“The Team is All White”: Reflections of Art Educators of Color on Whiteness

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we utilize duoethnography and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to address the state of Whiteness in art education and our own experiences; both concepts share the importance of including diverse narratives and challenging the dominant ones imposed by the construct of Whiteness. Through duoethnography, our narratives address instances of microaggressions, internalized racism and assimilation, as well as the lack of representation of diverse artists. We reflect on these experiences and the impact of Whiteness in our own lives. Through CRT, we are able to unpack the impact of our lived experiences and further discuss the implications for the future of our field.

KEYWORDS: Critical Race Theory, duoethnography, art education, diversity, critical consciousness, representation

This article discusses how Whiteness impacts the discipline of education, and in particular, art education. We posit Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw et al., 1995) as a critique of the prevailing dominant racial construct of Whiteness. CRT aids our understanding of our experiences with Whiteness as people of color in art education and allows us to utilize our narratives as a way to authenticate these experiences (Calmore, 1995). We offer our personal narratives through the method of duoethnography (Krammer & Mangiardi, 2012; Norris & Sawyer, 2017; Sawyer & Norris, 2013) to engage in a dialogue of experiences of two different people of color (Hannah Kim Sions, an East Asian woman, and Amber Coleman, a Black woman) in our field. While these narratives do not represent the entirety of experiences of people of color in art education, they do connect and reaffirm other narratives of art educators of color who have shared similar experiences (Acuff, 2018b; Desai, 2010; Lawton, 2018; Rolling, 2011). We hope that this duoethnography and the use of CRT promotes the need for critical consciousness and increased representation

of marginalized voices in pedagogy, curriculum, and teacher demographics. In doing so, we envision a future for art education that recognizes these kinds of racist experiences and challenges their indoctrination in the field.

This article begins with the statement of the problem, which describes the impact of White teacher demographics and White, Eurocentric curricula on students of color. Next, we introduce duoethnography as our methodology and CRT as the theoretical lens through which we provide context to and unpack our narratives. The following duoethnography addresses three different topics through our personal narratives: microaggressions; internalized racism and assimilation; and the need for diverse representation. Finally, the article concludes with implications of this duoethnography and recommendations for the field of art education.

Statement of the Problem

Although race is a social construct, Whiteness has been mobilized as a demarcation for racial privilege, a marker of normality, and a set of presumed social practices that reinforce White supremacy, a belief, perception, and social structure that deems White people as inherently superior to people of other races and/or ethnic backgrounds (Acuff, 2018b; Liu & Pechenkina, 2016). This reinforcement of White supremacist ideas is ingrained throughout our society and institutions in a variety of ways; one of these societal institutions is our system of education. In recognizing the construct and impact of Whiteness in education, there is a notable difference between the lack of diversity in teacher demographics versus the wealth of diversity in student demographics (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Data shows that on a national level, 81.9% of teachers are White, while only 6.8% of teachers are Black (Anderson, 2018). To adequately represent the student population, the number of Black teachers would have to more than double (Anderson, 2018). Ladson-Billings (2005) makes an analogy for education that "the team is all White" (p. 233). She explains that this means that White educators are on a different team from people of color; this particular team hosts the referees and officials (those in power), who are also not on the same side as the players (educators and students of color).

Whiteness in education

From the historical context of the United States, the demographics

of public school educators has been overwhelmingly White. After *Brown v. Board of Education*, schools slowly became desegregated, but desegregation did not address or change the larger problem of racism in the country (Bell, 1995). The perpatuation of racist thought and practices has impacted teachers and students of color alike. For instance, racist and/or separatist ideas fueled new ways to further segregate and discriminate against people of color, such as teacher testing and educational testing (Hatcher, 1975). Moreover, racist practices to systematically standardize the profession included tracking systems and superficial bases of quality controlling, which contributed to the South losing almost 10,000 Black teachers in the first 20 years after Brown (Hatcher, 1975). The loss of Black educators and other educators of color signaled changes in educational quality for students of color (Lash & Ratcliff, 2014). They were "less likely to have access to high quality curriculum," and "systematically denied the educational opportunities that would lead to college and university admissions," which then prevented them from entering the teaching profession (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 230). With the perpetuation of a predominantly White teaching force, students of color did not often have educator role models who looked like them (Lutz, 2017).

An additional concern of the impact of Whiteness in education, with respect to demographic differences between educators and students, is the need for recognizing and valuing different racial lived experiences in the classroom. There seems to be either an inability or unwillingness by some White art educators to deeply engage with students from different cultural backgrounds. For example, White art educators may discuss the importance of diversity and inclusion, but fail to practice inclusion beyond a superficial level. The lack of continuity of stated values can be due to implicit biases, which manifest despite an educator's intentions (Staats, 2015). The problem is not necessarily about race, but instead about implicit biases that may impede the recognition and acceptance of different lived experiences (Brooks, 2012). With the existence of books like *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...And the Rest of Y'all Too* (Emdin, 2016) and *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education* (Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter II, 2018), it is clear that a disconnect (still) exists between some White educators and their diverse student populations. This is a problematic occurrence as educators may not understand or value their students' individual experiences and unique learning styles. They may be teaching in a way that assumes their students have the same lived experiences as them (Grant & Sleeter, 1998).

Moreover, White educators may perpetuate trauma through their implicit biases toward students of color (Brooks, 2012; Dovido & Gaertner, 2004). Students of color may experience trauma if these biases manifest in the form of prejudice and oppression, which many White educators have not experienced (Ladson-Billings, 2005). These educators usually are not willing to confront their biases as they are either unaware or trying to deny their negative feelings towards students of color to preserve their own self-image. Unfortunately, this dissociation between thought and practice does little to protect the students who fall victim to the projection of negative stereotypes and biases (Dovido & Gaertner, 2004).

Whiteness in art education

As students and educators of color, we, the authors, have been constantly aware of the influence and impact of Whiteness in our art educational experiences. Whiteness is visible within all areas of art education, from the population of the teaching force to classroom curricula. In art education, the most visible influence of Whiteness is in the curriculum where White, Eurocentric ideas of who an artist can be and what art looks like prevails; from the beginnings of public school art education, most pedagogy of art education within the United States was modeled after European standards (Efland, 1990). These standards have reinforced White European males as the masters of art, with artists of color incorporated sparingly throughout the occasional "multicultural" lesson.

In the 1970s, multicultural art education was introduced into public school curricula through the urging of marginalized communities. The goal was to provide a more equitable learning experience for students of color (McCarthy, 1994). An early analysis of art education literature by Tomhave (1995) identified several approaches to multicultural art educational practices and discussed the inclusion of multicultural contexts in art education, but also highlighted some shortcomings of these initial approaches. Inclusion was only a beginning, a mere step in the right direction, as the inclusion of diverse cultures, in these cases, did not result in the thorough exploration of the cultures (Stout, 1997). Further, artworks were misinterpreted through the Western lens (Desai, 2005). The narratives of the individuals that belong to these different cultures must be considered when speaking about these artworks. Without their perspectives, cultures and cultural works are misrepresented through an inadequate lens that attempts to understand what it means to be a person of color (Ritchie, 1995). This half-hearted attempt is evident

in curriculum that believes inclusion can be achieved by "merely injecting a few folk customs and ethnic heroes" (Grant & Sleeter, 1993, p. 9). In these shallow attempts with multiculturalism, art education misses the mark and further perpetuates the hegemony of Whiteness in our field. Through implementation of duoethnography, we hope to provide firsthand accounts of navigating Whiteness in art education and use CRT to further unpack these experiences.

Methodology

This paper utilizes duoethnography as a means of providing two different narratives that address three problematic instances that are a result of the impact of Whiteness in our field: personal accounts of racial microaggressions; internalized racism manifesting in attempts to assimilate; and the lack of accurate and contemporary representation of racially/culturally diverse artists in curricula. The themes for these narratives have been identified as they relate to the realities of racism that people of color experience. CRT has often pointed out the occurrences of microaggressions, internalized racism and assimilation, and the dire need for diversity. These occurrences impact the everyday lives of people of color and have (and continue to) impact the lives of the authors. CRT further helps us unpack these experiences to fully comprehend the impact of Whiteness in art education.

Duoethnography

Duoethnography stems from a research desire to engage in methodology that involves dialogue. This dialogue does not just encompass the conversations between the researchers. Sawyer and Norris (2013), who coined the term duoethnography, note that this desire connects to inserting voices and narratives in research projects to further humanize issues and questions in relation to social justice. In the process of humanizing, duoethnography simultaneously promotes diverse narratives, challenges traditional understandings, and seeks to disrupt norms in their field as well as individual realities (Norris & Sawyer, 2017). By unsettling the two parties involved, the potential for insight grows as the two people transform their own and each other's understandings through conversation and the dialogic twists and turns of their stories (Krammer & Mangiardi, 2012). The twists and turns of these stories yield a fruitful space where each participant's perspective adds to another's, while also building knowledge from the interaction.

Norris and Sawyer (2017) suggest that there is a need to reject the "manufacturing model" (p. 4) of education where students are merely consumers of the knowledge given to them by teachers; by engaging students' prior experiences, the insertion of personal narratives creates connections between public and private knowledge. Therefore, personal narratives are important in interrogating and challenging dominant metanarratives in the educational context. Krammer and Mangiardi (2012) note that William Pinar's autobiographical method of *currere* relates to duoethnography in relation to people's natural tendencies toward being storytellers and story-makers; this process entails creating and recreating ourselves and the world around us. We use duoethnography in a similar manner where our stories

> [embody] a living, breathing curriculum. Our life histories become the site of research. Within our personal curriculum we become engaged with ourselves through the other as we interrogate our past in light of the present with hope to transform our future. (Brown & Barrett, 2017, p. 87)

Thus, in a sense, the telling of stories through duoethnography allows the participants to create a conversational structure, which allows for knowledge construction between two individuals over time (Krammer & Mangiardi, 2012). Just like a curriculum, which creates a structure for knowledge construction to occur between the educator and learners, our storytelling aided us in structuring this article as we engage with our personal narratives; the public knowledge of society and our field; the private knowledge that has been shared through CRT and various scholars; and the merger of narrative and knowledge in our interpretations of the impact of Whiteness in art education. The telling of our stories adds to other stories of people of color who have been impacted by the negative consequences of the team being all White in art education. It also opens these kinds of experiences to become a part of the conversation of how to address and dismantle the hegemonic structures of Whiteness in our field. As Kramer and Mangiardi (2012) declare, we hope that sharing our duoethnography does more than expose the "hidden curriculum" (p. 44) and personal impact of Whiteness in art education; our stories and others must also be comprehended in order to work toward any real sense of social justice.

Critical race theory as a critique of Whiteness

Critical race theory (CRT) argues that society in the United States

is built on a foundation that benefits White Americans (Crenshaw et al., 1995). CRT recognizes that this foundation necessitates and perpetuates the oppression of people of color, as "race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequality in the United States" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2017, p. 12). In education, White Americans benefit from a carefully constructed notion of "knowledge," one that highlights the perspective of a select group of individuals while silencing others. The selectiveness of scholarship has a political agenda, which is based on White supremacist ideas (Crenshaw et al., 1995) and hopes to maintain current power structures (Acuff, 2015). CRT challenges White supremacist perspectives by providing the narratives of people of color to challenge "truths" based around the understandings of White lives. CRT acknowledges the importance of counternarratives of people of color, who challenge dominant narratives (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Sleeter, 2017). CRT compliments duoethnography as both use narratives to provide different perspectives. Both can be viewed as a means to challenge the dominant narratives of Whiteness and push us to reflect and share personal stories within a public platform.

Narratives

In this article, duoethnography and CRT also engage in a form of dialogue as they both provide counternarratives to traditional, dominant narratives (Calmore, 1995; Sawyer & Norris, 2013). The following narratives address three themes, which emerged as we began analyzing our experiences through a critical race lens: instances of microaggressions, internalized racism and assimilation, and the need for diverse representation. Each narrative begins with literature that illustrates the negative impact of Whiteness on art education. Then, the narratives of each author are shared to illustrate this impact through our lived experiences. Finally, each narrative concludes with a summary of our duoethnographic experiences and a discussion on how CRT helped us further unpack these experiences.

Narrative one: Instances of microaggressions

To efficiently teach students, educators should connect to them on more than just a superficial level; therefore, they must respect their students' cultural backgrounds (Brooks, 2012). The need for White educators to have cultural competency is due to the fact that they, despite intentions, may be uncritical of the inequitable situations presented to students of color by assuming that these students' challenges are personal: singular ones that impact them

on an individual basis (Brooks, 2012). Through the construction of certain knowledges, race and racism exist to maintain existing power structures (Acuff, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2012), including within the education system. Recognizing the connection between race and education, educators are in a unique position to disrupt the influence of racism in education by being critically aware (Acuff, 2015). It is important for White educators to seek out resources such as *The Palgrave Handbook of Race and the Arts in Education* (Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, & Carpenter II, 2018) to work toward critical consciousness and transformative action by recognizing the lived experiences of their students and other people of color around them.

Furthermore, White educators may not recognize the privileges that have been awarded to them. These are privileges that their students of color do not share, which can inhibit their academic success. Even in circumstances where White educators express a commitment to diversity, these commitments can be empty promises as they do not face the same consequences of racial inequity as their students of color or their fellow educators of color (Ladson-Billings, 2005). When the demographics of educators and curricula predominantly reflect Whiteness, how often are White educators able to understand the lived experiences of students of color? How often do White educators recognize the oppression that students of color face within and outside of the classroom? How often do White educators question the impact that they may have on their students?

> **Hannah:** *Before I begin, I would like to recognize that my experiences are my own and I do not wish to speak for other students of color, lest I "contribute to the subjugation" of others (Lorde, 1984, p. 92). In my experience as a K-12 art educator in a rural community, I frequently heard my White colleagues mention that they "didn't see race." The same coworkers would also assume I was not an American citizen and I frequently was asked "where are you from?" or "are you returning to your homeland (over break)?" Other times, whenever there happened to be another East Asian in the building, they would comment about how much we "looked alike" and "could be sisters," even when we specified that our respective heritages were from different countries. Before I understood the impact of microaggressions, I believed that racial stereotyping was an unavoidable consequence of my race. I distinctly remember the first time a professor made a judgement call based on my race. It was a ceramics course in the West, and after hearing me speak, my professor asked,*

"How do you speak English so good (sic)?" Unfortunately, that was not the last time someone made quick judgements about my cultural background based on my race.

Throughout my academic and professional career, I have been asked everything, from "did you choose your English name?" to "do you still speak your native language?" by educators. At the time, I assumed that these interactions were the norm: well-meaning individuals who couldn't help but judge a book by its cover. To them, an East Asian-American who was fluent in English was an anomaly. I truly believed that their misunderstandings were not their fault, and that the fault was mine: mine for being Asian-American (why couldn't I be White?), mine for being different (why couldn't I embody more Asian stereotypes?), and most importantly, mine for being hurt by these remarks (why couldn't I understand that they were just curious?). My well-meaning White friends assured me as much, constantly reminding me that people were just curious, didn't mean harm, and even suggested that maybe I did have an accent after all.

As an academic, I realize that the problem is not mine and, at the same time, that many of these individuals did not recognize the impact of their words. However, it was still problematic that I was facing microaggressions and subtle racism from individuals who were all educators. These educators were not meaning to harm or hurt; many of them were just curious. However, in the same breath, they did not begin to question what their comments implied, or that, by making judgement calls based on my skin color, they were being racist. While they may have been able to address some of their personal curiosities, I walked away feeling like an outsider, angry at myself for not "fitting in" better.

Amber: *Thinking back on my own education, past and present, I realize that I had many White teachers. I was often one of the few students of color in my classrooms and never recognized my color in those spaces until much later. The teachers that impacted me the most were the ones that made my thoughts and experiences feel valued in and outside of the classroom. With some of my White teachers, I felt like they just did not understand my ideas, tried to push me in a direction that I was not interested in, or never tried to engage*

with my racial difference. While I did feel their support, it felt like they could only support me to the extent of their cultural understanding. Once I wanted to embrace more "Black" things, it felt like their understanding or advice ended at general notions because they were not familiar with that particular intersection of experiences.

I have to admit that I feel as though I have experienced micro- and macro-aggressions, but I lacked the awareness of what these encounters meant or how to respond to them in the moment. There are three different instances during my education that come to mind. The first is when I had an art professor who constantly asked me to "do more" with my artwork with little instruction on what would enhance it. I was often frustrated as I did not feel like she asked for the same amount of changes from other students in the course. I did not know if there could be anything done about this situation as I was "the student" and she was "the professor." I found out later (after she was implicated in a macroaggression against a person of color) that she also did this with the students of color in the other art courses.

Moreover, in an art history course, I remember wondering why the professor never provided us with any contemporary examples of artwork by Black people or people of color. The art history courses centered heavily on European or White (male) artists while artists of color were not granted the same considerations. The syllabi for these courses would sometimes state that we would cover the artworks of artists of color; on other occasions, they would not be mentioned at all. When I thought that we might discuss artists of color, they were either addressed hurriedly or skipped over. When this happened, it seemed like there was no time left in the course to ask the professor to include these artists.

Finally, the last instance entails a colleague of mine, a person of color, and their decision to change the direction of their graduate program of study from one department to another that seemed to fit their interests better. In approaching a professor about the change, they were prompted with the question, "But, what about Amber?" When they relayed this situation to me, I was in shock. We both were perplexed as to how their change in program would impede either of our successes as students. As if this person were obligated

to be concerned about me, one of the few people of color in the program, when making a decision about their academic career and interests. I wonder if this professor considered whether they would be as concerned about a White student changing programs and leaving the other (many) White students in the program. I think not.

In reflecting on these experiences, I often thought that I had to play the "game of school," which is predicated on the team being all White and necessitates that people of color have to go along with these norms. I didn't see myself as having power to change anything in these moments, or the ability to address these situations without backlash. I now find myself questioning even more the way things are or the way things have always been, but not always knowing if there's another answer to the situation.

While the term "microaggression" might lead one to think that these instances of racism are inconsequential, they are only considered of little harm by the perpetrators, not the victims. Furthermore, it is the hegemony of Whiteness that creates the conditions for microaggressions to occur (Bridges, 2019). Our narratives demonstrate microaggressions and othering that we have both felt during our educational experiences. Hannah's narrative speaks of how educators made assumptions about her cultural background due to her race; they questioned her when she failed to fit their stereotypical understanding of an East Asian. Her race was used as a marker to separate her from the rest of her peers and colleagues. Amber shares how she felt about professors being either overly critical of her work or only showing artists that she did not feel connected to. Furthermore, Amber's professors never explicitly mentioned her race, but she recognized that their actions reflected how they conceptualized the inclusion of Black people and other people of color in their practices. In these cases, as Bridges (2019) quotes Derald Wing Sue,

> Microaggressions inevitably produce a clash of racial realities where the experiences of racism by [people of color] are pitted against the views of Whites who hold the power to define the situation in nonracial terms. The power to define reality is not supported at the individual level alone but at the institutional and societal levels as well. (p. 189)

Through a critical race lens, we recognize that these kinds of microaggressions are a frequent form of racism that marginalizes people of color by separating people of color from Whites in an "us vs. them" attitude and reinforcing social, institutional, and personal racism (Calmore, 1995). Each narrative displays a different angle to the same problem that students of color face—the constant reminder that they are somehow viewed as "different" in an education system that allegedly provides an equal opportunity for all students. These experiences, while not entirely the same, demonstrate instances that we were othered because of our race in the education system.

Narrative two: Internalized racism and assimilation

Further expanding the gap between White educators and their students of color is the institutionalized school system that is biased in favor of White students (Ighodaro & Wiggan, 2013). When left unchecked, the effects of such educational structures can have adverse effects on students of color where they internalize feelings of oppression. Internalized oppression can be defined as the process where:

> Members of the target group are emotionally, physically, and spiritually battered to the point that they begin to actually believe their oppression is deserved, is their lot in life, is natural and right, and that it doesn't even exist. The oppression begins to feel comfortable, familiar… (Yamato, 1995, p. 72)

As students of color, we both have had experiences of internalizing Whiteness and its corresponding racism. Sometimes these interactions were small and fleeting—microaggressions instead of macroaggressions. However, regardless of how big or small these circumstances may seem, the impact that they have had on us are long lasting and unforgettable. By interpreting, and then internalizing, the meanings from encounters of Whiteness and racism, we pushed ourselves to either assimilate, downplay our "differences," or attempt to reject our racial/cultural backgrounds altogether.

> **Hannah:** *To be quite honest, it is difficult for me to talk about how I externalized the otherness I felt throughout my life. Whether it be possessing an internalized racist attitude towards other East Asians or introducing myself as "practically White;" looking back, these moments are hard for me to acknowledge. Although I have been able to*

appreciate myself in the last three years, I cannot forget how I struggled with my racial identity for a large portion of my life. An examination of some self-portraits from my past begins to paint a picture of how I externalized (non) Whiteness.

From elementary school and throughout my bachelor's degree, I was taught that great artists were White (men). Held up as the standard for "good art" were artists such as: Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Van Gogh, Klimt, Matisse, Warhol, Pollock, Haring, and O'Keefe. In these lessons, women were usually subjects of the artworks, not the painters–glorified objects to be consumed and appreciated by the viewer. These idealized women represented beauty standards that were based on European features. Supporting this problematic "ideal woman" narrative was the visual culture that surrounded me—young, pale-skinned, White girls were plastered all over the magazines I read and the advertisements I saw. I never realized how much this affected me, until I recently revisited some of my older self-portraits:

Figure 1: The Moon (2016) Glass beads on Digital Canvas Print (from the group exhibition, *Larkin Arts Regional Juried Show*)

Figure 2: Self Portrait (2013) Digital Photograph

Figure 3: Self Portrait (2015) Digital Photograph (from the solo exhibition, *goodbye, hello*)

Before I was able to unpack the complicated nature of these images, I always assumed that my editing style was an aesthetic choice. A lighter skin tone contrasted better on a dark background, or the composition looked better with my eyes cropped out. However, I soon realized that my portraits were composed in a way that (tried to) erased my Asianness. Through makeup or compositional choices, I framed the images in a way that made me unrecognizable. This was confirmed by my friends who always responded with "that's you?" every time I showed them a new photograph. One could argue that this was an unfortunate coincidence, but all of my other portraits featured White models (save myself). Many of them were also photoshopped to be lighter than their actual skin. This feeling, of not feeling acceptable unless I denied my "otherness," is not a phenomenon unique to me. By lightening my skin, cropping out my eyes, hiding behind makeup, and introducing myself as "practically White," I was trying to become "raceless" by adhering to White supremacist standards (Collins, 2012). I was attempting to assimilate into a mold that I could never fit into. I did not feel comfortable to present myself as I am because I believed that "as I am" was not a good thing to be. Even within the art classroom, the successful artists that were presented to me were always White (males), and the women who were viewed as the embodiment of beauty were also White. With all those things considered, it is understandable that I felt the (unfortunate) need to lighten my skin and hide my race for viewers to take me (and my artwork) seriously.

Amber: *As I look back, I also believe that I internalized a racist attitude in regard to my Blackness. I remember growing up watching television and thinking Whiteness or lighter skin tones were somehow better than my darker skin tone. The women who were usually deemed desirable in these instances often had lighter skin. As I tried to ignore these notions, I tried to find other ways to culturally "lighten" myself through constantly straightening my hair or wearing similar clothing as my White peers. I knew that I was Black, but there were times that I wanted to distance myself from anything that seemed "too Black." On one hand, I did not want to be publicly associated with anything stereotypically Black by non-Black people. But, on the other hand, I felt some*

exclusion from other Black people when I did not enact or possess those things. It was like being between two cultural spaces, but not feeling like you fit completely within either. Luckily, I was able to find "homeplaces" (hooks, 1990) with other Black/students of color who were also having these experiences.

It was not until I went to college, especially graduate school, that I began to fully recognize my compelling need to embrace a sense of connectivity to the Black community and to carve out space for my own Blackness. I felt like my Blackness had previously been dictated by my upbringing and the spaces that I had occupied. Although college opened up new possibilities for exploration of my racial identity, my art education could still be considered one of those spaces where I also explored by identity. I should note that there was a huge gap in my art education. I had art classes in elementary school, but I did not have them again until my undergraduate study. In between that time, I engaged in art as an occasional hobby.

When I was a child, my mother would also share artwork by Black artists with me, as she was an art educator. If it were not for this occasional exposure outside of the classroom, I would not have really engaged with the work of Black artists. My art teachers were always White, and I do not remember them teaching about Black artists. In my art history courses, we did not talk about African American art or Black artists. We talked about African art, but not any specific artists or contemporary examples. In another course, I remember asking the teacher for advice on how to portray my skin color for a self-portrait project and received little instruction. At this time in my art education, I was never prompted to think or artistically reflect on my experiences, especially not my racial experiences. It was not until I began graduate school in art education that I first encountered critical perspectives around race and art in a course on multiculturalism and diversity in art education. As I participated in this course and contemplated my identity as a Black woman engaged in art education, I began to create artwork that allowed me to process my identity and Black experiences in general:

Figure 4: #BlackGirlsLivesMatter (2017) Mixed Media Collage
(from the group exhibition, *To Be Black and Female: Reflecting on Black Feminism and African American Women's Art in Museums*)

Figure 5: From the installation *Welcome to Our Living Room* (2017) Mixed Media Collage (from the group exhibition, *To Be Black and Female: Reflecting on Black Feminism and African American Women's Art in Museums*) (Photograph courtesy of Mikael Coleman)

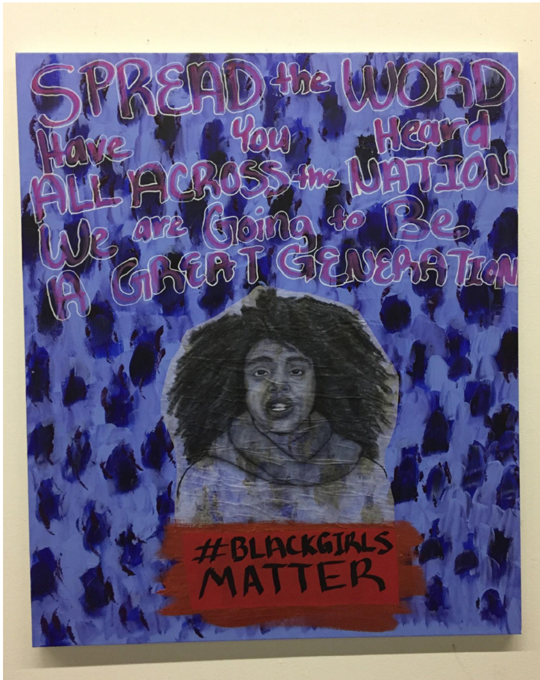

Figure 6: #BlackGirlsMatter (2018) Mixed Media on Canvas

While we both have felt pressure to assimilate as a response to our educational experiences, we have had different journeys healing. These journeys have allowed us to reject pressures to assimilate, as we came to embrace our "difference" and lived realities. We believe this is an important turning point, as our journeys have allowed us to share our unique experiences with the field, especially since assimilation, from a colorblind perspective, erases diversity as it removes positive aspects of cultural diversity in favor of homogeneity (Gotanda, 1995). Our attempts to assimilate were different, but we both struggled with finding our place and self-worth in a White supremacist world. Hannah's revelation about her own artwork helped her confront and unpack her attempts at assimilation. Amber was able to abandon her attempts to assimilate and find her unique identity as a Black woman by connecting with others who shared a similar lived experience. Both of our narratives demonstrate the healing that we had to do to unlearn the pressures of assimilation, countering the hegemonic narrative that was asking us to whitewash our cultural diversity.

Narrative three: Diversity needed

Often in education, "diversity" is a word with many meanings and intentions. Educators attempt to be diverse in curricula and initiatives are created to address demographic disproportionality. However, the visual representation of people of color and the inclusion of the diversity of their experiences still does not meet or exceed the needs of people of color. Despite intentions, when spoken for and interpreted through a White lens, people of color become objectified, becoming "the ingredients of the multicultural mix, which the dominant culture is determining for us to be accurate or authentic" (Ritchie, 1995, p. 309). The language used in this kind of multiculturalism is still focused on White perspectives, where people of color are othered as "non-White," still centering language and perspectives to Whiteness. In a similar vein, even the term "diversity" has its problems as it tries to present multiculturalism through a positive light without challenging the current racial struggles experienced by those of varying cultures (Gotanda, 1995). Educators must recognize the problematic narratives that they are perpetuating regarding race, and other intersecting identities, through superficial multicultural lessons (Haymes, 1995). In their practice, educators must embrace critical multiculturalism, which calls for "a comprehensive critique of standardized curriculum and whose knowledge is privileged throughout that curriculum….[as well as] embraces the use of personal narrative to counter cultural

subjugation, or the idea that one group's cultural knowledge is superior to another's" (Acuff, 2018a, p. 36). This use and engagement with critical multiculturalism requires the recognition and incorporation of diverse voices in art education. These voices are present, but are not often reflected in the demographics, pedagogical practices, and curricula in art education.

> **Hannah:** *During my position as a graduate teaching assistant, a practicum student shared a story about their interaction with an elementary student that I found noteworthy. I share it here with their permission. So, during a 1st grade lesson, the practicum student showed images of Pascale Marthine Tayou and his artwork to the class. At the end of their presentation, one student stated, "Hey! That artist is Brown!" The practicum teacher was taken aback at first, but confirmed this observation. The student then responded, "I'm Brown, too. Does that mean I can be an artist too?" While this interaction was short and fleeting, it displays the impact that visual representation can have on a student of color. I believe this recognition and empowerment can also be experienced by other underrepresented groups such as gender, social class, sexual orientation, or religion. The same practicum student told me of another instance where they introduced a contemporary Egyptian artist to a class of 2nd graders, and a student exclaimed in surprise, "People still live in Egypt?!" This comment further demonstrates how inadequate representation can perpetuate outdated stereotypes that suspend cultures within a certain time period in young students (Chin, 2011).*

> **Amber:** *I am thankful to my family for exposing me to art by Black artists. We would often visit museums and other cultural institutions or events. While I was intrigued by the work of Black artists, I realized that their work was sparsely represented in spaces like museums. There would be one artist here or there, or their artworks would be in one specific area. However, they would not be widely dispersed throughout the entirety of the space. It was something that I had mentally noted, but did not further investigate until my graduate studies. I realized through reflecting on my own personal experiences and interning at different art museums that I wanted to explore the representation of African American women's art in museums for my master's applied project. Using Black feminist theory as a lens, I curated*

a critical pedagogical experience for a few Black women, including myself, to explore their identities and experiences through art-making and holding an exhibition. One of the most interesting aspects of the project for me was seeing how it transformed the other participants' perspectives on seeing the museum as a space where they felt included and valued. I was also surprised by how the visitors to the exhibition, Black and non-Black, were moved by the display of Black women's experiences and desired to continue the call for empowerment on behalf of Black women. The artworks became a context for the participants to creatively consider their own lived experiences while the exhibition audience had the opportunity to contemplate experiences outside of their own.

It is imperative that we utilize culturally inclusive pedagogy and create curricula that prioritize the backgrounds and lived experiences of the students (Freire, 1970). It is equally important to present an inclusive population of artists to our students. Representation is paramount, as it may only take one exemplar for students to believe that they can be successful with art (Wilson, 2017). Showing artists that come from similar communities and cultural backgrounds as the student population acknowledges the diversity in the classroom and can help students connect to the curricular content on a more personal level (Hunter-Doniger, 2018; Wilson, 2017). Representation must also be contemporary or else it can fall into the same trappings as superficial multiculturalism. Without contemporary representation, young students may not be able to connect historical contexts and cultures to contemporary times (Chin, 2011). Like the example given by Hannah, some students may believe that either some cultures no longer exist or that people within those cultures still exist in the historical context of which they were taught.

CRT posits that racism is a norm in our society, so much so that it is often overlooked (Parker & Castro, 2013). Racism is recognizable in our education system through curricula that highlights the achievements of White (male) artists over other cultures. Our final narratives focus on the importance of diverse representation in curricula. Hannah's experiences describe how diverse representation can empower students and the trappings of showing only historical artwork. Amber describes how diverse representation of artists in cultural institutions and exhibition spaces can empower oneself, as well as others. With each narrative, we recognize that while racism is not blatantly obvious in our classrooms, it can be a tool that erases

artists of color.

Conclusion

The narratives of the authors connect to feature an anecdote itself: the authors both faced microaggressions in the classroom, had experiences which caused them both to internalize racism, and felt pressured to assimilate. Visual and cultural representation was a tool that helped the authors unpack these conversations for themselves and others. The conversation around Whiteness in (art) education has been an ongoing one, starting long before we decided to share our stories, by other art educators of color (Acuff, 2018b; Desai, 2010; Lawton, 2018; Rolling, 2011). In the same vein, scholarship that discusses the importance of critically reflecting on multicultural practices has also been around for some time (Alden, 2001; Chin, 2011; Desai, 2005; Haymes, 1995). This may highlight an unfortunate shortcoming of personal narratives in art education scholarship: while art educators of color continue to share their experiences, the continuation of the conversation over decades indicates that it is not igniting enough change for us to feel that our voices are being heard.

Whiteness in art education creates the environment for White educators to perpetuate trauma and harm to students of color through microaggressions; for reinforcing Whiteness in a way that leads to internalized racism or assimilation to norms of Whiteness; and that fails to represent a diverse group of artists and experiences that reflect the lives of their students. Duoethnography and CRT can “give voice” (Sheared, 2006) to people of color (educators and students) as they share their experiences of the impact of Whiteness and racism. Duoethnography also offers an opportunity for individuals of similar or differing backgrounds to juxtapose their narratives, humanities, and social realities in order to engage in critical meaning-making (Sawyer & Norris, 2009; Wilson & Lawton, 2019; Wilson & Shields, 2019). Meanwhile, CRT allows us to critically think about the inequities that people of color face and the systemic oppressions that affect their lives (Bridges, 2019). In each narrative of our duoethnography, we wanted to provide three instances of problems with Whiteness in art education and address them with a critical race lens. We hope by sharing our lived experiences, that we can contribute to the growing number of counternarratives in art education that highlight the impact of Whiteness in our field. The future of more equitable art education necessitates recognizing experiences of people of color with racism and challenging indoctrination of racist tendencies in our field. Furthermore, we

believe that diverse representation in curricula is necessary in order to decenter Whiteness.

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