheet either.

In our final interview, I asked Danielle about this lesson plan and what specifically about the lesson she thought made it anti-racist in nature. At this point, I had not had a chance to view the lesson as I waited until the semester was complete to review course related assignments. After I ask the question, “So speaking of the class, tell me a

little bit about the lesson plan that—because of the lesson plan you created the Enacting Anti-racism lesson plan? Danielle requested I pull up her Google Drive folder so that she could remember what she had submitted. In our exchange, Danielle described the lesson,

I don't have to school you in US history, you know everything there, but that was just a huge part of one of the most recognized documents in US history [U.S. constitution], and I thought that even just something as simple as this could enact an anti-racist pedagogy. It didn't have to be in-your-face, but it's not underlying in this document. It's the rationale for these plans, at least for one of them, and so I don't know, I enjoyed this last one. I was like, you know, this is really not that difficult.

While anti-racism does not have to be “in-your-face” to include conversations of race/ism does not inherently make a lesson anti-racist. As King & Chandler (2016) noted, even non-racist teachers acknowledge the existence of race/ism. Therefore, I went on to specifically ask Danielle what she thought made the lesson anti-racist. She replied,

The ability to bring up, like you can't see them filling in anything or anything like that, but even just having oh, slavery and representation. How did it address this, right? Like we're going to talk about why they wanted their entire population including the slaves to be within that count, right? It's not just because, "Oh, we wanted more." It's because most of their population included slaves, right? And so we're not going to just be like, "Oh, they wanted it because they just had more people," right? Or this or that. It is the reason they wanted it the way that they had proposed it. So, I mean, this one was not too difficult to include an anti-racist pedagogy.

At best, Danielle's lesson plan could be described as non-racist in nature. She makes some commonsense assumptions and limited racial knowledge that it “just makes sense” to talk about race/ism and slavery when examining the constitution. Nothing about this lesson, or Danielle's explanation of it, would lead an individual informed by anti-racism to elicit anti-racist aims in the classroom.

Madison's Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan submission was also void of any statement or outright recognition of anti-racism. When examining the folder submitted

via Google Drive by Madison, the lesson plan provides a moderately thorough description of activities associated with the lesson. Also, examining the US Constitution, in this lesson compared the document alongside several other governing documents: Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, Articles of Confederation, and the Iroquois Confederacy Constitution. In small groups students will explore one of the documents as well as the U.S. Constitution. Each group will then present about their assigned document and how it relates to the U.S. Constitution. As individuals, each student is instructed to complete a table comparing each of the documents to each other and soliciting commonalities across all documents. The PowerPoint presentation associated with the project serves as placeholder for the actions detailed above, and concludes asking students to vote on which document they believe to have the greatest impact on the U.S. Constitution.

In her final interview, Madison brought up this lesson at first, without prompting on my part, because she was able to teach it during her field experience. On this lesson, she stated,

For example just the other day I was teaching about the constitution and this Iroquois Confederation and how we, the big we, the United States government has a lot of similarities between the Iroquois Confederation and the United States. So, I was trying to get my students to understand that this could be a possible avenue for our play makers. It's not that I was getting frustrated but I was just like, guys, you know, "Do you think that this is a possibility?" And they were like, "Oh no, no this is definitely not a possibility."

So it's kind of like finding that balance between them actually making their decision and being like, this is blatantly our constitution, you know? So, I think just having my mindset open to being such an open person and having to realize that these kids are just not at that level. that I'm in. They're not willing to accept that level, and whether it's because they didn't have a teacher like that who was like, "You can challenge the way that your friends are thinking." I never had a

teacher like that, but, honestly, I don't think I would be very receptive to it so it's like this fine balance of like, "Do I force them? No," but how can I kindly guide them to that, you know?

Unaware that this lesson was tied to her Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan submission, later in the interview I asked Madison to explain the lesson. She stated that taught the lesson in her field experience, and that it served as the introductory lesson about the U.S. constitution. Of her students, Madison commented, "they have no foundation whatsoever about the U.S. constitution. I was lucky enough to have the first day. So, I kind of laid my foundation with the constructivist approach." After allowing students to generate their own groups, Madison stated she,

gave one group the Magna Carta, an abridged version of course. An abridged version of the Articles of Confederation, another one of the Mayflower Compact, and then another one of the Iroquois Confederation. And we laid a lot of foundation. I asked a lot of questions like, "Who is writing this?" "Why are they writing this?" "What is the one narrative that is being represented here based upon who is writing this quote?"

Madison added that her main goal of the lesson was to have students inquire about which document had the greatest influence on the construction of the U.S. Constitution. She continued,

Some would say Magna Carta because it created natural law and therefore we would have no other one without the Magna Carta. I'm like, "Sure. Right. Humans are naturally prone to organize themselves."

Anyway, then the Articles of Confederation because we understand what we shouldn't do. The Mayflower Compact was a little like, weird one, but one person was like I'm the first one in the U.S.

I'm like, okay.

And then we get to the Articles of Confederation. It was pretty split.

But the one thing they couldn't grasp was that we're taught, you know, that Native Americans are uncivilized and less than us. "Why would we go to them for government advice," right? And I was like, "Well, do they trade with each other?" They're like, "Oh yeah, definitely. Yeah, we encouraged them and we trade with them though, and it's cool."

"So do you think they know about their constitution," and they're like, "No?" And yeah, yeah. If they traded with them, they knew if they had a constitution. And our constitution is almost identical to theirs. So yes, we might have started with the Articles of Confederation, but then we realized that something has been really good for the last 200 years.

And I said, "They were researching dictatorships, they were researching monarchies, politics, democracies. They were reading old ancient texts that were finding different government ideologies and political philosophies. Of course they would reach out to any sort of resource they had."

Despite a written lesson plan that appeared non-racist at best, through this dialogue, Madison recalled her attempt to challenge student understanding of the construction of America's founding documents. Although the exchange was vastly confined by Madison's limited racial knowledge and understanding and deficit-oriented conceptions of her students' abilities, this discussion evidences her willingness to attempt conversations, more critical in nature. Madison's lesson demonstrates her knowledge that the lessons common in White Social Studies may be inaccurate or incomplete, though she does not maintain enough racial pedagogical content knowledge to enact a pedagogical approach that engages students in anti-racism. An important follow up to this encounter is in relation to Madison's next steps. Does she reflect on her shortcomings in this lesson and revise for future students—to move toward the Deep End OR does she rely on deficit oriented assessments that they are not making connections that should be obvious to them—and continue in the Shallow End?

Across both of these examples from Danielle and Madison, it is difficult to distinguish any direct attention to race/ism or anti-racism in their written lesson plans. In their recounting of the lessons in their final interviews there is little information to make one glean a different interpretation than that provided by their lesson plans. In fact, Danielle's reference to "the ability to bring up," leaves us wondering what is actually being brought up and is, if anything, non-racist in nature as a non-racist racial standpoint would acknowledge the existence of racism in a historical context and stop there. Similarly, while incorporating a variety of sources—notably the Iroquois Confederacy Constitution—is a step toward challenging White Social Studies, without the guidance of a teacher rooted in anti-racism this does nothing more than perpetuate a whitewashing of U.S. history.

**Enacting distancing behaviors.** Elder and Irons (1998) articulated nine behaviors utilized by whites when in situations in which they are forced to encounter race/ism (e.g., Definitions game; Where are the People of Color?; Racism isn't the only problem; Being an expert; Instant solutions; Find the racist; After I...; Geography; You've come a long way). These behaviors are often unconscious, and serve to preserve a sense of white normalcy or to prevent the burdensome appearance of white emotionality (Matias, 2016). In this study, participants engaged in three such behaviors. For many, including participants here, these behaviors may not appear to be problematic in nature. *Of course*, you want to engage with People of Color. *Of course*, racism is not the only problem we face. However, through a lens of critical whiteness studies we can interpret the application of white commonsense (Leonardo, 2013) to make these actions

seem normal insofar that the ability of white pre-service teachers to engage in such behaviors evidences the utility of finding ways to remain in the Shallow End.

*Requesting the presence of people of color.* Given the demographics of the class and the entire of college of education, it would be difficult to surround students with People of Color at every turn. It should be stated, that such actions would not be the desired response to this behavior, but rather a restating of the limited possibilities whiteness provides to redress this “concern.” Elder and Irons (1998) noted,

Many White people believe that until they can discuss racism with people of color directly, the issue can't be addressed. This belief also suggests that if there are only a limited number of minorities representing a particular organization or community, racism isn't a problem (p. 120).

In designing the course, I took great care in selecting course materials, readings, and invited guest speakers. I attempted to select texts that were written by both Scholars of Color and white scholars, as well as guest speakers, white and non-white, to present the case that anti-racist social studies teaching is to be taken up by all. Also, I wanted to be sure to be intentional in the voices to which students were exposed. A bunch of white people only reading the work of other white people to talk about race is problematic and futile to the goals of critical whiteness pedagogy (Matias & Mackey, 2016). And yet, some scholars suggest that exploratory discussions by whites into race/ism and whiteness should be conducted in single-raced racial groups (Leonardo, 2013; Tochluk, 2010). Said more directly, there is some stuff white folks need to think through and figure out before burdening People of Color with it.

Although participants shared their appreciation for the contributions of white scholars that joined the class—whether in person, via Skype, or in written form—in both class discussion and one-on-one interviews, they shared their desire for engagement with Scholars of Color. On September 12<sup>th</sup>, the first invited speaker to join the class was Dr. Wilson, a white, male, associate professor of social studies education, formerly from a southern state in the United States. Students engaged with Dr. Wilson in a thoughtful and meaningful way as he shared his insights and experiences teaching about race/ism at a middle school in rural, mostly white, area. After a thorough and thoughtful conversation via Skype, the class turned to a debrief discussion led by the course instructors. Immediately following the disconnect of Dr. Wilson, Madison jokingly commented, “So that’s what he looks like,” followed by awkward laughter by the rest of the group. About ten minutes later, Conor admitted, “Maybe it was just me, but I didn’t realize he was white.” To which several students chime in “Same.” Conor continued,

I just figured that since he was talking about race that he was Black, especially since he was talking about anti-racist pedagogy. So I remember thinking that wow, these guys are really confident in their beliefs if they are willing to say these things, from what I assumed was a Black man. But now it makes more sense...he showed up on Skype and I was like “Oh, he’s white...”

In my field notes from this class session, I observed at the time that this preconception was not surprising. On the surface, making such an assumption may not be seen directly as resistance. However, to assume that scholarship calling white teachers to be critical of the ways in which they teach social studies, had to come from a Scholar of Color situates anti-racism from beyond the identity of the white teacher. While Madison’s and Conor’s admissions do not inherently cause problems for teacher educators, this assumption does

create distance between the desired outcome, adoption of anti-racist standpoint, and the white pre-service teachers participating in the class.

*Searching for the geography of racism.* The application of racism as a geographic problem occurred several times throughout the course. This approach both normalizes racism in certain contexts and allows individuals to ignore its persistence in others (Elder & Irons, 1998). This defense was deployed in two ways in this study. First, participants wrote off racism that occurred in southern states—seemingly expecting it to happen, therefore it was un-noteworthy when reported. Second, participants also referenced the suburban/rural/urban context of schools in relation to the need or desire to engage in race/ism related teaching in their future classrooms.

The dialogue with Dr. Wilson, as discussed above, surfaced another distancing behavior. Students echoed Conor’s comment of surprise in Dr. Wilson’s whiteness, based on their reading of his scholarship. In addition, participants evidenced that the challenges Dr. Wilson shared were unsurprising and even expected to them, considering he was teaching in the rural south. In the Skype session, Dr. Wilson admitted to students that he had been, “raised to be racist.” Based on my field notes from the class session, participants voiced that his acknowledgement of his troubling upbringing and personal experiences tackling racism in the rural south gave Dr. Wilson “credibility” in his contributions in the discussion and his scholarship. As students shared their reflections from the Skype session, James admitted, “This might be a microaggression, but I totally did not expect him to be from Alabama.” Another student added that, in general, they (the group of students) considered all white people from Alabama racist and applauded Dr.

Wilson for recognizing his positionality and working to challenge racism and white supremacy in his work. Hannah, pushed back against this generalization in saying,

On the other side of that, I thought it was really interesting when he, um, talked about how no matter where you are from there are racist foundations everywhere. So, in a way, we can look at ourselves and say, ‘We were, in some ways, raised to be racist,’ and how education can move us beyond that.

Just as racism and whiteness *Stamped* our history from its beginning, it also exists beyond any traditional geographic boundary. White Social Studies has helped shaped white racial knowledge to assume that racism is grounded in southern states, despite its rich relationship everywhere. This geography of whiteness (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000) affords white pre-service teachers residing in “non-racist” states the privilege to distance themselves from modern day racism, or even discredit those who claim its existence, and make sense of racism when it appears in traditionally “racist” states.

***Wanting an instant solution.*** In an age of accountability and neoliberal efficiency, it comes as no surprise that pre-service teachers are seeking a quick fix or checklist they can enact in the classroom. However, the problems of race/ism and whiteness cannot be undone in an instant; rather, they require a depth of knowledge and commitment to equity uncommon in most teacher education programs. Throughout the semester, participants indicated they were looking for a quicker path toward justice in their classroom or indicated that committing the time needed for true anti-racist teaching would impede their abilities to teach social studies. The call for an instant solution to the problem of race/ism in social studies was also represented through participant insistence that if they only had the content or resources to this they would be able to engage in anti-racist teaching. Drawing heavily on the notion that they had been educated in White Social Studies, participants consistently sought specific, concrete resources or lesson

plans they could use in the classroom, that would make their teaching anti-racist in nature. I recorded in my field journal that with each guest speaker that visited the class came a question like “What resources would you recommend we use?” Guests obliged by giving students several resources for them to draw upon in their future classrooms.<sup>25</sup> This distancing behavior is reminiscent of Bartolome’s (1994) “methods fetish” in that instead of spending time investing in developing an internalized understanding of anti-racism, In our second interview, Madison suggested that what makes anti-racist teaching difficult is access to primary sources,

Well, my biggest thing is how am I going to find primary sources from all angles. I want there to be this database that I can reference from [laughter]... Yeah, I will [laughter]. But it's—that'd be so cool. Literally, my job would be done if somebody would just create each topic, and then give all the articles you need to teach it. Maybe I'll do that course grad, and then charge people a subscription.

Again, asking for help finding resources and primary sources is not atypical for beginning teachers. But, if the asking of the question becomes the end of the road toward anti-racist teaching, the question serves as a way to protect one’s investment in whiteness.

Moreover, hyper-attention to sources diverts one from the dehumanizing impact that racism and white supremacy maintains in the classroom.

In addition, participants also offered instant solutions for making the course more successful in the future. In the final interview, I asked participants for feedback for how the course could improve. A common theme across responses was that students felt they did not “do” anti-racism enough. Several participants echoed Danielle’s suggestion,

The first time we were actually told to go and do that was that [Enacting Anti-Racism] lesson plan. That's one experience. In my opinion, that was not enough. And why couldn't we incorporate that in all of our lessons? If it can be done, we

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<sup>25</sup> As an instructor for this group for a year, I also got this question frequently. Usually, I shared the same 4-5 sources, and yet they kept asking me for suggestions.

didn't we do-- you know? And some people were like, "Oh, you don't have to do it in this or that or whatever," but it's applicable in most situations if not all. So, I wish it would have been in all lesson plans.

Certainly, a fair critique and suggestion to offer. In constructing the course syllabus, this was a feature of my discussion with the course instructors. We made the decision to give students the entire semester to “get to know” anti-racism so that they could create a strong anti-racist lesson plan at the end of the semester. If students drew on anti-racism in their first two lesson plans it would be great, but not required. Here, Danielle’s suggestion infers that anti-racism would only be initiated if it is required of students. By this logic, anti-racism would never occur, because it is not required of practicing teachers. From the safety of whiteness, the repetitive nature of this critique suggests that for many, anti-racism would only be seen as a requirement and not as a necessity.

**Disconnect between anti-racism and social studies teaching.** In each interview with participants, I asked if they perceived connections between anti-racism and social studies teaching. These questions were designed to insist that participants, at minimum, think about potential connections between anti-racism and social studies teaching. At best, as evidenced in *Braving the Deep End*, participants articulated clear connections between the two and shared examples of their attempts at anti-racist teaching.

In both interviews and course sessions, participants voiced concern that the time spent engaging around anti-racism in class was getting in the way their preparation as future teachers. The particularities of whiteness may make this appear to not be a problem. Pre-service teachers seeking more attention to the specific actions related to classroom teaching is not uncommon. However, the ways in which participants echoed this call served as evidence of this “need” serving to distance them from enacting the

work of anti-racism. In our second interview, Conor shared a conversation being circulated amongst the cohort of students indicated that some were feeling as though the anti-racist component of the methods course was “redundant.” He clarified, “I think there's an issue of, we get the pedagogy but we don't get the professional insight. Not to say that what we're learning about anti-racist pedagogy is not important.” The concern voiced here by Conor, that discussions of anti-racism impeded students’ access to “professional insight,” appeared in data produced/collected by several participants. Also in our second interview, when asked if there was anything that was discussed previously in the class that could be revisited, Madison noted that she felt the course had spent too much time on anti-racism. She felt as though the course had, “beat it down a little bit. “ Although she agreed that it was, “so important to learn about this stuff and that we’ve learned about it for so long that I am lacking in certain aspects [about teaching].” She continued by expressing her feelings that, “It’s been a frustrating time because I feel like we talk a lot about this [race and racism] but we don’t spend a lot of time talking about activities that we can use in the classroom.”

Participants continued to voice the concern/frustration that they felt confident in their understanding of race/ism and anti-racism yet underprepared to engage in the profession of teaching. Although not specifically stating that there was a negative relationship between anti-racism and social studies teaching, the insistence that anti-racism got in the way of social studies teaching remained troubling. Yet, as evidenced by an analysis of their Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plans and in their responses to my questions in our final interview and RCJs, they had not demonstrated such mastery.

Reminiscent to the results reported by two recent studies by Matias and Mackey (2016) and Matias and colleagues (2014), participants embodying the racial standpoint of *Splashing in the Shallow End* found themselves trapped within the cycle of whiteness. The emotional disinvestment in the utility of in-depth explorations into race/ism and anti-racism produced a stifled development of racial knowledge which caused participants at this standpoint to recycle hegemonic whiteness, across data sources.

### **A Note on Tension and Resistance**

Tension and even resistance are to be expected when engaging white pre-service teachers with persistent dialogue around race/ism and whiteness (Elder & Irons, 1998; Galman, et al., 2010; Giroux, 1997; Leonardo, 2013; Matias, 2016; Mazzei, 2008; Pollock, 2008; Sleeter, 2004). Leonardo and Zembylas (2013) noted that engaging with whites about whiteness in education insists, by the nature of whiteness itself, that “Whites develop a set of discursive strategies to deal with racial contradictions, one of which is the establishment of an alibi, or accounting for one’s self in the face of allegations of racism” (p. 155). This resistance is merely evidence of the imminent importance dialogue around anti-racism should be imbedded within teacher education programs. Resistance can come in several forms and from several locations. In fact, resistance is to be expected as it allows the Racial Contract (Mills, 1997) to be upheld. At times throughout the study, each participant demonstrated various levels of tension within themselves and the project. In fact, Pollock, Deckman, Mira, and Shalaby (2010) noted that such responses are generated from one, seemingly simple question: *What Can I Do?*

Said with three unique inflections, this question offers specific insights into the tensions present in the racial standpoints discussed in this chapter. When participants ask,

“What can I *do*?” they are representing a desire for specific, actionable steps that would allow them to engage in anti-racist teaching with relative ease. Madison’s request for a website with a bevy of justice-oriented teaching materials and Danielle’s persistent request for specific texts to use in her classroom serve as two examples discussed above. I proactively tried to head off this act of resistance by selecting a course text, *Everyday Antiracism*, that provided specific and relevant examples of anti-racist teaching in action. Nonetheless, participants still reached out for more specifics. This might demonstrate more of a lack of racial pedagogical content knowledge (Chandler, 2015) than it does resistance to engaging in anti-racist work.

Second, when asked, “What *can* I do?” participants embody a sense of acknowledging the structural components of racism, yet failing to interpret what their individual part is to play in dismantling systems of racial oppression. This question is often accompanied by the overwhelming presence of white emotionality when one’s racial reality is jolted. As indicated by Russell’s experience at Jackson’s wherein one’s racial reality is challenged often causes whites to experience racial guilt and a heightened sense of racial consciousness. For some, this leads to a paralysis and a retreat to the safety of white ignorance (Pollock et al, 2010). In Russell’s case he reported mulling over these questions and was willing to move into an agentic position leaning toward anti-racism, rather than retreating toward non-racism and whiteness. Third, when asked, “What can *I* do?” pre-service teachers demonstrate a concern in their personal capabilities in teaching about race/ism. Despite prolonged and direct attention to race/ism in the course, participants indicated that they still felt varied amounts of uncertainty in their ability to enact anti-racist teaching. Such an admission may reflect an accurate assessment of their

ability levels. However, if unpreparedness is evoked as a reason to not attempt to adopt an anti-racist standpoint it can be a substantial barrier to overcome. Such an assessment cannot fully be interpreted by the results generated in this study. However, it speaks to the need for long-term scaffolded support for teachers as they attempt to develop an anti-racist position in their classrooms.

### **Conclusion: Non-Racist and Anti-Racist Standpoints in the Classroom**

This chapter sought to articulate the three racial standpoints embodied by participants in this study. The development of racial knowledge, a racial standpoint, and the deployment of racial pedagogical decision making are closely linked and rely upon each other to persist in pre-service teachers' approach to teaching social studies. One's knowledge informs their stance in the classroom, which dictates the pedagogical decisions they make. These positions embodied by participants were held fluidly throughout the semester as individuals moved about the swimming pool of whiteness.

Despite the resistance, tension, and embodied non-racism that emerged at times from participants, overall, these findings reveal that students enrolled in this course demonstrated greater understanding of race/ism, whiteness and the role each play on education and in social studies teaching. The semester concluded with a sense from participants that anti-racism was in fact possible in the social studies classroom, yet they remained unsure about what that would mean for them moving forward with student teaching and into their first years as in-service teachers. Some participants indicated that they were excited to "tryout" anti-racism in their field experiences. While others were unwilling to make such a bold claim. In Chapter 6, I move the discussion to the implications of this work on teacher education. I seek to provide additional

considerations for future and related work as well as share personal reflections on how to engage in the work of anti-racist social studies teacher education.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion and Implications—Navigating the Swimming Pool of whiteness in Social Studies Teacher Education**

*“Yet one thing is generally common: we white people do not interrogate ourselves on what it means to be white on a regular basis. This often results in a lack of both (1) the desire to see ourselves as part of a racial dynamic and (2) the skills to navigate racial terrain successfully” (Tochluk, 2010, p. v).*

In this dissertation, I examined the racial knowledge, racial standpoints, and racial pedagogical decision making of six pre-service teachers enrolled in a social studies methods course infused with direct and prolonged attention to race/ism, whiteness, and White Social Studies. Over the course of the fall 2016 semester, participants were asked to reflect upon the status of their whiteness, consider the ways in which whiteness infiltrates and informs social studies teaching, and evaluate their approach toward racialized teaching. In this chapter, I will briefly review the findings discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, address to three limitations of the study, and conclude with attention to the impact of this study as well as implications for future work.

Chapter 4 featured a discussion of the foundational racial knowledge and understanding presented by participants at the start of the study and course. Participants drew extensively on prior experience with race/ism in order to contextualize their stance toward anti-racism. Data indicated participants had relatively limited experience acknowledging the influence that race/ism and whiteness had played on their lives until their time at beginning at Central University. To that end, participant recollections of race/ism, white supremacy, non-racism, and anti-racism relied extensively upon on white

commonsense-approved racial knowledge. Reference to a Black/white racial binary, resistance toward directly discussing race/ism, attention to the overt rather than covert iterations of racism and white supremacy, as well as extensive reference to White Social Studies demonstrate that participants, largely, struggled to see beyond the white imagination (Matias et al., 2014). Despite the recognition of the limited and even problematic nature of such knowledge, participants struggled to articulate understanding beyond the scope of what whiteness would allow—that which protects their investment in whiteness (Lipsitz, 2006). Moreover, when considering non-racism and anti-racism in the context of social studies education, participants were limited by the shallow nature of their racial pedagogical content knowledge (Chandler, 2015), as shaped by years immersed in White Social Studies.

In Chapter 5, the examination of the findings continued as I utilized the metaphor of a swimming pool to discuss to the adoption of three racial standpoints by participants: Braving the Deep End, Treading Water, and Splashing Around in the Shallow End. The embodiment of each of these positions was fluid throughout the semester as participants' awareness, "ignorance," avoidance, and critique of whiteness was persistently in flux. Participants that were Braving the Deep End demonstrated an internalized sense of anti-racism, a willingness to adopt an intersectional approach toward teaching, and attempted to imbed anti-racism in their racial pedagogical decision making. However, due to the pervasive influence of whiteness participants, at times, moved from the Deep End and were required to wrestle with the emotions of a break in their racial reality. While Treading Water, participants evidenced a necessity to reconcile racialized cognitive dissonance they encountered as they experienced a heightened sense of racial awareness.

Just as treading water in an actual swimming pool is laborious and difficult to maintain for extended periods of time, participants at this stage often moved quickly from Treading Water either back into the Deep End or escaped toward the Shallow End. Participants Splashing Around in the Shallow End played along with anti-racism in an attempt to save face and to be perceived as a “Good White Person” (Sullivan, 2014; Thompson, 2003) while also engaging in several distancing or resistant behaviors.

### **Study Limitations**

Three limitations persist in this study. First, as stated, I had an existing relationship with every student in the class. I do not consider this a limitation to the study, but it requires attention here. Personal relationships are at the foundation of teaching and learning. Participants were also aware of my personal research interests from early exchanges in their program. This knowledge led them to see me as “credible” and “authentic” in my approach to examining their thoughts about race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy. I cannot help but wonder if participants would so openly discuss and write about their thoughts, feelings, and concerns if we had just met and were engaged in a strictly researcher-participant relationship. On the contrary, a more formal researcher-participant relationship might have reduced the pressure of social desirability associated with being known as a “Good White Person” (Sullivan, 2014; Thompson, 2003) who cares about anti-racism.

Second, despite an existing relationship with students and due to the necessary maintenance of ethical boundaries, I was unable to serve as an instructor of record for this course. Therefore, theoretical and pedagogical intentions I entered syllabus construction with may not have been evenly embodied within the actual instruction of the course.

Although the instructors of the course supported the curricular and pedagogical changes made, their delivery of said changes was limited by their lack of racialized knowledge. Students were still exposed to every reading and discussion I had hoped would occur with the course; however, the depth of engagement and analysis provided by the instructors varied from how I might have approached similar activities. Third, given the constraints of the field experience component of the course, we could not require that students attempt to enact anti-racism in a classroom. The assessment of their pedagogical decision making, which was infused in Chapter 5, was limited to their Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan and through RCJs and interview dialogue. Despite these limitations, the findings generated from this study can make substantial contributions to the fields of social studies and teacher education more broadly.

#### **Discussion: Non-Racism and Anti-Racism in Social Studies Teacher Education**

Three naturalistic generalizations (Stake, 1995; Stake & Trumbull, 1982) can be drawn from this data: internalization in anti-racism depends on the willingness of participants to engage in/with racialized content; racial standpoints are difficult to capture within the context of a research study; and support for anti-racism does not equate to an embodied anti-racism or anti-racist pedagogical decision making. In considering each of these generalizations, three specific questions came to my mind, which will be used to guide my discussion of the findings generated from this study. The chapter will conclude with attention to potential implications for future work related to policy, pedagogy, curriculum, and research in teacher education.

## **Does What Teacher Educators Do Even Matter?**

As a teacher educator-researcher, I persistently believe the work I do with pre-service teachers will impact their future work in the social studies classroom. I have been proud of the work I do with students and the work that they create. And yet, the data generated from this study leads me to question whether the work done through amending this course syllabus will really make a difference in the future pedagogical decisions of the students involved in this study. As I stated in Chapter 1, my decision to construct this course and the project was a result of my belief that the students were capable of engaging with/in anti-racism given our previous experiences in a years' worth of social studies methods courses together. The first day of our first course, my co-instructor and I displayed an image on the screen of the two of us attending a recent protest that had occurred on campus. Our first interactions with this group of students featured a discussion of the political nature of teaching, and that we were going to be open and honest about the necessity of teachers to understand the politicized context in which they are working. From day one, our tone with students was to promote informed action both in and out of the classroom.

In those courses, we discussed several critically-oriented topics, including: equitable teaching practices, culturally responsive pedagogy, human rights, social justice, master narratives, bias in texts and media, critical pedagogy, and even anti-racism. Students engaged in activities where they challenged the traditional narratives common in social studies and created lesson and unit plans designed to diversify the social studies classroom. In each of the prior classes, students also responded to a "Call to Action" wherein they surveyed their state of pedagogical knowledge and established working

plans to aid in their personal professional development. Students voiced their acknowledgement and appreciation of the approach we were taking to challenge the ways in which they had previously conceptualized social studies teaching. Persistently, students drew on our discussions of challenging the master narrative and of disrupting the myth of American exceptionalism when designing lesson plans and participating in class activities. These experiences are not common to social studies teacher education programs across the country, as most institutions provide only one content area methods course for pre-service teachers. I literally said to myself: *If anyone would do this, it would be this group.* And yet, as a result of this study, I am still left wondering if the work of teacher educators can really make a difference toward enacting anti-racism.

Of the six participants in this study, those most frequently Braving the Deep End discussed in their first interviews, as well as in their RCJ entries, prior experience engaging with justice-oriented educational issues or approaches. Hannah observed that her previous experience doing a privilege walk led her toward a path of examining her privilege and the oppression of others in her work as a future social studies teacher. Conor expressed his thorough experiences participating in the LGBTQ community and working to create a justice-oriented thematic approach to teaching social studies.

For these two students, this project, this class, served to affirm their existing beliefs in a Social Studies that challenges intersectional oppression and values the contributions of Students, Histories, and Communities of Color. Hannah observed that the class had served to “unlock [sic] a door, just one more path. . . there was a starting point and I learned more, and more, and more.” In our second interview, I asked Hannah if anything she had read or discussed in class challenged her to think differently about

race/ism, whiteness, or white supremacy. She responded that nothing had directly challenged her prior knowledge, per se, but rather had assisted her to make connections she had not previously considered. However, Hannah stated that she felt those connections were serving as lightbulbs or “aha” moments wherein she felt, “onto something here!” Similarly, in our second interview Conor noted that he was already aware of the institutional nature of racialized oppression, but the course deepened his awareness of the specific ways in which whiteness infiltrated social studies through White Social Studies. For both Conor and Hannah, this class provided the opportunity to garner more tools for their justice-oriented teaching tool box. According to Conor,

Going through this program, especially reading the anti-racist book [*Everyday Antiracism*]...gave me those skills to know what questions I need to ask. “What lens is this person coming from?” “What do I want this person to know?” “How do I understand the world around me, and how do other people understand the world around me?” “Why is that?”

Would Conor and Hannah most likely address issues of race/ism in their future classrooms? Probably. Through analyzing their assignments, reflections, and dialogue throughout the semester, it appears participation in the course did assist in providing clarity, context, and depth to their approach; particularly as it relates to enacting anti-racist pedagogical approaches. Teacher education spaces that serve to affirm the existing justice-oriented motivations serve to validate the need for continued work on the part of pre-service teachers. It could be incredibly deflating for justice-oriented pre-service teachers to enter courses intended to prepare them for their life’s work and face a philosophical disconnect between anti-racist/oppression work and social studies teaching. The intent of this project was to engage participants in an experience that would garner feelings that anti-racism can be social studies and social studies can be anti-racism.

We see a more complicated narrative when we turn to the experience of James. Throughout the study, James demonstrated a willingness to reflect upon his previous thoughts and conceptualizations of race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy as he continued to engage with course material, his classmates, and with me via interviews during the semester. James also discussed racialized exchanges he held with family and friends in which he struggled to articulate a thoughtful critique of their “borderline” racist dialogue and struggled to move beyond the limits of his white racial knowledge to offer an anti-racist rebuttal. He sought feedback and suggestion from me in pursuit of improving his approach with future actions. Although he treaded a great deal of water during the semester, his approach to doing so was grounded in his desire to make meaning of his new racialized knowledge. In our final interview, I asked James what he perceived as the biggest takeaways from participating in the class/study. He reflected simply, “Race is okay to talk about when you talk about it. Once again, [a] methodology for confronting oppression and other forms of oppression. Those are big [for me].” Although James was clearly still wrestling with what to do with his new knowledge, he grasped onto the specific approaches discussed within the course and felt as though the space affirmed his belief that race/ism and other forms of oppression should be discussed in the classroom.

For other participants in this study, the extent to which this course will have on their future work remains unclear. Madison’s knowledge and expressed disposition toward anti-racism remained relatively steady throughout the semester. Early on, Madison avoided directly engaging in race talk; opting instead to use the language of whiteness to talk about everything *but* race/ism. Her Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan

lacked similar clarity regarding an anti-racist approach; despite her stated beliefs that the lesson did in fact draw on anti-racism. And yet, in our final interview, when asked to share her takeaways from the course, Madison reflected, “Once I did a lesson that was anti-racist, I was like, ‘This is possible.’ So, I really like that we had to do those... The takeaway is that it's possible.” Despite producing a lesson that was non-racist in nature, Madison believes the lesson successfully enacted anti-racism in her field classroom, and expressed confidence in her abilities to enact anti-racism in the future,

I'll be fine. I think really well. It's pretty exciting because I have a mixed race course teacher so having this background or having a conversation about is this right, is this what I'm supposed to say, that kind of thing.

Little evidence was generated as a result of this study that would support Madison's assessment of her ability to enact anti-racism in her future classroom.

It became evident through the semester and through revisiting the data generated in this study that enacting justice-oriented change through a single teacher education course continues to be quite a challenge. Even when considered a part of a larger series of conversations of equity-oriented teaching, this study demonstrates students will continue to embody non-racist, or even racist, understandings and approaches to teaching social studies. Students pre-disposed to justice-oriented teaching continued down the path with more nuance; students exploring what it meant for them to be a teacher, continued to do so; and students rooted in post-racial beliefs struggled to move beyond them in a concrete sense.

### **How Do We Know if it Does?**

The second question generated from the findings presented here explores how we can assess if direct and prolonged attention to race/ism, whiteness, and non-racism, and

anti-racism has an impact on the racial standpoint of pre-service teachers. I begin with the affirmation that all teachers have a racial standpoint. Some teachers position themselves intentionally within anti-racism in the classroom. Others, rely on the notions of non-racism that they most likely encountered as K-12 and teacher education students to guide their instructional approach. Many more find themselves somewhere in between the two ends of the spectrum. Firmly stated, the absence of the awareness of a racial standpoint in teachers is not the same thing as the absence of a standpoint. Racism exists whether we acknowledge it or not; therefore, so too does our position toward addressing it in the classroom.

That said, the development of a racial standpoint is relatively challenging to capture within a research study. Participants must be willing to acknowledge that they are developing racial knowledge, generating understanding of said knowledge, experiencing racial cognitive dissonance, and pursuing anti-racist pedagogical decision making. Perhaps even more important for research, participants must be willing to articulate that they are on this journey. Meaning, participants must vocalize—either through direct speech or other forms of communication—that they are experiencing such behaviors, emotions, and encounters. As evidenced in this study, these steps are not linear and are not embodied for a specific duration of time or with consistency. Moreover, participation in this class/study called participants to directly question the ways in which whiteness had influenced their lives, the knowledge, and their approach to teaching social studies. This serves to challenge what white commonsense conceptualizes as “appropriate” racial discourse (Mills, 1997; Leonardo, 2013).

Russell and James most frequently shared the challenges they were encountering as a result of wrestling with the development of new racial knowledge throughout the semester. The emotionality of whiteness weighed heavily on Russell as he considered what to do with the Red Pill from The Matrix. Similarly, James openly admitted when he concluded that some of his prior racial understandings were grounded in faulty, or even racist, logic. While James and Russell were willing to engage with me directly with these cognitive challenges they faced, that does not mean that other students did not also encounter racialized cognitive dissonance. Danielle, Madison, Conor, and Hannah could have also been struggling through the development of their racial standpoint; however, they were less willing to shed light directly on their challenges.

### **Do Actions Speak Louder Than Words?**

We know that students involved in this study had three semesters of critically-oriented social studies teacher education. Over the course of their engagement in this study every participant evidenced more nuanced linguistic abilities in terms of engaging in racial dialogue. Drawing on their prior knowledge gained through the first year of social studies methods course work as well as through the specific attention to race/ism and anti-racism in this study, participants were willing to “talk the talk” of teachers concerned with racial justice and interested in embodying and enacting anti-racism. What remained to be seen was whether participants were willing to “walk the walk” as well. Moon (1998) argued the most damning component of whitespeak is its strategic use to separate symbolic interaction from meaning. As Moon (1998) observed, white talk about race/ism can occur passively, without investment or agency, and without humanity. Subsequently, whitespeak allows white folks to *appear* to embody a sense of anti-racism

without *engaging* in the cognitive and emotional processes that accompany such an endeavor. Every participant articulated a belief that race/ism should be talked about in the social studies classroom, while also recognizing the possibilities of anti-racist social studies. In our final interview, Danielle even acknowledged that she viewed anti-racism as a part of her teaching philosophy moving forward. However, for participants to articulate feelings of support toward anti-racism does not equate to their embodied racial standpoint enacting anti-racism. As evidenced here, in many instances the words of participants—stated support of anti-racism—were disconnected from their observable actions—enacted and embodied anti-racism.

When trying to examine the embodiment of anti-racism we must listen to the words of students/participants as well as observe their actions and pedagogical decision making. Several participants indicated that they were engaging with friends and family around racial issues during the semester. Fewer participants discussed their experiences engaging in race talk in a social studies classroom. When we turned toward their lesson plans, we saw students were less successful in transferring their stated knowledge and anti-racist intentions within a course assignment. Danielle’s insistence that her Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan was anti-racist in nature because it simply “brought up” race/ism when talking about the Constitution is evidence of this disconnect. Within social studies spaces, the presence of racial dialogue alone is not enough to make instruction anti-racist in nature. Even non-racist social studies teachers will talk about race/ism with their students (King & Chandler, 2016). What matters most, is how and what teachers AND students do with race/ism dialogue and their racial knowledge.

## **Toward Anti-Racist Teacher Education: Implications for Future Work**

Comedian Wanda Sykes opened her 2016 special *What Happened...Ms. Sykes?* with a discussion of her experiences being married to a white French woman and raising their two white children. She observed that there were things, events, actions, encounters, et cetera, that her white family was unable to recognize or failed to acknowledge as racialized in nature. On the difference in their racial standpoints, Sykes (2016) commented, “I wish we could live in a colorblind society. But I gotta’ admit, I see shit. I’m sorry, I see shit. I notice it.” As Sykes quipped, it would be nice to live in a colorblind society. The temptation to accept that race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy no longer have an impact on our world or in our classrooms is incredibly alluring. This theory is also exceedingly inaccurate and harmful to Students and People of Color, as well as to white folks, to a lesser extent. For teacher education policy, curriculum, pedagogy, and research to adopt this post-racial or non-racist standpoint is also just as troubling. Here, I provide several recommendations for future work that will assist teacher education professionals in engaging pre-service teachers with/in anti-racist praxis.

### **Policy in Teacher Education**

To begin, we must first look at the mission, vision, and values articulated by the teacher education policies and programs in which teacher education is conducted. Often, university mission statements are written from the perspective rooted in heteronormative whiteness (Iverson, 2007). Although many mission statements are written with the intent of promoting inclusion, they often include veiled language (*i.e.*, social justice, multiculturalism, and diversity rhetoric) that rests on whitespeak (Moon, 1998) to guide

students to the assumption that racism both is, and is not, addressed. With mounting political pressure on teacher education programs given the current federal administration, it is time to get real about enacting teacher education policies grounded in racial realism and committed to true equity and justice for all students. The field has spent too much time placating to white commonsense that it has become increasingly non-racist in its racial standpoint. Further, making the claim that “racism is bad” does not necessarily lead to anti-racist understandings or pedagogy. Rather, teacher education programs must be *overtly* anti-racist in in both their words (policy) and their actions (enacted curriculum).

We should consider constructing teacher education programs and policy grounded in more direct challenges to intersectional oppression. Sefa Dei’s (1996) concept of integrative anti-racism offers an intriguing starting point for colleges of education to consider. In 1996, Sefa Dei offered six points of interest through which we should construct anti-racism in educational spaces: history; culture; identity; representation; community; power and knowledge. Designing teacher education policy with these six components in mind will engage pre-service teachers with/in racialized—and intersectional—explorations into themselves, others, schools, and society insofar that they are better prepared to serve all students, particularly those marginalized by systems of oppression.

Given the recent attention to long standing demands of Students of Color for attention to the influence of race/ism on college campuses, colleges of education should take an authentic and introspective examination of the ways in which they support and prepare future teachers for enacting equity-oriented practices. Participants in this study acknowledged that the racialized events of 2015 at Central University, and across the

country, put race/ism sharply within their sights. Yet, they also demonstrated that a simplistic sense of racial knowledge and understanding does not translate to anti-racist teaching. Through implementing an intersectional, justice-oriented framework—such as Sefa Dei’s (1996) integrative anti-racism—students may begin to develop an internalized sense of anti-racism coupled with experience engaging in anti-racism within the “safety” of their coursework. Such an approach must be implemented programmatically; a single course or instructor will not be able to truly enact change to the ways in which their white students navigate the swimming pool of whiteness.

### **Curriculum in Teacher Education**

For too long, White Social Studies has shaped the ways in which social studies content has been taught and learned. The vast majority of social studies students have been taught to engage in relative racial silence, to believe in the myth of American exceptionalism, to uplift white people and whiteness, and to marginalize People of Color and the depth of their experiences and contributions (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015). Generations of educators, scholars, teachers, and citizens have literally been raised through institutionalized whiteness. And yet, we have a responsibility to construct a curricular experience that places students in space to directly challenge this persistence.

It would be disingenuous for me to claim that a single social studies methods course, such as the one at the center of this study, could reverse decades of students’ and teachers’ internalized White Social Studies. Nonetheless, social studies teacher education must do this work. As evidenced in this study, even pre-service teachers desiring anti-racism struggled with racial pedagogical decision making that was able to critically challenge whiteness and racism. Several considerations can be made from the way in

which the syllabus used in this class was designed as well as from the feedback provided by participants.

Four curricular considerations should be explored. First, teacher educators should seek to lace together readings that attended to the profession of teaching through building students' racial pedagogical content knowledge. Readings that were selected provided concrete examples of racialized teaching, specific approaches to teaching in the classroom (e.g. constructivism), as well as critical conversations of race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy. Second, the selection of authors should also be weighed heavily. Just as it matters who we cite in research; it matters who and what students read in the classroom. Selecting a diverse set of authors is important; equally important is the deliberate discussion of said diversity with students. As evidenced by participants in our discussion regarding the work of Dr. Wilson, students assume race work is done by Scholars of Color, particularly male, heterosexual, Scholars of Color. Curricular choices should represent a variety of identities and perspectives and students should be made aware of it. Otherwise, we continue the limited narrative that race work is not white people's work.

Third, teacher education curriculum should have space for students to process their emotions as they unpack and repack their racial knowledge and understanding. Race reflective journaling threaded with attention to white emotions will help students begin to articulate that which they have been previously taught not to articulate—their feelings about racism (Milner, 2003; Matias & Mackey, 2016). Fourth, curriculum should include space wherein pre-service teachers can “do” or “see” anti-racism in action. Again, each course should embody these approaches, but so too should the entire teacher education

program. Anti-racism would be well-served by the willingness faculty to engage in a programmatic curricular mapping process wherein a spiraling of integrative anti-racism can be implemented.

### **Pedagogy in Teacher Education**

The course at the center of this study was constructed through a lens of critical whiteness pedagogy (Allen, 2004; Matias & Mackey, 2016). Students were asked to consider the ways in which their whiteness influenced their perspective in the classroom; were given space to process the emotionality of their developing racial knowledge and understanding; and were asked to engage with texts that called out whiteness and white supremacy directly. This approach was selected intentionally as most students in the course and College of Education at Central University identified as white and held social studies knowledge predominantly shaped by White Social Studies.

That said, when working with predominantly white students at a PWI teacher educators would benefit from adopting a pedagogical approach grounded in challenging the ways in which whiteness permeates their experiences, their students, and the curriculum. We can no longer afford to placate to white ways of knowing and speaking about race/ism (e.g. whitespeak). To generate such an experience, teacher educators should begin by attempting to establish “new racial spaces” (Bonilla-Silva, 2010) in which pre-service teachers and teacher educators can explore their identities and the influence they collectively play on policy, teaching, learning, and the reproduction of whiteness. In such spaces, race/ism and whiteness are discussed with frankness, a sense of criticality, and a willingness to push through discomfort.

Additionally, given the depth of resistance-oriented behaviors discussed in the Shallow End, teacher educators should consider naming the resistance they see demonstrated by students, in relation to unpacking the influence of race/ism and whiteness on their approach to teaching. If students are aware of, and are held accountable for, the ways in which white people tend to avoid engaging with whiteness then they can begin to see their position as agentic in nature. While I find James' criticism of political correctness as, discussed in Chapter 5, problematic, I do think a meaningful takeaway can be gleaned from our exchange. White folks, particularly those shrouded in privilege, need to understand the ways in which they reify white supremacy. Simply calling someone racist and shutting them down will not move them toward reformation. Rather, quite the opposite. Whites enacting racism and white supremacy deserve to be criticized for their efforts. However, such criticism must be scaffolded with support to guide them toward a more equitable exchange in the future. Every participant in this study, just like I believe every teacher in this country, asserts that all students should receive an equitable and just experience in the classroom. The disconnect lies in transference of cognition and stated beliefs and enacted approaches in the classroom. Teacher educators have the opportunity [read responsibility] to model what it means to both "talk the talk" and "walk the walk" of anti-racism.

### **Research in Teacher Education**

As popularity in race/ism research continues to rise we must approach the work with a sense of deliberate necessity as we examine race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy. More race work does not equate to more race work done well. Several implications can be drawn from this work to inform future research. First, careful

selection critical theories of race/ism must be deployed in pursuit of decentering and dismantling the stronghold of whiteness through white supremacy. Here I selected related tenets of critical race theory and critical whiteness studies to inform the design and analysis of this study. These theories, though common, may not be most appropriate for other studies seeking to explore anti-racism. In fact, additional research specifically unpacking anti-racism directly would strengthen the field of teacher education immensely. Second, researchers must call on white participants, as well as themselves, to get uncomfortable, be messy, and reconcile new racial realities as they encounter racialized cognitive dissonance. As Leonardo (2009) noted, white people are responsible for racism and, therefore, should be involved in its dismantling. However, if the pursuit of anti-racism by whites only serves to reify whiteness and white supremacy, no progress has been made.

Third, although this dissertation focused on the experiences of white students, additional research needs to address how to support Students of Color at PWIs learning alongside white students with limited and varied levels of racial knowledge and understanding. The white participants in this study stated that they wished they could talk to more Students and Faculty of Color about race/ism. Alluding to the notion that speaking only within white spaces and with white faces was not enough for them to garner a sense of the impact of race/ism on social studies teaching and learning. While these interracial dialogues are important, they often place undue burden on the non-white half of the exchange. If we only examine the influence of whiteness and white supremacy on white people then we are vastly limiting our chances at successful anti-racist research outcomes.

As Hall (1985) observed, “Racism is inside the schools and outside the schools, but we must struggle where we are” (qtd. in Gilborn, 1995, p. 176). For white scholars, this means that there is work to be done within white spaces to unpack whiteness, white commonsense, and to complexify white racial knowledge and understanding. Borrowing again from Milner (2010), we must first start where we are by examining ourselves and our communities. It only after understanding the intersectional nature of our identities within ourselves and society that we can begin to move. It is easy to see racism as *over there or their problem*—but until white folks are willing to acknowledge their position in the swimming pool of whiteness, and what they can do to impact the position of other whites in the pool—anti-racist work will forever be futile.

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation sought to uncover the racial knowledge, racial standpoint, and racial pedagogical decision making of secondary social studies teacher education students. Grounded in critical race theory and critical whiteness studies, I examined the ways in which participants engaged with non-racism and anti-racism while working to develop their positionality in the social studies classroom. The three racial standpoints embodied by participants during this study serve to illustrate that the water of whiteness is inescapable for white pre-service teachers. Some participants were able to see the depths of the swimming pool and embraced the challenge of maintaining a position in the Deep End. Others struggled with how to reconcile their newly constructed racial reality as they Treaded Water. And still, participants also demonstrated their comfort of remaining safely within the Shallow End. Regardless of their position, participants relied on whiteness for their survival.

# **APPENDIX**

APPENDIX A: Secondary Social Studies Methods III: Amended Syllabus

APPENDIX B: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol I

APPENDIX C: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol II

APPENDIX D: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol III

APPENDIX E: Race Consciousness Journal Prompts

APPENDIX F: Enacting Anti-Racism Lesson Plan Assignment

## **Secondary Social Studies Methods III: Course Activities and Readings**

### **Comprehensive Lesson Plans (20 points each)**

Throughout this course, you will be asked to create two comprehensive lesson plans, focusing on the same unit of study (e.g., Reconstruction, River Valley Civilizations, Legislative Branch of Government, Human Geography, etc.). You may choose which unit of study you would like to focus your lesson plans on. As comprehensive lesson plans, you will be required to provide detailed descriptions of the student objectives, methods, and assessment possibilities. In addition, you will be expected to include all supplemental materials for each lesson (handouts, activities, visual aids, PowerPoints, etc.).

The Lesson Plans will be organized in the following way:

#### **Background**

Instructor:

Subject:

Topic:

Missouri Grade Level Standards:

Lesson Objectives:

Prerequisites (Prior Knowledge):

Supplemental Materials:

#### **Lesson**

Connection to Prior Knowledge:

Instructional Methods:

Formative Assessment:

Closure:

Recommendations for Differentiation:

Second, lesson plans will be evaluated for how well the activities and lesson ideas mirror aspects of constructivist lesson design. This rubric will address the following design question:

- Does the lesson make the content relevant to students' lives?
- Does the lesson access the students' prior learning/knowledge?
- Do the lesson activities cause students to be active learners, making their own interpretations about the subject matter?
- Does the lesson allow for dialogue and/or interaction between students and students and students and teachers so as to promote reflection and critical (constructive) thinking about the content?
- Do lesson assessments afford students the opportunity to reflect on their learning and develop meta-awareness of their understanding and learning processes?
- Does the lesson align with one or more approaches to constructivist social studies instruction (constructivist historical design, authentic social studies instruction,

## APPENDIX A: SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS III: AMENDED SYLLABUS

teaching for meaning, problem-based learning, experiential learning, historical thinking)?

Lesson plans will address important aspects of issues related to social studies teaching and curriculum:

Lesson Plan #1: Must model Authentic Pedagogy or Constructivist lesson design.

Lesson Plan #2: Must incorporate an activity with activity guidelines and rubric. (See class session on Scaffolding and Activity Design.)

### **Enacting Anti-Racist Social Studies (20 points)**

In this assignment, students will construct an anti-racist content-specific lesson plan. A complete project will include the following: Learning objectives, pre/post assessments, instructional practices, and student activities. A successful project will: weave together understanding of the complexities of race/ism within the content area, articulate ways in which the instructor and students can challenge each other to examine content, past experiences and understandings, and seek justice-oriented future action. Remember, the overarching goal of this lesson plan is to deliver content while asserting anti-racist intentions.

### **Critical Collegueship Reading Group (20 points)**

An essential component of life as a teaching professional is continuing education. Often, schools will ask educators to engage in critical collegueship throughout the school year. This practice is designed to provide teachers with space to participate in professional development activities in a group setting. Participants work through a series of readings in pursuit of deepening their knowledge of a specific topic or area of interest.

Building from our last book club, this semester we will be engaging in critical inquiry using the text: Pollock, M. (Ed.). (2008). *Everyday Antiracism*. New York: The New Press. In groups, you will examine the major themes, arguments, and pedagogical implications addressed by the authors.

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**Racial Consciousness Journal (RCJ) (3 points each; 40 points total)**

To begin the path toward becoming an antiracist educator, we must look inward and outward to see the self in relation to the racialized other. Over the course of the semester, students will maintain a weekly Racial Consciousness Journal (RCJ). Journals will be turned in via the Blackboard site by 5:00pm on the date noted on the course calendar, and each entry should be about 650 words each (about 1 page single spaced), following the format described below. In the RCJ, students will engage in two activities:

- Respond to a set of racial reflective prompts in order to elicit racialized memories and/or knowledge. These prompts will be provided by the instructor and are intended to push you to think more deeply about your past experiences in schooling and society.
- Also, record encounters with or observations of race, racism, and white supremacy throughout the semester in the chart below (on next page of syllabus). The intent of this component of the RCJ is to assist you in becoming conscious of the racialized spaces, places, and world in which we all live and work.
- In your journal, please use unobtrusive research techniques so that the person(s) you write about in your journal will not be aware that they are being studied. In other words, you may not interview anyone you observe as a researcher, but you may interact with people as you usually would. Please be detailed, but ensure anonymity.

Date	Description of Encounter/Observation	Thoughts/Feelings/Emotions
	What happened? Where did it happen? With whom did it happen? What role, if any, did you play in this encounter/observation?	How did this encounter/observation make you feel? What feelings or emotions were evoked in you?

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**Course Calendar**

Items marked with ^ are those added by researcher

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment/ Assignments Due
8/22	Introductions & Course Overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of Definitions, Concepts and Ideas, Constructivist Models for Social Studies Introduction to Assessment Key Terms</li> </ul> Guest speakers to discuss Field Service Requirements  ^Anti-racist social studies study participation recruitment	*Complete/update biographical form in class*
8/29	Introduction to Authentic Social Studies Education and the C3 Common Core Standards in Social Studies Education	Scheurman & Newman (1988). “Authentic intellectual work in social studies: Putting performance before pedagogy”  ^King & Chandler (2016) “From Non-racism to Anti-racism in Social Studies Teacher Education: Social Studies and Racial Pedagogical Content Knowledge”  “The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.”  Optional: Avery (1999), “Authentic assessment and instruction”  ^RCJ
9/5	<i>No Class—Labor Day holiday</i>	<i>No Class</i>
9/12	^White Social Studies  ^Guest Speaker to discuss White Social Studies	READ THIS: ^Chandler & Branscombe (2015), “White Social Studies: Protecting the White Racial Code”  PLUS any TWO of these:

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		<p>^Sullivan, S. (2014). Demonizing white ancestors: Unconscious histories and racial responsibilities. In S. Sullivan Good White People: The Problem with Middle-class White Anti-racism. Albany, NY: SUNY, pp. 59-84.</p> <p>^Lipsitz, G. (1995). The possessive investment in whiteness: Racialized social democracy and the “white” problem in American studies. American Quarterly, 47(3), 369-387.</p> <p>^Roediger, D. R. (2008). A nation stays white: How race survived mass immigration. In D. R. Roediger, How Race Survived U.S. History. London: Verso, pp. 136-168.</p> <p>^Okun (2014) “Teaching about race and racism: The imperative of history”</p> <p><b>^RCJ</b></p> <p><b>Due: Lesson Plan #1—Authentic Pedagogy or Constructivist Lesson Design</b></p>
<p><b>9/19</b></p>	<p>Part 1: Planning for Social Studies: Backwards Design, State and National Standards, and the Big Ideas</p> <p>^Critical Colleague Reading Group: Race and Racism in Classrooms and Schools</p>	<p>Wiggins &amp; McTighe, “Chapter 1: What is backwards design?”</p> <p>Wiggins &amp; McTighe, “Chapter 2: What is a matter of understanding?”</p> <p>^Reading Group: Pollock (Ed.) (2008) “Section D: Race and the School Experience: The Need for Inquiry”</p> <p><b>^RCJ</b></p>
<p><b>9/26</b></p>	<p>Part 2: Planning for Social Studies: Racial Pedagogical Content Knowledge and Racial Literacy in the Social Studies</p> <p>^Guest Speaker to discuss Racial Literacy</p>	<p>Lintner, Timothy, “Teaching social studies through the big ideas”</p> <p>^Smith (2014) “Not Stopping at First: Racial Literacy and the Teaching of Barack Obama”</p>

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		<p>Read ONE of these:                      ^Swartz, E. (1992). “Emancipatory narratives: Rewriting the master script in the school curriculum.”</p> <p>^Pinar, W. F. (1993). “Notes on understanding curriculum as a racial text.”</p> <p><b>^RCJ</b></p>
<b>10/3</b>	<p>Creating Critical Spaces                      Introduction and Guest Speakers</p> <p>Teaching with Big Ideas</p>	<b>^RCJ</b>
<b>10/10</b>	<p>Curriculum Activity</p> <p>Creating Critical Spaces Workshop                      Time</p> <p>^Critical Colleague Reading Group:                      Engaging Communities</p>	<p>^Pollock (Ed). (2008) “Section E: Engaging Communities for Real”</p> <p><b>Due: Have Creating Critical Spaces groups and topics chosen; be able to verbally describe your possible plan for CCS session; consult the Bridge calendar and think about possible dates for your CCS session.</b></p> <p><b>^RCJ</b></p>
	<p><b>Creating Critical Spaces Proposal due 11:59pm, Thursday, Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> via drive</b></p>	
<b>10/17</b>	<p>Critical Spaces Proposal Workshop                      Time</p> <p>Test Construction and Analysis</p>	<p>Banks &amp; Banks, “Assessment Strategies” *Bring notes/reading to class*</p> <p>Bloom’s Taxonomy Handout (in class)</p> <p><b>^RCJ</b></p>
<b>10/24</b>	Test Construction and Analysis	Jadallah, “Constructivist learning experiences for social studies education.”

APPENDIX A: SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS III: AMENDED SYLLABUS

	<p>Experiential Learning and the Learning Cycle &amp; Discussion on How to Assess Performance Based Assessment</p>	<p>Nickel, “The issue of subjectivity in authentic social studies assessment”</p> <p>Yell, “Multiple choice to multiple rubrics: One teachers’ journey in assessment”</p> <p><b>Due: Bring draft of at least 6-8 questions for test construction workshop</b></p> <p><b>^RCJ</b></p>
<p><b>10/31</b></p>	<p>Nuts &amp; Bolts of Activity Design; Design workshop</p> <p>Instructional Scaffolding</p> <p>^Critical Collegueship Reading Group: Anti-racist curricular approaches</p>	<p>^Pollock (Ed.) (2008) “Section D: Curriculum That Asks Critical Questions About Race”</p> <p>“Scaffolding handout” (In class)</p> <p><b>Due: Test</b></p> <p><b>^RCJ</b></p>
<p><b>11/7</b></p>	<p>Enacting Anti-racism in Social Studies Education</p> <p>^Guest Speakers to discuss teaching about race/ism in the social studies classroom</p>	<p>^Castro, Hawkman, &amp; Diaz (2015) “Teaching Race in High School Social Studies: Lessons from the Field”</p> <p>^Sleeter &amp; Turner Bynoe (2006) “Antiracist Education in Majority White Schools”</p> <p>^Ferber (2014) “Bringing Students into the Matrix: A Framework and Tools for Teaching Race and Overcoming Student Resistance”</p> <p><b>^RCJ</b></p> <p><b>Due: Lesson Plan #2—Activity</b></p>

APPENDIX A: SOCIAL STUDIES METHODS III: AMENDED SYLLABUS

11/14	Diversity: Meeting the needs of diverse learners in secondary classrooms.	Pawling “Universal design for learning and social studies classrooms”  ^Reading Group: Pollock (Ed.). (2008) “Section B: How Opportunities are Provided and Denied in Schools”  ^RCJ
11/21	<i>No Class: Fall Recess</i>	<i>No Class: Fall Recess</i>
11/28	Work Day  Also available for Critical Spaces presentations	^RCJ  <b>^Due: Enacting Anti-racist Curriculum &amp; Pedagogy, due by 11:59pm on Friday, December 2</b>  <b>Due: Any lesson plan revisions, due by 11:59pm on Friday, December 2</b>
12/5	Creating Critical Spaces debrief and celebration  ^Critical Collegueship Reading Group: Moving Forward with Anti-racist Praxis	^Reading Group: Pollock (Ed.) (2008) “Section F: Keeping it Going”  ^Duncan-Andrade (2009) “Note to educators: Hope required when growing roses in concrete”  ^RCJ  <b>Due: Creating Critical Spaces Reflection, due by 11:59pm on Monday, December 5</b>
	Finals Week	<b>Due: Final Paper, due by 11:59pm on Monday, December 12</b>

**Semi-Structured Interview Protocol #1**

- I. Thinking about Race/ism
  - a. When you think about race what comes to your mind? Why?
  - b. What comes to mind when you think about racism?
  - c. What experiences, if any, have you had with racism? (These can be personal experiences or experiences you have observed.)
  - d. What comes to mind when you think about white supremacy?
  
- II. Prior experiences with social studies and race
  - a. As a student what did you learn about race/ism and white supremacy in high school?
  - b. What did you learn about race/ism and white supremacy in college?
  - c. What did you learn about race/ism and white supremacy in the College of Education? In your social studies courses?
  
- III. Race and Racism in the Social Studies
  - a. In general, what is your sense about the current high school social studies curriculum's ability to prepare youth to address issues of racism?
  - b. In your opinion, when should K-12 students talk and learn about race and racism?
    - i. Are students capable of learning about race/ism and white supremacy? If so what age? To what extent or degree?
    - ii. Are teachers capable of teaching about race/ism and white supremacy?
    - iii. Are schools capable of teaching about race/ism and white supremacy?
  - c. What feelings or emotions come to mind when you think about teaching your future students about race/ism and white supremacy?
  
- IV. Non-racist and Anti-racist
  - a. If you were to think about something or someone being non-racist, what comes to mind? Why?
    - i. Within the context of social studies curriculum and pedagogy.
  - b. If you were to thinking about something or someone being anti-racist, what comes to mind? Why?
    - i. Within the context of social studies curriculum and pedagogy.

**Semi-Structured Interview: Mid Semester**

1. Has your personal understanding of race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy changed as a result of your time in the course?
2. What have you learned about teaching/learning about race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy thus far? Has anything we've discussed challenged your prior understanding of this?
3. Is there anything that the class has discussed thus far that you would like to circle back to, as it relates to race/ism, whiteness, and white supremacy?
4. What questions do you have about enacting anti-racist work in your future classroom?
5. What do you think you still need to know in order to enact this work in your future classroom?
6. Are there any concerns you have?
7. What are you excited about?

**Semi-Structured Interview: End of Semester**

- I. Understanding Personal Identities
  - a. What role do your personal identities play in your work with students and colleagues?
  - b. What role do the identities of your students play in your work in the classroom?
  - c. What steps can you take to better understand your own identities as well as those of your students?
- II. Non-racist and Anti-racist
  - a. What does non-racism mean to you? Examples?
    - i. Can you provide examples that would best demonstrate non-racist social studies teaching?
  - b. What does anti-racism mean to you? Examples?
    - i. Can you provide examples that would best demonstrate anti-racist social studies teaching?
  - c. In general, how would you define your teaching philosophy or approach?
- III. Race and Racism in the Social Studies
  - a. Tell me about the lesson plan you created during the “Enacting Anti-racism” assignment.
  - b. Did you draw on any other concepts related to anti-racism in the assignments you completed this semester?
  - c. What specific strategies or approaches are you interested in trying with your future social studies students?
  - d. How will you address impromptu discussions with students about race and racism?
  - e. How were race and racism addressed during your field experience this semester?
  - f. In your opinion, what barriers persist in the teaching and learning of race and racism?
    - i. How might you counteract these barriers?
- IV. Experiences in the class and program
  - a. Each week you completed an entry in your Race Consciousness Journal. What was this experience like? What emotions, feelings, thoughts came to mind as you completed these entries? Were any of the prompts particularly challenging for you to respond to? Did you observe things you hadn’t considered previously?
  - b. Which readings, activities, assignments, discussions left an impression on you, as it relates to the teaching about race and racism in the social studies classroom? Why?
  - c. To what degree would you say you completed the course readings/activities related to race/ism and anti-racism?
  - d. Please identify what you consider to be the strengths of the course.
  - e. If a class infusing anti-racism and social studies were to be taught again, what suggestions would you make to the instructors?
  - f. What are your biggest takeaways from this course?
  - g. How prepared do you feel to talk and teach about race and racism in your student teaching semester?
    - i. What kind of support do you think you need moving forward?

## **RCJ PROMPTS**

### **Week 1: 8/29: Examining ourselves**

- When did you first realize your racial identity?
- What does your racial identity mean to you?
- How does your racial identity interact with/inform your other identities (e.g., gender, sexuality, ability, religion, class, etc.)?
- Has anyone/anything been influential in shaping your understanding of your racial identity?
- Read Chapter 3 from *Everyday Antiracism*
  - How can we use racial labels like “white,” “black,” or “Asian” without suggesting biological differences that do not really exist? On the other hand, what would be lost if we deleted all racial terms from our language?

### **Week 2: 9/12: Examining the emotions of talking about race/ism**

- Read Chapter 4 from *Everyday Antiracism*
  - If you have had—or tried to have—conversations about race with your friends, family, fellow students, or classroom students, what happened? If you have not, describe a time you wish you had, and what stopped you from initiating or participating fully in the conversation.
- In what ways, if any, do you experience guilt or shame when it comes to talking about race/ism? Do you encounter any other emotions?
- What are some possible social studies curricular connections you could make to talking about race/ism with your students?

### **Week 3: 9/19 Racial Identity and Teacher Identity**

- How does your race influence your work as an educator with your students, especially with your students of color?
- As an educator, what is the effect of race/ism on your thinking, beliefs, actions, and decision making?
- How do you, as an educator negotiate the power structures in your class to allow students to feel a sense of worth regardless of their racial background?
- How do you situate and negotiate students' knowledge, experiences, expertise, and race with your own?

## APPENDIX E: RACE CONSCIOUSNESS JOURNAL PROMPTS

### **Week 4: 9/26: Race/ism and social studies curriculum**

- How are people with the same racial identity as your own represented in social studies curriculum?
- How are people with different racial identities than your own represented in social studies curriculum?
- In what ways is race/ism visible and invisible in the social studies curriculum?
- Considering the diverse nature of student identities, how will you envision the curriculum to serve as both a window and mirror for your students? (See Chapter 28 in *Everyday Antiracism* for a refresher)

### **Week 5: 10/3: Considering the Racialized Other**

- How does your racial identity inform the way you see others?
- What do you know about races other than your own?
- Has anyone been influential in shaping your understanding of other racial identities?
- Is it possible that two individuals from different backgrounds experience, or make meaning of, the same event in different ways?

### **Week 6: 10/10: Encountering Racial Language**

Ms. Lawson was glad to be teaching social studies at Greenstown High School, a racially and economically diverse school. She previously had worked at predominantly white schools with very few students receiving free or reduced-price lunches. After losing her job due to budget cuts, and after taking a course on diversity while earning her Masters of Arts in Teaching degree, she accepted a job teaching in a more diverse environment. She arrived at Greenstown feeling eager and prepared to take instructional advantage of the diversity. Several weeks into her first year at Greenstown, Ms. Lawson was happy about how well she had adjusted to her new environment. She had taken several measures early in the school year to demonstrate her commitment to racial equity and it seemed as though students were responding positively. She was especially pleased when she saw students of color reading the Diversity in History posters she hung around the room, highlighting historically important people of color from around the world. They complained a little—predictably, she thought—in all of her classes on the second day of school when, responding to the racially segregated seating patterns she noticed the first day of class, she assigned seats. She never mentioned her reason for assigning seats, though, and students were accustomed to seat assignments from some of their other classes, so that tension passed quickly. All in all, things were progressing smoothly.

## APPENDIX E: RACE CONSCIOUSNESS JOURNAL PROMPTS

One afternoon around mid-October, as she gathered her materials for her fifth-period class and students made their way into her classroom, Ms. Lawson overheard one of her students use the n-word. Understanding how inflammatory the n-word was, her immediate reaction was concern that there would be a fight in her classroom. So when she looked up from her desk and peered toward the back of her classroom, where she was sure the word came from, she was surprised to see Reggie, an African American student, Adolfo, a Latino student, and Anthony, a white student, all laughing together.

“Who said that?” Ms. Lawson asked as she stood and walked toward the back of the room. “Said what?” Adolfo asked, still laughing.

“You all know exactly what I mean. The n-word,” Ms. Lawson replied. Nobody responded, but Adolfo and Reggie both glanced at Anthony. “Anthony?” Ms. Lawson prodded.

“I didn’t say the n-word, I said n-i-g-g-a, nigga,” he explained. Ms. Lawson was unsettled by how confident Anthony sounded, as though he really did not believe he had done anything wrong. “I always call Reggie that. He’s cool with it. It’s a term of endearment.”

Keisha, an African American young woman who had overheard their conversation, interjected, “That’s no term of endearment, you idiot. It’s racist. And you’re lucky you’re not getting a beat down right now for saying it.”

“Enough of that,” Ms. Lawson said, glaring at Keisha. “There won’t be any threats of violence in this classroom. Sit down and let me take care of this.”

Unsure what to say next, Ms. Lawson turned toward Reggie. He no longer was laughing and, she thought, was beginning to look uncomfortable. “Is that true, Reggie, that he calls you that all the time and you’re fine with it?” “It’s no big deal,” Anthony explained. “Right, Reg?” he asked playfully, nudging Reggie with his elbow. “Reggie can speak for himself,” Ms. Lawson said, then looked back at Reggie, who was looking even more uncomfortable.

Just then, the start of class bell rang and Ms. Lawson looked up to see everybody in the room staring at her and Reggie. Feeling that, whatever he really felt about Anthony’s use of the n-word, Reggie was even more uneasy with the spotlight she was shining on him in that moment, she decided to drop the issue and commence with teaching class.

As she walked back toward her desk, she said with a half-defeated sigh, “Please remember, everyone, that one of our community norms is respect. I don’t care you how pronounce it or what you mean by it, there is no room in this classroom for that kind of language.”

## APPENDIX E: RACE CONSCIOUSNESS JOURNAL PROMPTS

She knew, even as she was making that statement, that she did not handle the situation well. She also knew she needed to figure out a way to respond more thoughtfully in case it happened again.

- Did Anthony’s explanation about how he wasn’t really using the n-word make his actions less of a problem? Is there any circumstance in which it would be fine for somebody to use the n-word or any variation of it in a classroom or school? If so, what would that circumstance be?
- When Keisha voiced her displeasure about Anthony’s language Ms. Lawson, worried that the tension would escalate, chastised her and ordered her to sit down. How could she have addressed Keisha’s comments more effectively?
- Ms. Lawson put Reggie on the spot by asking him how he felt about the situation in front of his friends, in front of Keisha, and in front of whomever else was in earshot as students filed into the room. What are some other ways Ms. Lawson might have checked in with Reggie in order to avoid shining the spotlight on him in that way?
- Ms. Lawson knew she needed to address the use of the n-word with her entire class, as she couldn’t be sure how many students overheard the conversation. How might you approach such a task?

### **Week 7: 10/17: Reflecting on Teachers, Students, and Families**

There are three sections to your RCJ this week:

- On Monday, we ended class with the video “3 Ways to Speak English” by Jamila Lyiscott ([https://www.ted.com/talks/jamila\\_lyiscott\\_3\\_ways\\_to\\_speak\\_english](https://www.ted.com/talks/jamila_lyiscott_3_ways_to_speak_english)). Please rewatch the video and reflect on how this video connects to the readings from last week. How does this inform your thoughts about getting to know your students, their families, and their communities?
- In one of your Book Club readings last week, authors Wyman and Kashatok stated, “Teachers should expect to make mistakes, to be laughed at their fumbling efforts, to encounter rejection, and to wrestle with ongoing questions about the racial positions of themselves and their students” (p. 303). Reflect on this quote and your own development as a teacher preparing to teach about race and racism.
- Include your Racial Awareness/Consciousness/Observations Chart

## APPENDIX E: RACE CONSCIOUSNESS JOURNAL PROMPTS

### **Week 8: 10/24: Engaging in Difficult Dialogues in the Social Studies Classroom**

- Often educators utilize vague, coded, or imprecise language when talking about students, race/ism and equity in education. Read Chapter 5 in *Everyday Antiracism* from Mica Pollock and reflect on the following questions
  - Why does this imprecise language persist in race talk? Have you engaged in conversations with others and recognized this linguistic approach? What did you "read between the lines" during these conversations?
  - How can educators talk more precisely about who needs to provide which opportunities inside schools to help dismantle racial disparities, without raising the defenses of colleagues who feel "blamed" by the analysis? What if some educators feel the "real cause" of disparity lies outside the classroom?
- Include your Racial Awareness/Consciousness/Observations Chart

### **Week 9: 10/31: Considering Your Professional Identity as an Anti-Racist Educator**

- In book club this week you are reading about the professional and social interactions relating to race and racism that teachers encounter.
  - Discuss and reflect upon 2-3 strategies that are discussed relating to interactions with students around race/ism shared by the authors. Why do these stand out to you?
  - Discuss and reflect upon 2-3 strategies that are discussed relating to interactions between colleagues around race/ism shared by the authors. Why do these stand out to you?
  - How do these strategies intersect and inform each other?
- Include your Racial Awareness/Consciousness/Observations Chart

### **Week 10: 11/7: Race Talk and Teaching in the Social Studies Classroom**

- What benefits might accrue from talking about racism and encouraging others to do the same? How might such conversations be advantageous for all of us as individuals and American society? How might each of us effectively and consistently "break the silence about racism whenever we can"? (Tatum, 1993).
- Tatum (1997) argues that it is impossible to be "passively anti-racist" rather, to adopt an anti-racist position in the classroom necessitates and agentic orientation toward teaching about race and racism. Why is it not enough to be anti-racist in our thoughts alone? What does this mean in the context of teaching social studies? How might you prepare for taking such a stance in your classroom? Is it possible to encourage your students to do the same?
- In what ways might our students assist in engaging with teaching about racism?
- Include your Racial Awareness/Consciousness/Observations Chart

## APPENDIX E: RACE CONSCIOUSNESS JOURNAL PROMPTS

### **Week 11: 11/14: Turning On and Off the Switch of Antiracism**

- Dr. Jones asked of us, "Is there an on and off switch for White allies when it comes to antiracism?"
  - What is your understanding of this? What does it mean to be a White ally?
- Include your Racial Awareness/Consciousness/Observations Chart

### **Week 12: 12/5: Moving Forward through Antiracist Practice**

- What does it mean to adopt an anti-racist stance in the classroom? Is this a possibility for you moving forward? What strategies might you deploy? How will you work to make your classroom a place that engages in "race talk"?
- Include your Racial Awareness/Consciousness/Observations Chart

### **Enacting Anti-Racist Social Studies: 20 Points**

In this assignment, you will construct an anti-racist social studies lesson plan. You will utilize the same format as you utilized in previous lessons (see Google Drive for template).

- Step One: Visit the Google Drive document called “Enacting Anti-Racist Social Studies” and identify a social studies topic to serve as the foundation for your lesson plan. You will notice that we are asking you to create a lesson plan for a social studies topic not typically taught through a racial lens. Each topic can only be “claimed” once; so, you may consider your top 3-4 categories.
- Step Two: Visit pp. 343-348 in *Everyday Antiracism* to select at least one anti-racist pedagogical approach to utilize in this lesson. A successful anti-racist lesson plan will do the following:
  - include all the necessary components requested in the lesson plan template
  - feature sources, content, and/or curricular materials that build upon students’ racial literacy
  - clearly incorporate an anti-racist pedagogical approach, as provided in *Everyday Antiracism*
  - a brief narrative (1-2) paragraphs of your topic selection, your pedagogical approach, and how this lesson attends to the goals of anti-racist teaching (separate from the framework)

Additional Notes:

- Be intentional when paring a social studies topic and pedagogical approach—some work better together than others.
- Although teaching this lesson is not required, please let us know if you would like to teach this lesson in your field experience and we will try to arrange for observation and coaching.

## APPENDIX G: LIST OF CONTRIBUTING SCHOLARS

### List of Contributing and Supporting Scholars

Dr. Ryan Crowley	University of Kentucky
Dr. Billy Smith	University of Arizona
Dr. Amanda Lewis	University of Illinois at Chicago
Dr. Cheryl Matias	University of Colorado at Denver
Dr. Barbara Applebaum	Syracuse University
Dr. Robin DiAngelo	Independent Scholar
Dr. Timothy Lensmire	University of Minnesota
Dr. Kevin Kumashiro	University of San Francisco
Dr. Zac Casey	Rhodes College
Dr. Angie Zapata	University of Missouri
Dr. Kathryn Chval	University of Missouri
Dr. Zandra De Araujo	University of Missouri
Dr. Prentice Chandler	University of Cincinnati
Dr. Sarah Diem	University of Missouri
Dr. LaGarrett King	University of Missouri
Dr. Antonio Castro	University of Missouri

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## Vita

Andrea M. Hawkman was born in St. John, Missouri. In 2003, she graduated from Ft. Zumwalt South High School after an illustrious career as a three-sport athlete and accomplished violist. In 2007, Andrea graduated from McKendree University, located in Lebanon, Illinois after four years as a member of the Bearcat Softball Team. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Science and Secondary Education with minors in Ethnic Studies and Psychology. From McKendree, Hawkman began her teaching career at Warrenton High School where she led courses in American History, Advanced Placement U. S. History, World History, and History through Film. During her five year career in the classroom, Hawkman oversaw and facilitated professional development for her colleagues and worked to redesign the social studies curriculum while serving as a softball and basketball coach for the Lady Warriors. In 2012, Hawkman obtained her Master of Education degree in Educational Leadership, Secondary from the University of Missouri—St. Louis. The following year, Hawkman began her studies in the College of Education at the University of Missouri—Columbia. Focusing on Social Studies Education, her work attended to the teaching and learning of race/ism, the intersection of education policy and social studies education, and justice-oriented teacher education.

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