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Jennifer Combe, *Caucasian Flesh Tone* For more information, please refer to the article by Jennifer Combe in this issue.

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Reflecting on a Paradigm of Solidarity? Moving from niceness to dismantle whiteness in art education

Marit Dewhurst

Editorial: Whiteness and Art Education

Joni Boyd Acuff, Ph.D.
The Ohio State University

> *Whiteness is a racial discourse, whereas the category "white people" represents a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin colour. (Leonardo, 2009, p.169). White-ness, in this sense, refers to a set of assumptions, beliefs, and practices that place the interests and perspectives of White people at the center of what is considered normal and everyday. Critical scholarship on Whiteness is not an assault on White people themselves, it is an assault on the socially constructed and constantly reinforced power of White identifications, norms, and interests (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).*
>
> Gillborn, 2015, p. 278

To be White in America means not having to consistently consider one's place in the world because "Whiteness frames subjectivity and prescribes what is sayable, shaping affective structures and behaviors in ways that become encoded in the body" (Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, Carpenter, 2018, p. 9). Further, the maintenance of Whiteness relies (and thrives) on knowledge, certain ways of being, orientations, dispositions being positioned as "the norm", rendering Whiteness invisible (Frankenberg, 1993; Harris, 1993; Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, Carpenter, 2018). This invisibility has impacted the ways in which we think, discuss and teach about race, especially in art education research and practice. For example, social justice art education, critical multicultural art education, culturally relevant and/or responsive art education, socially engaged art education, and critical race art education generally center the narratives of people of color because oftentimes their knowledge, lived experiences and contributions are absent and/or ignored in mainstream art education discourse, research and classrooms.

The curriculum, pedagogies and research practices undergirded by these critical frameworks support and give much needed attention to racially marginalized groups of people. The use of these frames are undoubtedly imperative to our field if we are one that desires educational equity. However, if the art education field only thinks about race when it is considering or occupied by people of color, then the implication is that Whiteness is not racialized, it is simply normal. Whiteness stays unbothered, unresearched, stable in its central position as "Others" hover around it. As a result, we have been and will continue to be in a perpetual cycle of developing pedagogical and theoretical frameworks intended solely for people of color to thrive

because, as a field[1], we have yet to explicitly name Whiteness as a central structure that needs to be disrupted. There needs to be a paradigm shift in which art educators simultaneously prioritize the interrogation of Whiteness, as well as action oriented investments that centralize voices of color in curriculum, pedagogy, and research.

To destabilize White supremacy, the art education field has to identify itself as a racialized site at all times, and especially because it is predominantly White. The Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education call for papers on the theme "Whiteness and Art Education" was an attempt at this destabilization, as it aimed to shift the critical gaze, as well as the theoretical and empirical focus, from racially subordinate groups to the racially dominant group (Delgado and Stefancic,1997; Frankenberg, 1993). Such a shift lifts some of the weight off of the shoulders of people of color doing race work and places the onus on those who benefit from systems of White supremacy, and thus have the primary responsibility to "interrupt Whiteness" (Bell, 2014).

"Whiteness and Art Education" yielded a record number of research and creative submissions. To me, the breadth of personal narratives, investigative inquiries, and immediate calls to action that were submitted was evidence that the art education field is ripe for attending to the unmarked nature of Whiteness. Such that, the conversations initiated in this volume must not be static and cannot end on the last page of volume 36 of jCRAE. The art education field has the responsibility to be intentional in its discussion about race, specifically Whiteness, and revisit it again and again with rigor and passion so that actionable steps to destabilize its normativity can be developed, enacted and sustained. To model continuous dialogue on the topic of Whiteness and art education, this mini-theme will be distributed in 3 consecutive issues that forthrightly name, center and challenge the standard of Whiteness in art education. Further, please note that the research, creative essays and artworks in each issue are not traditionally categorized and separated. All of the contributions engage with one another, comfort each other, push one another and show solidarity in intention and commitment.

Dionne Custer Edwards opens Volume 36, Issue I with an unfiltered, potent poem that uncomfortably peels back the historical silences about and sacrifices of Whiteness in American history. Then, **Courtnie N. Wolfgang** presents a fiercely raw, but articulate call for White art educators to acknowledge and accept art education as a field that is heavily impacted by and even complicit in the

1 Scholars of color in art education have and continue to call out whiteness in the field (see Acuff, 2018; Ballengee-Morris, 2013; Daniel & Stuhr, 2006; Daniel, Ballengee-Morris,& Stuhr, 2013; Desai, 1996; Desai, 2010; Herman & Kraehe, 2018; Knight, 2014; Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández, Carpenter, 2018; Lawton, 2018; Rolling, 2018; Wilson, 2018)

maintenance of Whiteness and white supremacy. Wolfgang offers anti-racist arts pedagogies as a step towards being an accomplice in de-centering White orientations and ways of being that are at the forefront of art education.

Noting issues like microaggressions and the internalization of Whiteness, **Hannah Sions** and **Amber Coleman** use duoethnography and Critical Race Theory as frameworks to share and analyze personal lived experiences that illustrate the ways Whiteness emotionally and psychologically impacts students of color in our art education classrooms, specifically at the university level. Following these intimate narratives, both **Kim Cosier** and **Gloria Wilson** offer new (to art education) pedagogical and curricular tools that support preservice art teachers' journey in reflecting on and critiquing Whiteness. Introducing the concept of "warm demanders" to the field of art education, Cosier vulnerably shares her precarious effort to guide her preservice art education students to a place of race (White) consciousness. Then, describing an art-based project that she completed with her predominately White preservice art teachers, Wilson introduces film and the "circuit of culture" as a framework to bring to light the social and cultural investment in White supremacist ideologies.

Jennifer Combe shares artwork that illustrates her ongoing critical reflection and analysis of Whiteness in the arts and art education. From a critique of paint manufacturers to an experimentation with adhesive bandages, Combe's artwork aims to capture and question the complexities of race, especially the concept of "Caucasion" skin color and its connection to power in the art world. **Daniela A. Fifi** and **Hannah D. Heller** present research that attends to the impact of Whiteness on interpretive practices in art museums in the US and abroad (Caribbean). The co-authors feature Afro-Carribean art in a case study that analyzes the global impact of White supremacist culture on the arts. **Tania Cañas, Odette Kelada** and **Mariaa Randall** join forces with South African artist Sethembile Msezane in a discussion entitled "Art & Action: Displacing Whiteness in the Arts." The transcript presents musings and strategies shared by arts professionals and practitioners of color that focus on decentering and destabilizing Whiteness within the field.

Issue I of "Whiteness and Art Education" wraps with **Marit Dewhurst**'s pointed self reflection in which she wrangles with Whiteness and its inescapable privileges. Dewhurst is transparent in her writing, as she shares not only her conflicts, struggles and negotiations with trying to exist outside of Whiteness in her work in the museum and art education field, but she also shares her challenges in real time as she transparently includes editorial comments from the article review process that called out Whiteness in

her writing. Dewhurst draws from antiracist work to reiterate specific values and practices that may help the art education field move "towards a paradigm of solidarity."

Volume 36 of jCRAE forefronts a discussion about what happens to Whiteness once it has been made visible to White people. What happens to Whiteness when its normality has been interrupted? (Bell, 2014). The authors share personal reflections, paths of exploration, and even actionable items that may be able to assist the art education field in establishing a new way to talk about race and engage in transformative practices that calls out and challenges the pervasiveness of Whiteness in art education.

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American History Elevator Pitch

Dionne Custer Edwards

One day we will talk about ghosts.
Find a way to miracle.

Name a once-river a sober row.
A hybrid: sweet shiny lie with plastics,

long crawl down a halfway magic,
a trouble the shape of spades.

For now, we call it home. This land

of fertile knot of self and star-like wounds.
A small debt of death and heat

in our throats. Swallow of hot iron cruel.
And in fairness, a curtain of kindness.

Notice the manner of kindness:

at dinner parties, on front porches,
across the street, around cubicle walls.

When we unearth this soil, we loosen
the soothe. Stumble on the silence.

I wait.

Give my American history elevator pitch:
A few strangers, heavy hands on land,

on people. A concoction of pecking orders,
feuds and sparks. They called it freedom.

Some sorted details, time, peril left out.

This country spread its long thick spine
between the oceans.

Became a ribbon of glorious terrible deeds.
Born between the legs of heroes and thorns.

Bitter, sweet, rotten, wicked, free.

The White Supremacy of Art Education in the United States: My Complicity and Path Toward Reparation Pedagogy

Courtnie N. Wolfgang, Ph.D.
Virginia Commonwealth University

ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author discusses legacies of white supremacy in the United States of America and the effects on art education. Through personal reflection and resourcing the ongoing work to right the misinformation acquired through inherently white-privileged educational experiences, the author suggests the possibility of actively anti-racist arts pedagogies and pedagogies of justice in the arts.

KEYWORDS: Culturally sustaining pedagogies, anti-racist arts pedagogy, equity and justice

> *Teachers are often among the group most reluctant to acknowledge the extent to which white supremacist thinking informs every aspect of our culture including the way we learn, the content of what we learn, and the manner in which we are taught.*
>
> bell hooks, 2003, p. 25

This started as a more traditional manuscript: a critical investigation of my whiteness through philosophy, theory, and praxis. These tools were given to me (yes, given) with limited hesitation because of my whiteness. The intersections of my gender (I am a woman) and my sexuality (I am queer) produce challenges to access and credibility within the academy and the world. Ultimately though, I can rely on my whiteness as privilege. Additionally, white supremacy relies on the normalization of that experience. Put another way, white people being unable or unwilling to see the social and cultural underpinnings of access is a function of white supremacy. And it is functioning well. So what I really want to discuss is white supremacy, generally, and the white supremacy of Art Education, specifically. In doing that, I am refraining from academic citations from white scholars in Art Education who aren't explicitly confronting their whiteness. I am, whenever possible, avoiding privileging a scholarly voice and instead relying on honest narrative about my complicity in white supremacy.

This essay includes embedded resources throughout. I have found these and others helpful in exploring white supremacy, confronting my part in white supremacy, acknowledging the unearned privilege I enjoy, and developing language with which to discuss related issues with students, with colleagues, with family, and with friends. Lesson one that I have been taught is that we (white and white presenting people) have to do the work. Whenever possible I am relying on scholarship that is open access, acknowledging the institutional privilege of academic scholarship and restricted access that is rooted in systems of oppression. So I am sharing in my learning, but I am not doing all the work for you. In doing this, I hope my fellow white art educators in school, museum, and community spaces will read with open hearts and understand this not as a character assassination. Rather, this is our opportunity to acknowledge how legacies of racism and violence continue to deeply impact curriculum and pedagogy in the arts; to make space where we have failed in the past; and to reconsider pedagogy as a step toward reparation or mitigating the effects of white supremacy in Art Education on our students, our colleagues, and our communities.

White Supremacy and Rhetoric of Whiteness

Race is a construct and, according to Alexander (2010), a historically recent development "owing largely to European Imperialism" (p.23). She continues, "Here, in America, the idea of race emerged as a means of reconciling chattel slavery- as well as the extermination of American Indians- with the ideas of freedom preached by whites in the new colonies" (p.23). We can point to a historical emergence of white supremacy following Bacon's rebellion in 1675. A white property owner in Jamestown, Virginia, USA, Nathaniel Bacon, successfully united enslaved Blacks, indentured servants, and poor whites against planter elite in the American colony. The rebellion effectively failed to overthrow the planter elite. In efforts to preserve their power, the planter elite extended privileges to poor whites to "drive a wedge between them and black slaves" (p. 25), eliminating future alliances between enslaved Blacks and poor whites and establishing white supremacy as poor whites sought to expand their racial privilege (Alexander, 2010).

According to Kuykendall (2017), whiteness "is predicated on the power to grant recognition and legitimacy…[it] exercises the right to impose meaning, objectives, and worldview on the racialized other and so makes the issue of race undiscussable" (p. 295). What most people- especially white people- are taught to understand, either directly or indirectly, is that race isn't constructed but biological. A biological imperative of race was used to support the eugenics movement in the USA, where the desire to "breed" out so-called unwanted traits resulted in the forced sterilization of Native Americans, Mexican immigrants, and Blacks in the south. If we

consider the history of the construction of race, and the reasoning behind its construction as a maintenance of power for white, wealthy landholders in the 17th century, then we can begin a process of unraveling the white supremacist power maintenance of "race" as it is intentionally violent toward Black and Brown bodies.
White supremacy assumes an intersectional erasure of women, disabled bodies, and queer bodies. I will not approach a discussion of the violences committed upon Black and Brown bodies without acknowledgement of those intersections (you should probably also read this). Instead, I wish to weave the tapestry of violence that white supremacy enacts, and how without actively anti-violent pedagogies and curricular reconsideration, the field of art education continues to reinforce narratives that exclude and harm.

Intent vs. Impact

Simply put, one's intention does not govern the response. If something one says or does hurts another person, that pain is not erased because one did not intend to hurt another. "Do no harm" is only an effective strategy when one can identify the harm one is doing. White supremacy relies on the cloaking of violence toward non-white persons as normalized. White supremacy in art/education relies on the normalization of whiteness in arts curriculum and pedagogy: a normalization that is inherently violent (Ighodaro and Wiggins, 2013). White people, if we are not willing to critically analyze what and how we were taught about the world, our intentions do not matter. If we are not willing to acknowledge that what we achieve is always at least in part to our unearned privilege of whiteness, our intentions do not matter. White teachers, if we cannot be truthful with ourselves about how white supremacy has influenced our teaching in order to actively combat the negative impact of white supremacy in art/education, we continue to enact violence on our students.

Who Am I?

So, like many of you, I am trying to do the work. I am a former high school art teacher now working at a university helping prepare future art educators. With a few exceptions related to job relocation and graduate school, I have spent the entirety of my white life in the Deep South of the United States of America.[1] Presently, I live and work in the former capital of the confederacy, Richmond, Virginia. As a white

1 This essay is accompanied by images and videos from my recent visit to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum in Montgomery, Alabama. Individual county and state monument images represent the places from which my family comes, places I have lived, places I have worked, and places where my family still resides.

person born to non-racist (but not actively anti-racist) white parents in the south-eastern corner of Alabama, being white dramatically shaped my perception of self and the world around me. However, because we didn't talk about whiteness as a race or racism in general, I lived without explicit acknowledgment of how the construction of race benefitted me and others like me, in spite of experiencing casual racism almost daily. Now, as an adult who is owned by my Southerness in many ways, I am actively learning new strategies to undo the damages of explicit and implicit bias in my professional and personal lives.

What We Need to Begin the Conversation

Engaging in difficult discussions about race requires some agreements between participants. Side by side with one of my students, we adapted these guidelines from Lynn Weber's Guidelines for Classroom Discussion:[2]

1. We believe that in order to honestly and thoughtfully have this discussion, we must acknowledge that institutional oppression- including but not limited to racism, ableism, classism, sexism, genderism, transphobia, and heterosexism- exists.
2. That we are taught misinformation about our own groups and others.
3. That we agree not to blame ourselves for misinformation that we were given and to accept responsibility for not repeating it once we've learned otherwise.
4. To always do the best we can.
5. To actively seek information.
6. To not demean or devalue people for their experiences.
7. To actively combat myths and stereotypes.
8. To be brave and vulnerable and honor the space during discussion- including not repeating information outside of the conversation if asked not to do so.[3]

Legacies of Racism and White Supremacy in My Learning

Examples of Content I Did/Didn't Receive from my (Mostly) White Teachers :
I DID receive content that slavery was abolished.
I DIDN'T explicitly receive content about legacies of racism that continue to oppress Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) or that the concept of race as we understand it in the USA was

2 I use Weber's guidelines when working with university students and with adult learners, however students have frequently asked for a version that might be more accessible in language in particular for younger audiences.

3 Thank you to Patrick Carter for his valuable insight and input on this adaptation

constructed to preserve white supremacy (Alexander, 2010).
I DID receive content about the Pilgrims and the first Thanksgiving.
I DIDN'T explicitly receive content about genocide and ongoing erasure of Native identity in the United States of America.
I DID receive content about "equal rights".
I DIDN'T explicitly receive content about what colorblind racism (Desai, 2010) is.

Figure 1: Memorial to victims of terror lynchings in Houston County, Alabama: the author's childhood home.

Figure 2: Clarke County, Georgia: location of the University of Georgia, where the author received her undergraduate and master's degrees.

What I learned was a whitewashed version of history, one that privileges white experience and white saviorship (see also this and this) thereby maintaining White Supremacy. And when I started teaching, I replicated that- as many of us do (Spillane, 2015). This is not a vilification of every teacher I have ever had. Guinier and Torres (2003) cite continuing racial injustice as a result of a *canary in the coal mine* mentality- that by identifying a singular event or marker of blame one fails to acknowledge the institutional and systemic causes of ongoing racial injustice.

This, of course, does not absolve one of one's personal responsibility, rather encourages us to understand racial injustice as deeper and more complicated than the singular action. Put another way, one's actions are a result of histories of myths and misinformation regarding race. Part of my work is to be honest about times where the legacies of racism have influenced my interaction with students. This story is hard for me to tell, and I'm going to tell it anyway:

It was my second or third year as a high school teacher. I could say I was young (an excuse often presented when white people commit violence, but never for POC) but I was still an adult, degreed, and working as a professional. One of my brightest and most dedicated students was a Black girl who I will call L. She wanted to go to art school. She came in before school and stayed after to work in our classroom. I felt close to her and I think she felt close to me. For most of the year, she wore her hair short and natural. One morning, she came in with long braids and proudly asked me what I thought of her hair. I thoughtlessly made what I considered a harmless joke about her new hair being a liability in a hallway fight. Typing these words right now brings me so much shame. She said nothing and I carried along in my day thinking absolutely nothing about it until the next morning when L came in before school started and asked to speak with me. She told me how hurt and embarrassed she felt by my comment. And she called me on my racism. Of course I apologized. And I meant it. And yet I was so eager to convince her of my anti-racism that I did the thing that many of us do when challenged on our white privilege or white supremacy: I failed to fully hear her. Or to fully acknowledge the ways I upheld white supremacy outside of that singular moment for which I was apologizing.

At the time, I didn't push myself to dig deeper. I simply and shamefully tamped down the incident because it made me so uncomfortable and therefore failed in acknowledging L's inability to "tamp it down." Because it wasn't a singular incident for her. It was persistent and oppressive. See, I thought the joke was harmless because I could not imagine L getting in a fight. It wasn't funny because what I was really responding to was the harmful stereotype of young Black girls being inherently volatile and the criminalization of Black girls in schools (Morris, 2016). In a moment, I undid all the trust I had been lucky to cultivate between myself and L. The ease with which I deployed a tactic of subjugation upon a Black body continues to haunt me, as does trying to locate all the other times I may have done so and not been aware of it. I live with the knowledge of my violence against that student and likely the many others who could not find the words to call me out on my upholding of institutional violence. L, if you somehow are reading this, I am sorry. This essay is dedicated to you. I hope you are thriving.

Figure 3: Gwinnett County, Georgia, where L was a student and the author taught at a public high school.

Regrettably, the narrative I learned about teaching- either explicitly or implicitly- was that "being there" was simply enough: that teaching art in a space with Black bodies didn't require me to do any of the work to better understand legacies of white supremacy in education. That myth went unchallenged for much of my early career as an art educator. Unchallenged myths about race are a product of white supremacy, as are the histories of suppression in educational spaces for Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).

Making Space Where We Have Previously Failed

Ighodaro and Wiggan (2013) consider curriculum as a "social-psychological discourse of power, which reflects social and

institutional values" (p.3).
They continue:

> A curriculum forms a discourse of power and culture, where the interests of dominant groups or power elites are stated and then served through a dominant curriculum and where, in the curriculum process, less powerful groups are not allowed to enter the dialogue. (p. 3)

This discourse of power in educational spaces Ighodaro and Wiggan refer to as *curriculum violence.* Because, historically, Black people were considered as property in the United States, schools "purposely suppressed and denied the intellectual heritage of these groups" (Ighodaro and Wiggin, 2013, p. 6). Ighodaro and Wiggin contend that the legacies of exclusion and denial of culture are present in education today.

So how does one make space for anti-racist pedagogy where we have previously failed? To start, I posit that an ongoing and reflexive practice of developing culturally sustaining pedagogies is necessary. A culturally sustaining pedagogy "seeks to perpetuate and foster- to sustain- linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism of schooling for positive social transformation" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). If you made a Venn diagram of how and what you consider essential to teach at the end of the second decade of the 21st century, and how and what you were taught, directly or indirectly, to teach where would the overlaps be? I echo Ladson-Billings (1994) in claiming that we teach what we value. Put another way, we communicate to our students what we value through the artists, the content, the questions, and the processes we bring into spaces of art education. I also argue that *inclusion* is not demonstrating value. Our students don't need to be taught *about* Blackness or Brownness through inclusion of artists of color. They need to be taught that we *value* Blackness and Brownness as much as we value our whiteness. And how do/are we doing that in a culture that has taught each of us, Black, Brown, or white, that whiteness has inherent and superior cultural value? One way is to consider what Stewart (2017) calls the *language of appeasement*. Are we adopting language of *diversity and inclusion* in our approach to curriculum in art education or of *equity and justice*?

- Diversity asks, "Who's in the room?" Equity responds: "Who is trying to get in the room but can't? Whose presence in the room is under constant threat of erasure?"
- Inclusion asks, "Has everyone's ideas been heard?" Justice responds, "Whose ideas won't be taken as seriously because they aren't in the majority?"
- Diversity asks, "How many more of [pick any minoritized

identity group do we have this year than last?" Equity responds, "What conditions have we created that maintain certain groups as the perpetual majority here?"

- Inclusion asks, "Is this environment safe for everyone to feel like they belong?" Justice challenges, "Whose safety is being sacrificed and minimized to allow others to be comfortable maintaining dehumanizing views?"
- Diversity asks, "Isn't it separatist to provide funding for safe spaces and separate student centers?" Equity answers, "What are people experiencing on campus that they don't feel safe when isolated and separated from others like themselves?"
- Inclusion asks, "Wouldn't it be a great program to have a panel debate Black Lives Matter? We had a Black Lives Matter activist here last semester, so this semester we should invite someone from the alt-right." Justice answers, "Why would we allow the humanity and dignity of people or our students to be the subject of debate or the target of harassment and hate speech?"
- Diversity celebrates increases in numbers that still reflect minoritized status on campus and incremental growth. Equity celebrates reductions in harm, revisions to abusive systems and increases in supports for people's life chances as reported by those who have been targeted.
- Inclusion celebrates awards for initiatives and credits itself for having a diverse candidate pool. Justice celebrates getting rid of practices and policies that were having disparate impacts on minoritized groups. (Stewart, 2017)

A culturally sustaining pedagogy in the arts would be a pedagogy that makes no claim, among other things, to race neutrality. Race neutrality can be understood as an effort to be inclusive with claims of colorblindness. But what race neutrality does in our classrooms is erase the history of inequity for BIPOC manifested in systems of white supremacy. Instead, doing the work of a culturally sustaining pedagogy in the arts would include engaging in difficult dialogues (Love, Gaynor, & Blessett, 2016) about race, in particular how race can shape experience or expression in the arts. I intentionally use the language of difficult dialogues as opposed to the more common phrasing I hear from teachers regarding a topic like race/racism: controversial. Controversy implies prolonged disagreement, and difficult dialogues are not inherently prolonged disagreements. Although they can be "controversial," framing conversations as such has the added weight of not seeing them as appropriate for classroom settings. Additionally, it is too simple to overlay "controversial" onto a body- particularly bodies that have been historically marginalized. Bodies are not controversial, ideas can be. A culturally sustaining pedagogy in the arts would be a pedagogy that is actively anti-racist. An actively anti-racist pedagogy is not simply inclusive of Black

Figure 4: Experiencing Hank Willis Thomas's "Rise Up." (video taken by author)[4]

and Brown artists. Instead, it would be a curriculum that de-centers whiteness by explicitly naming histories of harm, erasure, and exoticization of Black and Brown bodies in the arts. De-centering whiteness in art education would involve, for many of us, filling in the gaps that formal education in the arts left us with: gaps in our knowledge of non-western art; gaps in our knowledge of indigenous art; gaps in the knowledge we acquired about what to *value* in the art world.

In 2017, white artist Dana Schutz's "*Open Casket*," a painting of Emmett Till, a child and victim of a terror lynching in Mississippi in 1955, was included in the Whitney Biennial. There was much debate following the opening of the Biennial regarding Schutz's inclusion of the portrait (Till is depicted in his open casket, as the title of the piece suggests), in particular of the subject matter. Was the story of Till's death one for a white, successful artist to further profit from? The capital-A Art World responded predictably, in my opinion, with rallying cries of censorship and artistic freedom. The New Yorker ran an essay in April 2017, titled "Why Dana Schutz Painted Emmett Till", that described Schutz as a painter of "enigmatic" stories and with a voice that is "high and childlike." After a detailed description of Schutz's career and accomplishments, the matter of "Open Casket" is discussed. The article concludes:

> 'I knew the risks going into this,' Schutz told me. 'What I didn't realize was how bad it would look when seen out of context. Is it better to try to make something that's impossible, because it's important

4 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fHpG5jPft56b4vx-CBvUZp6hmoO-J22tr/view

> to you, and to fail, or never to engage with it at all? I just couldn't do it any other way.' (Tompkins, 2017)

First, to describe the story of Emmett Till's murder as "enigmatic" dangerously dilutes the horrors of terror lynchings in the United States. Second, the rhetoric employed to describe Schutz, her voice as "high and childlike," reinforces an innocence of whiteness; what Kuykendall (2017) has referred to as the *logic of whiteness*, the "justification on which whiteness rests" (p. 296). Finally, for Schutz to speak of "risks" and not of reflection on cultural appropriation or possible mishandling of the story of the violent death of a Black child- brought on by the false accusation of a white woman- is inadequate and, again, dangerous.

As a white person studying art, I received a lot of liberal signaling as to what determined art and artists as credible. As white teachers moving toward a culturally sustainable pedagogy of art, we must engage in active skepticism of the historic gatekeepers of culture, which include museums, schools of art, canons of art history, and, yes, art education as a field. Are you one to resist in engaging in socio-political content via social media? If so, you must believe that you get all the information you need about the world while engaging in other forms of media. Social media and forms of popular media are valuable, I would argue essential, sources for Black and Brown scholarship and cultural content. If you aren't following Black Twitter, if you aren't following BIPOC artists on Instagram, if you aren't actively seeking sources of information and art that weren't signaled to you as "valuable" or "credible" I would encourage you to question why.

Arts Pedagogy as an Act of Reparation

I am not going to engage in an argument of the necessity for reparation. I am, rather, proceeding in this work with the mindset that, without it, a moral debt cannot be repaid. I recognize that the word "reparation" in this context requires some caution. I do not seek to undermine the gravity with which reparation is taken up regarding the violence and genocide enacted on BIPOC in the United States of America. Rather, I use it to suggest the gravity with which I consider anti-racist work done in the name of art and art education. The very least white teachers can do is push back on the white supremacy of art education that gives us unearned protection by virtue of being white. One of the most successful lies white supremacy teaches us is that we can't talk about it, even as white people. Especially as white people. And to foist the responsibility on BIPOC, the imperative for action pivots away from an action needed for all to thrive to an action that is perceived as benefiting only some.

During a panel discussion in Richmond, Virginia, in the spring of 2018, art educator Joni Acuff was asked how we could support BIPOC high school students in pursuing degrees in art and art education. Her response, in effect, was that if we wait until high school it is too late. I have considered her words many times since then, and challenged myself to reconfigure my "pedagogies too late" into pedagogies for a more just future. By the time BIPOC students get to high school, if they have not been nurtured as artists, have not seen their lives represented in the examples shown in class, if they have not *seen their lives valued* in the art and processes and histories we bring into our spaces of learning and making, it is too late for them to consider the world of art as one that embraces them.

Whatever we are doing now, it's not enough: no backpatting, no congratulating. We're working within centuries of white supremacy and Black suppression that can't be undone through a single well-meaning gesture or even a series of them. White supremacy relies on our sense of accomplishment when we include Black artists in our curriculum for Black History Month and do not question why the canon of artists is exclusive of Black and Brown voices or we conveniently overlook Gauguin's exploitation of his famous Tahitian women.

It's not about "right" language. It's about working toward "just" language; to be prepared to have our ways of knowing challenged and to be willing to listen and make changes; to actively seek new ways of knowing instead of becoming complacent with what we already know; to acknowledge that there is much we do not know, but more so to acknowledge that we have, every one of us, been fed myths and misinformation about our own groups and groups which we are not a part of. And those myths need undoing.

We must look directly at the ways in which this racist ideology of white supremacy, this idea that white equals better, superior, more worthy, more credible, more deserving, and more valuable actively harms anyone who does not own white privilege. And we must look at the ways that this plays out at an individual, personal, intimate level - within you as a person. It is so easy to blame the system 'out there' for creating this oppression. But the system was created by individual people, and it is upheld by individual people (whether knowingly or unknowingly). (Saad, 2018, pp. 18-19)

Stay with it. The ability to retreat when we are uncomfortable is a product of white privilege. The understanding that we are afforded when we do it is a product of white supremacy. I humbly submit these words as a testament of my commitment to staying with this work. I dedicate all these words to my students: I am sorry for all the ways I have failed and will likely continue to fail you. In solidarity,

and to a more just future of art education.

Figure 5: City, county, and state memorials for the victims of terror lynching in the United States of America-church bells tolling in the distance (video taken by author)[5]

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5 https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b6b2IeMJ6exDWYmIvHPKc08Nur5MP8dx/view

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"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*)

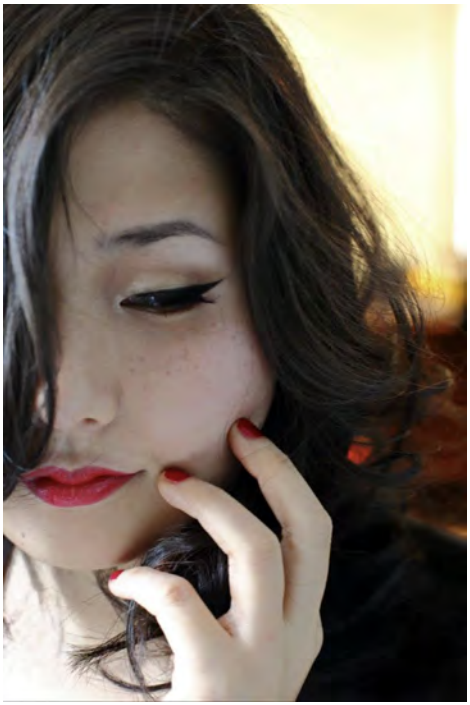

Figure 2: Self Portrait (2013) Digital Photograph

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 Asian-ness. 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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On Whiteness and Becoming Warm Demanders

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ABSTRACT

Being a White teacher educator in a Northern urban setting serving a student body that is also predominantly White and working to middle-class from small towns and suburbs outside of the city presents unique challenges. They necessitate a pedagogy that disrupts stories inherent in the collective memory (Buffington, 2019) of these students. Helping students think critically about their developing teacher identities through exposure to new ideas and investigations of old ideas is key. This article describes what I am learning from a semester-long endeavor to guide students to reflect on race and teaching identity through the lens of "warm demanding" (Vasquez, 1988; Ware, 2006).

KEYWORDS: warm demander, pedagogy, whiteness, reflexivity, pre-service education, critical race theory

Perfection is a stick with which to beat the possible.

Rebecca Solnit, 2016, p. 77

Introduction

Joni Acuff's call for this special issue forthrightly directs White art educators "to more critically and intentionally engage in race work (Acuff, 2018, p. 2). Toward that end, this essay centers on at a semester-long attempt by a White teacher educator to graft the notion of *warm demanders* onto a curriculum that centers on urban education and teaching for social justice (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Collins, 1990; Delpit, 2012; Hambacher, Acosta, Bondy & Ross, 2016; Irvine, 1998, 2002; Vasquez, 1988; Ware, 2006). I am always searching for inroads to becoming anti-racist, and a culturally responsive advocate for children of color (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Because our teacher education program is situated in the Northern city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a city that routinely and shamefully comes out on top of lists of "most segregated cities" in the U.S. (Downs, 2015; Frey, 2015), these roads are filled with potholes.[1] Jarring and uncomfortable as they may be to traverse, I try to get my students to stay on this

difficult road. This is a tale of openness and resistance, of good intentions and not so good implementation, and of learning from small successes as well as failures. Failure as a White teacher educator who seeks to practice anti-racist pedagogy is becoming a subgenre in art education research (Broome, 2018; Spillane, 2015). As these authors assert, failure can, if we let it, be a great teacher. Upon reflection, I see that pushing a group of mostly White, Northern Midwest preservice teachers out of the safe and cozy place White privilege creates, in the context of the obfuscating and euphemizing culture of the Northern Midwest, requires a different form of warm demanding than has been written about thus far. Thus, with this article, I aim to share what I have learned about warm demanding with fellow art educators, while also contributing to the growing body of literature on warm demanding by adding a focus on Whiteness, specifically Northern Midwest Whiteness.

I begin with a review of the literature on warm demanders, which sits within the larger frame of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Following that, I offer a brief description of the class of students who were part of this journey and what happened during a semester in which I introduced warm demanders as a lens through which to develop an understanding of a teacher identity, paying close attention to the special challenges that presented themselves related to race and place. Finally, I close the paper by exploring possible implications for other teacher educators and their students committed to working toward a more just world.

Review of Literature on Warm Demanders

A growing body of literature describes successful teachers of African American students as warm demanders (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Collins, 1990; Delpit, 2012; Irvine, 1998; Vasquez, 1988; Ware, 2006). According to Bondy and Ross (2008), Judith Kleinfeld (1975) "coined the phrase warm demander to describe the type of teacher who was effective in teaching Athabaskan Indian and Eskimo 9th graders in Alaskan schools" (p. 55). Over time, the phrase warm demander has shifted

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Potholes are a traffic phenomenon many people in the Northern U.S. obsess over. While they can be dangerous, they are generally just a nuisance caused as pavement breaks down because of cycles of freezing and thawing. Lack of investment in infrastructure also contributes to the problem. I once heard a rich White guy complain to a candidate at a public forum that driving down his street was like "living in a third-world country." While this is obviously an absurd manifestation of White privilege, politicians in the north have to take potholes seriously. A campaign called "Scott Holes" https://www.scottholes.com/ played a part in the recent defeat of racist Republican Governor Scott Walker.

toward describing effective African American teachers of African American students in underfunded urban schools.

An early example is James Vasquez, who used the term to describe highly successful teachers of color in his 1988 article "Contexts of Learning for Minority Students." Vasquez studied learning contexts and student perceptions of teachers, finding warm demanders described as teachers of color who share an understanding of the contextual challenges faced by their students and who demonstrate they care in culturally relevant ways. It is fitting that the move toward framing successful teachers of African American students as warm demanders came first from a study of student perceptions because student-centeredness lies at the heart of the concept of warm demanding (Alexander, 2016).

Subsequent studies that focus on warm demanders have expanded our understanding of the traits of strong African American women who are successful teachers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002). According to Jacqueline Jordan Irvine (1998), warm demanders create "tough-minded, no-nonsense, structured, and disciplined classroom environment(s) for kids whom society has psychologically and physically abandoned" (para. 2). She goes on to say that a warm demander is a teacher who teaches "African-American students with a sense of passion and mission based in the African-American cultural traditions and history she shares with her students" (para. 2).

Franita Ware (2006) presents case studies of two African American teachers focusing on the impact of culture and relationship building on student success. Setting the stage for her argument, Ware agreed with Irvine (1990) and Delpit (1995) that the mismatch of school culture, which is predicated on White middle class cultural norms, and the cultures of students of color is problematic and creates roadblocks to success. Inclusion of students' culture was found to be an important component in the practices of the warm demanders Ware studied.

Ware goes on to point to evidence that during the period of *de jure* segregation, African American teachers were models of warm demanding in the segregated schools of the past, citing Vanessa Siddle Walker (2001) who "revealed that there were many positive experiences in segregated schools" (Ware, 2006, p. 429). Desegregation and the subsequent transition to *de facto* resegregation has had a negative effect on the number of African American teachers in the workforce. Ware also cites research that shows that schools where there remain a higher percentage of African American teachers African American students are more successful on a range of measures.

Melanie Acosta (2105) studied urgency as a phenomenon in African American educators' stances toward teaching. She found the teachers in her study to have an understanding of the social, economic, and political implications of schooling and African American student experience, which compelled them to push their students to be their best. Acosta sees a need for reform in teacher education, saying:

> (T)eacher educators must redesign their approaches to urban educator preparation in ways that legitimately build on African American philosophies and perspectives if schools of education are to be leaders in the effort to improve education for students of African descent in urban schools. (p. 983)

I agree that inclusion of content and experiences that help pre-service teachers understand the implications of the current racist system of education for African American and other children of color is important to developing a stance as a warm demander.

In the 2008 text *The Teacher as Warm Demander*, Elizabeth Bondy and Dorene Ross ask "How can you create an engaging classroom?" then answer "Convince students first that you care—and then that you'll never let up" (para. 1). This emphasis on holding students to a high standard of achievement in a caring way is a hallmark of a warm demander. Bondy and Ross (2008) go on to assert:

> What is missing is not skill in lesson planning, but a teacher stance that communicates both warmth and a nonnegotiable demand for student effort and mutual respect. This stance—often called the warm demander –is central to sustaining academic engagement in high-poverty schools. (para. 5)

So much of teacher education, including assessments such as the edTPA, focuses heavily on curriculum and instruction and very little the emotional and philosophical learning, yet affective learning makes up an important component of anti-racist, culturally responsive teaching (Cosier, 2016; Dress, 2012). According to Irvine (1998), though the research clearly shows that warm demanders are successful, these teachers can often be seen in a negative light when their practices are assessed based on teaching standards that privilege Whiteness and middle class values. Warm demanders can appear to be harsh and uncaring when viewed through a traditional, White teacher assessment lens (Irvine, 1998). This has implications for how White preservice teachers aspire to be, or not to be, warm demanders as well. I recommend Bondy and Ross's (2008) article as a starting point to introduce preservice teachers to the concept of warm demanding. One mistake I made in my first attempt was to assign a

traditional scholarly article as an introduction to warm demanding, which put up unnecessary barriers to understanding for many of my students causing them to complain that the reading was too difficult. While their article does not focus on pre-service teachers, Bondy and Ross's work is written in an accessible manner while clearly defining and describing what becoming a warm demander looks like in the classroom. It lays out three actions teachers can take to become warm demanders:

1. Build relationships deliberately,
2. Learn about students' and our own cultures and,
3. Communicate an expectation of success.

Like most of the literature on successful teachers of African American children in underfunded urban schools and warm demanding, this article focuses on teachers who are, themselves, African American. There are very few sources on warm demanders that address Whiteness. In my review of the literature, I found one essay, *The Warm Demander: An Equity Approach*, by Matt Alexander (2016) in which the author discusses his own identity as a White teacher. The article that started this journey, *Elementary Preservice Teachers as Warm Demanders in an African American School,* by Elyse Hambacher, Melanie Acosta, Elizabeth Bondy, and Dorene Ross (2016), is the first study on warm demanders that focuses on preservice teachers and is the second of only two articles I was able to find that focus on a White subject. The authors were interested in answering the question "How do teachers think about and enact warm demanding?" Though they focus on one White and one Latinx pre-service teacher this question does not name Whiteness or race as a factor. Finding ways for pre-service teachers to reflect on and interrogate Whiteness and race is an area of study that needs more attention.

Our Story of Working to Become Warm Demanders

This is not the story I hoped to share with you. In fact, if you are looking for an inspirational tale about a White teacher educator who channeled Moses and Harriet Tubman to successfully create a dialogic space that led her predominantly White students to the promised land of enlightened anti-racist teaching, you will not find that here. Though my goals for the semester's learning were not realized, the hard work of cultivating hope while looking critically at how we fit into systems of privilege and oppression must go on. In the end, this is as much a story about my own shortcomings as a warm demander as it is about students who resisted deep interrogations of race and identity.

As I planned for an elementary methods course I would teach in the Fall of 2018, I wanted to build in more ways than I had in the past

to explore how White teachers' identities influence their work with children of color. I planned the beginning of the semester to focus on the affective parts of teaching, not just looking at mechanics but at the bigger ideas, the heart and soul parts of teaching (Cosier, 2016; Dress, 2012). This, in itself, was not new, but I wanted to implement a more sustained engagement on issues of identity and teaching than I had in the past and I was particularly interested in implementing a new framework for this investigation through the idea of successful teachers of African American students as "warm demanders" (Hambacher, Acosta, Bondy, & Ross, 2016).

The group of students was even Whiter than the normal demographic in our teacher education program, with all but one student in the group of 22 appearing and/or perceiving themselves to be White. Most identified as middle or working class and hailed from rural and suburban places outside of the City of Milwaukee, which is one of the few parts of Wisconsin with a significant population of people of color. According to a study by the Brookings Institute, Milwaukee continues to top the list of most segregated cities in the country (Frey, 2018). As a result, White students come to our university having had little experience with people of color, particularly African Americans. They also come with entrenched ideas about the city as a place of crime and violence, though they routinely say they are not racist. Most have been exposed to very little talk about racism and White privilege and this group was particularly reticent when the subjects were brought up in class.

We began the course reading list with an article by Amelia Dress (2012) that called upon teacher education to attend to matters of the spirit. From the beginning, I urged my students to "lean into the sharp points" as Buddhist teacher Pema Chödrön (2001, p. 75) says, in order to push through their discomfort and grow and become better allies to the students they would serve. I wanted to find ways to help them understand that having the option not to push through our failures is a way White privilege operates. Getting this group to lean in to this challenge, however, turned out to be more of a bumpy ride than usual.

In addition to traditional class meetings, field experiences are integrated into this six-credit course, with students spending two afternoons per week for at least eight weeks in an urban public school. We place students in non-art as well as art classrooms so that we can have a cohort of students together in one school in an effort to get them to come to feel part of a community. Our elementary school partner, Lloyd Barbee Montessori, named for a prominent civil rights activist, is a public specialty school situated in a north central neighborhood in Milwaukee called Garden Homes. Garden Homes is a neighborhood that is almost completely populated by

impoverished and underserved African American people who have been successfully sequestered by segregation. Driving to the school, you see ramshackle dwellings, storefront churches, and small businesses, many of which have the tell-tale, blueish-green plywood over the windows, signifying foreclosure. Those businesses that are still open include automotive parts chain stores, mom and pop liquor and tobacco shops, storefront churches, and lots of shabby daycares of the sort that cropped up after Wisconsin effectively did away with welfare in the 1990s and pushed African American women into a workplace that had no room for them (see Cosier, 2011). Hardly anyone stops for red lights and lots of drivers will pass you on the right going 50 miles per hour in a school zone, which is just one of the dangers people in the neighborhood face.

Lloyd Barbee Montessori has an incredible principal who was once an art teacher, with whom I have partnered for almost two decades. She affirms that her little community struggles in the face of the many challenges that White supremacy and segregation have created. In the Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Evicted,* Matthew Desmond (2016) describes the lives of people who are part of the Lloyd Barbee community. They are faced with constant trauma, at the mercy of predatory landlords who rent them apartments that are full of lead and other dangers. Four out of five African American children in Wisconsin live in poverty (Downs, 2015), and "the state ranks last in the country in the overall well-being of African-American children based on an index of 12 measures that gauge a child's success from birth to adulthood," according to a report by the Wisconsin Council on Children & Families (Boulten, 2014, para. 2). Going to Lloyd Barbee makes my students feel unsafe, and they are to some extent, but I see it as my job to help them see that the children we are working with are at much greater danger than we, and that our complicities in White supremacy contribute to that, so we have an obligation to forge ahead on this pothole cratered road.

It is not possible to cover all of the content from the course here but the focus on identity and race was threaded throughout, as was plenty of insistence on reflection. We encountered many potholes along the road, and often had to hit the brakes in order to stay on track. In broad strokes, we investigated the ways we come to know ourselves through the stories we are told and tell. We linked to the idea of *counterstories* (Adichie, n.d.; Whitehead, 2012; Yasso, 2006), a strategy that grew out of Critical Race Theory, to the work of contemporary artists of color such as Glenn Ligon, Lorna Simpson, Wangechi Mutu, Nina Chanel Abney, and others. We returned to warm demanding throughout the semester in discussions on what was happening in their Lloyd Barbee Montessori classrooms. They added to their storehouse of information about the particulars of race and identity, racism, and White supremacy in Milwaukee through

additional readings, videos, guest presenters, and short lectures. Because we accompany our students to the schools every time they go, we have many shared stories of real-world teaching and learning to draw upon, connecting theory to practice. Despite these efforts, the majority of students in the group remained resistant to engaging in deep discussions of race in class.

Throughout the semester, students were required to reflect in their journals on these ideas relative to their experiences in our partner school. I provided written formative feedback on multiple occasions urging them to dig more deeply into identity and race when I noticed that most were only scratching the surface. Trying to remain optimistic, in the final week of class I asked them to go back one last time to the ideas presented in the warm demander article to reflect on their learning over the course of the semester relative to burgeoning teacher identities. When I completed final assessments of the reflective journals, however, I was disappointed to find next to nothing on the topic of race. I had failed as a warm demander to my students. Writing this essay has allowed me to reflect deeply on the experience and has given me some insights that may help in the future.

Learning from Failure

Even though I deliberately named Whiteness, White privilege, and racism throughout the course in both content and discussion, this group of students were extremely reticent to discuss and write about race. They knew from the formative assessments provided that they would not earn full credit for these assignments if they continued to avoid the subject, Yet, if they attended to race at all, it was in a superficial manner that did not reveal a substantive change in their frames of reference about identity and teaching. With regard to becoming warm demanders, students were enthusiastic about the aspect of care, but they either ignored or resisted the idea that warm demanders engage with politically charged understandings of how race is implicated in schooling.

Originally, I had planned to include quotes from the reflective journals to help tell the story of our journey but, in the end, there just wasn't any point because I found only platitudes. Most students claimed to aspire to be warm demanders, but they whitewashed warm demanding to being caring yet firm. In this space, I seek to share a developing understanding of why this was so. I do not claim to come close to fully understanding all answers –or even yet all the questions—but I believe it is important that I lean into the sharp points, myself, and continue to try. I have spent time writing this to reflect on what stood in our way in the hopes of learning from failure and moving closer to becoming a warm demander.

The remainder of the article focuses on those potholes and roadblocks and what may be done to help address them.

Potholes and Roadblocks

While the reasons for my failure to enact warm demanding fully are many, I will focus most closely on the unique forms of White Privilege that come from our location in the deep Northern Midwest. There are, of course, other factors that came into play, such as state-mandated assessments including the edTPA, which have been shown to be biased against warm demanders (Irvine, 1998). The general move in our culture away from talking directly to other human beings and the resulting increase in social anxiety does not help either, but there is not space to explore all of the reasons and it seems to me that the parts that are connected to where we are from are most salient.

Lack of Role Models of Warm Demanders

To date, the research on warm demanders focuses almost exclusively on successful African American teachers of African American students. Because of the hyper-segregated nature of Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin, most students in my class had not had an African American teacher in their own K-12 education with whom to identify. Additionally, at Lloyd Barbee Montessori, all of the cooperating teachers we worked with were White. They did, to varying degrees, model care and holding students to high standards, but they did not share a cultural history and did not readily express a commitment to engaging with the political nature of teaching. To make matters worse, the one teacher who overtly expressed a commitment to social justice turned in her resignation midway through our time in the school. Therefore, my students did not see themselves reflected in warm demanding in theory or in practice. There was one school community member who was an excellent example of a warm demander but she was not a teacher and did not work directly with my students. In the future I plan to work with her and the principal of the school to create some shared professional development around culturally responsive teaching and warm demanding in hopes of supporting the students of Lloyd Barbee and my own students more fully.

White Fragility and White Privilege in the General Sense

A White student came back to class and shared an experience in her Lloyd Barbee classroom that troubled her. A five-year-old African American student had said something that the student took to mean, "I hate you and all White people." Many students were agitated by this and some joined in talking about feeling injured by something that was said to them in anger and frustration. I feel for them,

they tried to care, and the person they were attempting to care for rejected them. While this is clearly a case of genuine hurt feelings, it can also be an example of White fragility, which Robin DiAngelo (2011) describes the ways White people have "expectations for racial comfort while at the same time lowering the ability to tolerate racial stress" (p. 54). While it can be painful, we must lean into that discomfort and not allow fragility to keep us from doing race work. It is also an example of the problems inherent in the White savior (Cammarota, 2011) syndrome in which White teachers see themselves as tools of uplift for students of color.

While partly a natural human reaction to rejection, over time, I have come to understand that the students' shock is also partially because, as White people, they are unaccustomed to being lumped into a racial group that is perceived in a negative light. While people of color deal with this all of the time, my students have an expectation to be judged on an individual basis that is a symptom of White privilege. It is important to take the time to work through the justifiable causes for the 5 year-old's response to their caring overtures and commit to developing more ways to do so in our program and to parse the ways incidents like these can teach us more about ourselves than it may about others. I need to work on finding ways for my students to develop a critical yet empathetic stance that checks White fragility and the White savior syndrome while opening space for them to examine how they fit within the White supremacist social order.

Growing up in the Deep North

In a recent article urging art teachers to confront hate, Melanie Buffington (2019) sounded a moving call to action for art educators around the debates on Confederate monuments. As part of her argument, Buffington discusses the concept of *collective memory*, saying it "is a social concept that addressees how communities and societies create an understanding of the past that may or may not be founded on the facts" (p. 15). Buffington goes on to dismantle a number of myths connected to collective memory that are invoked in arguments for the preservation of Confederate monuments. As I read this article, I was inspired and encouraged that it appeared in *Art Education* knowing that particular journal reaches a wide audience of practitioners and scholars, alike. However, my next realization was that my own students will read this and it will confirm for them that they have no work to do around racism since I teach in the deep North. Our collective memory teaches us that it is Southerners, not we, who are racist. Our forbearers, after all, did not enslave people, or so we are told.

Northern racism is much less transparent than Southern racism. It is obfuscated by a collective memory of being on the right side of

history. In an excellent article on the particular problem of Northern racism, Lanahan, (2015) quotes the late comedian, Dick Gregory:

> 'Personally, I've never seen much difference between the South and the North,' comedian Dick Gregory wrote in a 1971 issue of *Ebony*. 'Down South white folks don't care how close I get as long as I don't get too big. Up North white folks don't care how big I get as long as I don't get too close.'
>
> That's the famous part of the quote. Gregory goes on to say, 'In the South, black folks have been abused by the white man physically. In the North, black folks have been abused by the white power structure mentally. The difference is that in the North the white system is more clever with its abuse.' (paras. 4 and 5)

That cleverness does a number on the psyche of White people from the North. As a collective, we grow up sincerely believing we are not racist. We are taught to think that our road is clear when it is rutted with unnoticed patterns of behavior.

Of course, a storyline that paints Northern White people as harmless reveals a profound ignorance of the history of race in America, which is not, to put things mildly, the version of history taught in U.S. schools (Kendi, 2016). Looking back, I see I should have paid more attention than I did to our Northern collective memory and gaps in historical knowledge when I tried to implement a warm demander framework. Though I did address some content in lectures, I should have found other ways to address our racist history while bearing in mind that what I've come to know about our history over a long career focused on urban education is not the norm. My students really don't know that racists have been here since White people stole this land from the Native Americans who lived here. These are not the stories they've been told by their former teachers, family members, or in popular culture. When faced with alternative historical narratives such as slave ownership in New York (Smith, 1949), for example, they may also hear voices from childhood (such as their Uncle Travis or television personality Bill O'Reilly) railing against politically correct, revisionist history, voices that were formative and can be difficult to quiet. Northern collective memory has taught my students that they should think slavery was bad and that racists are some other people, not them. My students, like many Northern White people, are unaware of a great deal of the histories of African Americans and the ways most White people have benefitted from the myriad ways oppression has been woven into the fabric of the United States of America. They do not know that the labor of enslaved people in the South allowed the North, and ultimately the United States as a whole,

to become what it is today. The following are just two of many vital pieces of history that I believe I need to better address and situate in this particular place of teaching and learning. I need to find more ways for students to understand the idiosyncratic historical context of teaching in Milwaukee.

The Great Migration helped create the economic boom of post-war America. African American people joined the Northern workforce in great numbers, and they were met with a virulent form of Northern racism that differed from Southern racism. After he started to organize in Chicago, this difference caused Dr. Martin Luther King to change his mind about White people. He no longer believed they all wished for redemption. As the Rust Belt region began to decline economically, racial tensions escalated. This problem was compounded in Milwaukee because African American people didn't move here in great numbers until the 1960s, when the boom was already beginning to bust. Thus, there is little to no Black middle class here, and further, White Wisconsinites often equate African Americans with bad times.

Racist policies like redlining enforced segregation and, although we just celebrated the 50-year anniversary of the historic fair housing *March on Milwaukee*,[2] none of my students could name any details about the event's historical relevance. They knew nothing about Vel Phillips, the firebrand who became the first African American woman to do so many important things in our state. They had not heard about the *Milwaukee Commandos*, nor did they know that the White mayor of Milwaukee probably secretly ordered NAACP headquarters to be firebombed (Miner, 2013). None offered up stories passed down to them from their grandmothers and grandfathers about throwing racial slurs –and maybe even bricks— at the marchers…because we don't talk about such things here; it isn't nice. And yet, for me to be a warm demander to my students, I have to find ways to get them to talk about things that are not nice.

Midwest Nice and Warm Demanding

According to Elizabeth Bondy and Doreen Ross (2008),

> Warm demanders also recognize that their own cultural backgrounds guide their values, beliefs, and behaviors. Although it can be difficult to perceive one's own culture, culture consistently shapes an
>
> individual's behavior and reactions to the behavior of

2 For more information about this exciting and important story see UWM Libraries *March on Milwaukee Civil Rights History Project* https://uwm.edu/marchon-milwaukee/

> others. Gaining insight into cultural values and habits helps teachers monitor their reactions to student behaviors that they might deem "bad," but that are considered normal or even valued in the student's home culture. Without such reflection, a teacher's implicit assumptions can inadvertently communicate to students a lack of caring. (p. 56)

Avoidance of the difficulties inherent in race work contributes to the problems White supremacy and racism have created for people of color, particularly African Americans (Knight, 2006). White privilege and White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) are at play in this discomfort and must be named and addressed forthrightly. Yet forthrightness (dare I say forthrightly?) is the antithesis of the subtle and passive-aggressive communication style of the Midwest, as Paul Kix (2015) explains in his essay *Midwestern Nice: A Tribute to a Sincere and Suffocating Way of Life*. Midwest nice presents special challenges in the pursuit of anti-racist art teacher education. Many of us were taught that we just don't talk about ugly things here in the Midwest. Thus, devising ways to help students understand their own Northern/Midwestern brand of White culture in relation to other people's children (Delpit, 2006) is an ongoing project. I did not succeed this semester in totally breaking through the cocoon of Northern identity and Midwest nice, becoming an effective warm demander to my students. But I must keep trying.

Becoming a Warm Demander as a White Teacher Educator

Since the literature on warm demanders focuses on African American teachers, forging an identity as a warm demander as a White teacher educator of mostly white students is a sort of photographic negative of warm demanding. With each new class of pre-service art teachers, I am faced with this challenge: to persuade people who think they have no work to do with regard to race, to do some of the most difficult work imaginable. I struggle to find ways to crack this particular kind of White privilege –the protective coating with which Northern-ness envelops us and the vague platitudes of Midwest nice.

Because I, myself, grew up White in the Midwest, I have had to learn to push through culturally bound ways of being in the world, shedding the armor of "niceness" and leaning into the sharp points of race work. Becoming a warm demander to my students is a work in progress. It is not altruistic work, however, and I must remind myself, and my students, that it is beneficial to all people to do it. According to historian Ibram X. Kendi (2016), though difficult, working toward anti-racism is actually in the "*intelligent self-interest*" of most people because making society more equitable for African American people makes it better for nearly everyone else (emphasis in original, p. 504).

Despite mounting evidence that the North is now a worse place to live than the South if you are an African American person (Sisson, 2014), White people in the North continue to blame Black people for their problems, or, if they are feeling generous, frame them as victims of some other people's hatred. The vast majority of my students have been in that latter camp. Students come to our program with a sincere desire to help with the problems associated with racism, but they see themselves as caretakers and saviors, not demanders. In one of the more thoughtful journal reflections, a student who did dig a little deeper than most accidentally referred to warm demanders as "warm defenders"…this was telling to me. They see themselves as doing good for others, as is the Midwestern way, but they have a hard time envisioning themselves as demanders. Demanding seems so aggressive and assertive from a Midwestern cultural perspective. I need to continue to develop my own muscle of warm demanding in order to help them become demanders as well as defenders.

In closing, I am left with more questions than answers. How might we learn from and expand upon the scholarship on warm demanders relative to teacher education programs that continue to enroll a majority of White students who are taught by White professors? What teacher education strategies might we develop to navigate the potholes and roadblocks inherent in this work and move White students to become warm demanders? How can we teacher educators become warm demanders to our pre-service teachers in order to help them become so for their K-12 students? If I am going to become a warm demander myself in order to get my students to be so, I need to devise more ways to push myself and my students toward these goals:

- Matching care with authority in a way that models warm demanding;
- Pushing harder than feels comfortable;
- Setting aside our fears of not being nice;
- Developing deeper, more nuanced, understandings of the contexts in which we teach;
- Developing a more vivid sense of ourselves within the cultures that White privilege and racism have created.

Understanding that the development of anti-racist pedagogical practice is a messy, never finished project puts this work into a kind of framework that allows for mistakes to happen as long as we learn from them. But never expecting to fully succeed can be daunting to White academics and White students who have learned to learn within a system that tells them they have a right to succeed. As Rebecca Solnit (2016) reminds us, however, "perfection is a stick with which to beat the possible" (p. 77). I failed this semester as a warm demander but I am not going to beat myself with the stick

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Pre-service Art Education: Examining Constructions of Whiteness in/through Visual Culture

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I describe an arts-based curricular project taught to ten White-identifying and two non-White-identifying pre-service art teachers in Fall of 2018. The curriculum used a cultural studies framework to examine Whiteness as both a hegemonic cultural construction and identity construct. As a means to expand an arts-based pedagogy and curriculum, I utilize film as a pedagogical tool, and the circuit of culture, as a framework to reveal the power inherent within various "moments" or processes of visualization culture. By using this framework, students analyzed, exposed and challenged White supremacist ideologies and were given a contemporary way to examine Whiteness and the power invested in its creation and how this investment impacts every part of their personal and professional lives. Three key cultural analyses of Whiteness are offered in this paper. In sum, I propose the necessity of development of Whiteness art education curricula in support of critical multicultural methods and give suggestions of next steps for art education.

KEYWORDS: arts-based pedagogy, art education, circuit of culture, cultural studies, preservice, racial identity, time-based media, Whiteness

Over the last decade, educators and researchers interested in social justice education have concerned themselves with centering the study of Whiteness in their work (Bonilla-Silva, 2001; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997; DiAngelo, 2012; Lipsitz, 1995). More commonly, scholars invested in examining Whiteness in preservice teacher education have paid close attention to exploring the nature of preservice teachers' White racial identity (Bloom, Peters, Margolin & Fragnoli, 2015; Fasching-Varner, 2012, 2013; Groff & Peters, 2012; Lawrence, 1997; Rieger, 2015; Seidl & Hancock, 2011). In these studies, various modes of multicultural interventions (through curricula and field placements, for instance) have been used to examine White preservice teachers' racial awareness and identity development. While this is an important endeavor, fewer preservice education studies have explored how preservice teachers understand Whiteness as a hegemonic cultural system. A deeper examination of the varied interlocking systems invested in Whiteness would benefit these efforts.

(In)visibility of Whiteness[1] in Art Education

> *Whiteness, because it is predicated on the power to grant recognition and legitimacy, exercises the right to impose meaning, objectives and worldview on the racialized other, and so makes the issue of race undiscussable.*
>
> Ronald A. Kuykendall, 2018, p. 194

Even with the recent investment in examining White identity in teacher education, an examination of the literature in the field of art education reveals a gap in Whiteness studies, specifically in preservice teacher training. The introductory quote speaks to these powerful silences. Collective efforts to expose the arts as "White property" (Harris, 1993) and fill this gap in arts education have begun to emerge (Kraehe, Gaztambide-Fernández & Carpenter, 2018).

If social justice art education is to broaden its concern with systems of racialized inequities, I propose that we shift the lens to centralize and expose Whiteness within preservice art teacher training as a means to examine: 1) how higher education plays a role in either disrupting or perpetuating the hegemony of Whiteness through curricular decisions, and 2) how larger systems are always at work in constructing White racial supremacy. I have found resonance in the work of cultural and political studies scholars (Hall, 1996; hooks, 1996; Kuykendall, 2018) as starting points for this work.

Using their frameworks, I advocate for broadening a critical arts-based pedagogy to examine the power inherent within various "moments" or processes of visualization culture (Wilson, 2019) and the investment in *imposing* and *maintaining* constructed meanings of Whiteness as cultural hegemony. In order to do this, I propose that art educators adopt a cultural studies approach by using the *circuit of culture* (DuGay, Hall, MacKay, Janes & Negus, 1997) as a tool of analysis. I suggest that pre-service art teachers need a fresh way to examine Whiteness and the power invested in its *creation* and how this investment impacts every part of their personal and professional lives. To these ends, I submit that preservice art teachers, as artists/creatives, should become aware of the cultural processes invested in what I have referred to as the "creation loop" (Wilson, 2019), and I ask: *How might an arts-based pedagogy help to examine the power invested*

1 The author has chosen to give equal importance and consistency to racial designations of Black, White and so forth signified by the use of uppercase lettering, rather than blackand white, as designated with lowercase lettering, except when directly quoting another author; according to the APA Publication Manual, sixth edition, racial and ethnic groups are proper nouns designated by capitalization.

within a visual(ization) education process? In using a cultural studies approach (Hall, 1996; hooks, 1996), I have found it useful for students to examine racialized representations in/through media culture by examining the various moments in the creation process of the visual culture texts of film.

Why Cultural Studies?

The field of cultural studies provides an important foundation for art education in general, and specifically for visual culture art education studies. The practice of visual representation is a concept commonly studied in cultural studies (Hall, 1996) and without a doubt, is essential for critical arts-based educational inquiry (Wilson, 2019). Hall's work (1996) on the concept of racial representation is important because he would later help to develop a framework to unpack the unwieldy question: *How does representation work?* as it relates to race as a cultural construct. Specifically, Hall was interested in how cultural artifacts or visual "texts" of race are produced and represented in/through various media, such as cinema and television (Kellner, 1995). In other words, he was interested in the practice and process of visual representation. In order to examine the varied interconnected moments in the process of representation, Hall would help to advance a circuit of culture framework.

Visual culture art education: Curricula centered in examining Whiteness

In the Fall of 2018, I designed a graduate-level art education seminar course that aimed to encourage pre-service and in-service art teachers to examine the nuances of power and hegemony by using cultural studies and arts-based frameworks (Hall, 1996; hooks, 1996). Using time-based media texts (cinema, television and music video) as a springboard for conversations about race, I wanted students to engage the power invested in these texts as pedagogical tools for critical examination of how Whiteness (as an ideology and culture) has advanced, yet remained simultaneously and strategically invisible (Craven, 2018).

In designing the curricula for the course, I made a deliberate decision to center the concept of Whiteness as our point of departure. Students engaged in weekly readings and viewed various media texts examining Whiteness (film, television, music video, etc.). They also responded to these readings and viewings with visual journals--they created visual responses in Google Slides and gave in-class presentations. In creating multiple platforms for engagement, my aim was to allow for a variety of responses. Using students' responses, I offer a look at three key cultural analyses of Whiteness, using the circuit of culture. These analyses will be discussed in depth later in

this paper.

By centering and exposing Whiteness as a cultural text (Hall, 1996), I also aimed to counter and reframe a multicultural method within pre-service art education (Acuff, 2018; Kraehe & Acuff, 2013) that advances justice-oriented work and examines the hegemonic system of Whiteness. Further, I believed that students should examine the visual-relational aspects of race, in order to uncover its inherent power in the construction of racial identity narratives. I tasked students with examining intersecting moments of culture: the *construction of Whiteness* alongside the construction *processes* involved in its creation. This would prove to be an eye-opening endeavor for students. By examining the construction of White racial identity through the lens of the time-based arts expression of film, the aims of the course were twofold: 1) to position these visual expressions as powerful pedagogical tools for engagement in conversations about race, and 2) to frame these expressions as products of a cultural exchange, supporting White supremacist systems.

Key theoretical and methodological readings from the field of Cultural Studies (Hall, 1996) were used to examine a variety of visual arts/time-based texts and engage in conversation about critical structural issues of race and racism through contemporary American cultural productions. Students were exposed to pedagogies that challenge hegemonic social norms and raise issues of power in relation to intersections of race, gender and class inequities (Desai, 2010).

Expanded arts-based pedagogy

In a prior commentary (Wilson, 2019), I discuss the potential of cinema, television, music video and social media as art-based pedagogical tools, which prompt deep engagement and discussion among my preservice art teachers. I find that these time-based platforms provide unique historical account of values, beliefs and attitudes of the times. Like hooks (1996), I find that these media texts (Kellner, 1995) provoke students in ways that traditional academic literature does not and find them particularly useful when I engage students with the topic of race.

Each week during the semester students took deep dives into scholarly cultural studies readings, listened to podcasts and viewed various forms of time-based texts. My aim was to pair the readings along with provoking cinematic forms and then have students respond to key questions related to what they had read and/or viewed in their visual journals and in a Google Slides format. Later in the semester they presented findings of their own research on media texts that they chose on their own. This task yielded interesting results

(I write more on this in later sections). I found that even though the course material about race was uncomfortable to digest for many of my White-identifying/presenting students, they were eager to discuss the content of the popular media texts that they had viewed.

To set the stage for the course, I felt it timely for students to view an adaptation of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, aptly titled: *Rebirth of a Nation*, by DJ Spooky (2007). The adaptation by DJ Spooky contains powerful cinematic elements from the original film, yet is updated with a new musical score. I chose this film as an introductory pedagogical element to underscore the impact that the original movie had in the "making" of White Supremacist ideals (Craven, 2018). Our discussion began with us examining the varied ways we could identify this film as a cultural text of its time. Different from other scholarly reviews that spoke to D. W. Griffith's use of technological advancements in cinema (Alberti, 2015; Paolo, 1994), our analysis was from a cultural studies perspective, using the circuit of culture as a framework (Figure 1). This framework set the foundation for all subsequent media analyses for the semester.

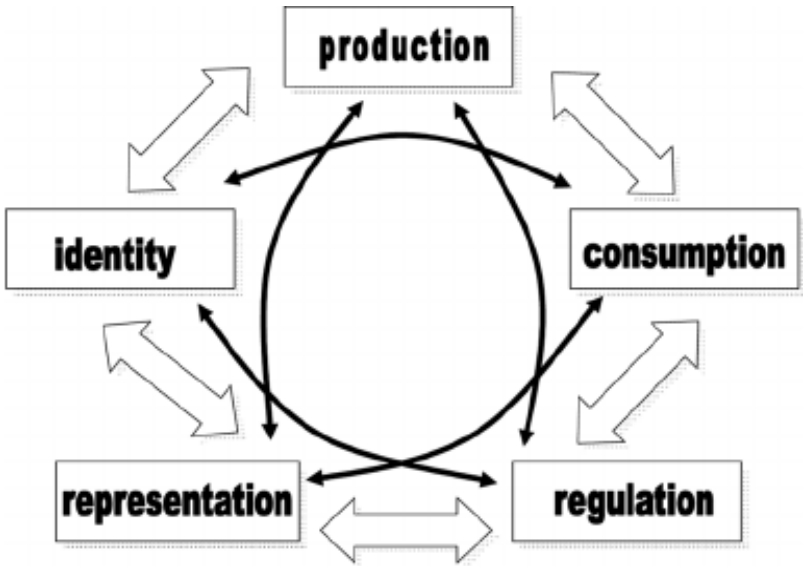

Figure 1. *Circuit of Culture,* DuGay, Hall, MacKay, Janes & Negus, 1997, p. 4.

Circuit of Culture

To examine the double layer of "representation" (Hall, 1996) in the assigned cultural texts, each week students presented an analysis of a racial trope in and through a personally-selected media text (DuGay, Hall, MacKay, Janes & Negus, 1997). Students selected from a broad variety of texts to include historical and contemporary forms (film, television, music video, social media, Google images, etc.). Their presentations needed to show an understanding and application of the circuit of culture.

The circuit of culture (Figure 1) is a framework developed by cultural studies scholars and is a useful tool when analyzing a cultural text (site, practice or object) from as many angles and as many contexts as possible. This framework suggests that when studying a cultural text or artifact (and in this case, a film, television series, music video), one must look at the interconnected moments in the creation process. These linked moments contribute to the production of meaning. For instance, when examining racialized (re)presentations in film, one must look at all points of the production process.

In other words, to understand a text, is to examine it in terms of *production, consumption, regulation, signification, and identity*, and how each of these elements of culture relates to and is a *part of all the others*. In production, we might ask: *Who is paying for it? Where is the money/ other resources coming from? Who is making/producing it? How different are the people who are paying for it from those who are producing it?* In consumption, we could ask: *Are the people who consume it different than those who are producing it? Paying for it? If so, how?* Also: *How, where, why do you consume it?* For regulation, some questions include: *Is it illegal or against the rules? Who makes and enforces the rules? What type of certification/license do you need before you consume/produce it?* For identity: *Who cares about it? What do others think about those who use it? What do you have to know, understand, value, believe in order to use it?* And finally, for signification: *What does it signify? And what/who signifies it? What genre conventions does it work with? What arguments is it making--intentionally or not?* Asking any and all of these questions for each cultural "moment" is optimal and necessary in order to fully understand how something is (and becomes) represented.

Representation

In Hall's (1997) view, the word representation has double meaning: 1) to offer a depiction of something else and also indicates that something was *already there* in the media text, and that processes of creation has re-presented it, and 2) it also serves as a "stand-in" or something that depicts something else. In other words, representation is the way in which meaning is given to the thing depicted. To accept this notion, we should ask the question of whether events, the

meaning of people or groups *do* have any one essential fixed or true meaning against which we could measure the level of "distortion," or (the way in which they are represented). The *meaning* is the complicated thing to decide. So, we could say that representation does not fully capture the process by which the representation rests; what is uncertain is a "true" and fixed meaning of the representation. This truth will depend on what meaning people make of it (this could be situational due to time and space parameters) and depends on how "truth" is represented; in other words, representation is constitutive of the event; representation happens within the event. A critical lens allows an unpacking of representation through an examination of interlocking cultural systems and contexts.

Culture as primary

Cultural studies, as a field, is more than simply about examining distortions of representation; the larger question is why the notion of culture becomes a primary element. Culture is the way we make sense or give meaning to things in the world. Each of us has our own take on the conceptual world. We have shared meanings within the social world.

Culture consists of the maps of meaning; the things that allow us to make sense of a world that exists; it is ambiguous until we give meaning to it. At some point, we begin to believe that our concepts are mere images of the world (Hall, 1997). To this end, visual media are an ideal way in which to observe representations of/from the dominant/minoritized groups in a culture and to examine themes of racialized identity and representation.

Racial representation in/through the media

When the film *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915) is analyzed through the circuit of culture, salient moments of the process are revealed. Using the "circuit," I modeled my *response to* and *analyses of* the film for students in class (Figure 2). In my discussion, I felt it was important to note two things: 1) that at the time of its production, *Birth of a Nation* was considered to be a racist film by many (McEwan, 2007), yet classified as a cinematic success (Anderson, 1953), and 2) the film was produced, directed and openly received by members of a White dominant class, despite protests by the NAACP. In presenting this information to students, they were able to give radical context (Grossberg, 1997) to the power invested in the film as a cultural product, which simultaneously advanced a racist narrative for the U.S. nation to view (McEwan, 2007).

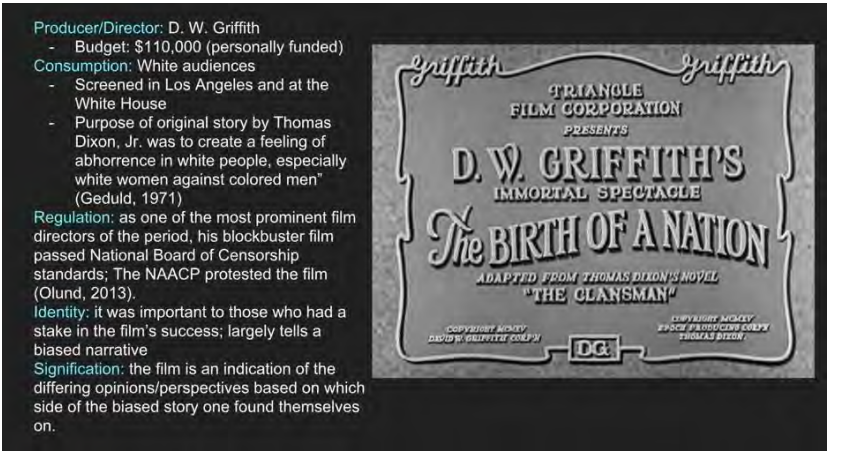

Figure 2. Cultural analysis, *The Birth of a Nation,* Courtesy of G. J. Wilson.

A broad sweep of the film also revealed what McEwan (2007) describes as "the particularities of early twentieth century racism and the centrality of mediated images to that racism" (p. 99). My closer analysis (Figure 2) revealed that the purpose of the original storyline (as told by the author, Thomas Dixon, Jr.) was to "create a feeling of abhorrence in White people, especially against colored men" (Geduld, 1971, p. 94). For anyone familiar with the film, it could be said that D. W. Griffith honored Dixon's sentiments by creating a Mulatto (half White, half Black) character, Silas Lynch, who was framed as a villain and almost-rapist to the central White female character. This White female character would later be "saved" by the Ku Klux Klan. Given that this cultural text, from production to consumption, was the project supported by White people and for the benefit of a White supremacist ideology, we can also begin to see the makings of a bifurcated White identity (savior and innocent/pure victim). The success of *Birth of a Nation* is that it was able to operationalize White racial anxiety (Rose, 2015) and reasonably justify Blackness as dangerous (Kuykendall, 2018).

This is but one example of what I would call "getting to the dirty details of cultural processes." Moments of production, consumption, and regulation, for instance, are often overlooked when discussing cultural texts and their potential meaning (Hall, 1996). After viewing and discussing the film, I asked students to put a cultural studies (circuit of culture) framework to the test and have them choose a media text which they believed contained a trope of Whiteness as described in their readings (Benshoff & Griffin, 2004). Discussion of how these tropes "show up" in educational spaces followed. In the next section, I discuss two student examples of this process.

Tropes of Whiteness

> *"The logic of whiteness….is the justification on which whiteness rests: innocence. As in other words, power rests on the mythical (re)construction of itself in relation to the other."*
>
> Kuykendall, 2018, p. 296

When tasked to locate historic tropes of Whiteness in film and television, students in my class could identify common tropes of "White savior," (Figure 3) and "White innocence" (Figure 4). Many students could easily make connections between the White savior trope and K-12 classroom spaces, citing two Hollywood movies: *Dangerous Minds* (1995) and *Freedom Writers* (2007). In her two-year ethnographic study Brown (2013) notes, "Racialized and classed discourses of saviorism operate not just in terms of school reform in a broad sense, but rather in classrooms, in regard to the construction of the White female savior teacher" (p. 128).

Although the examples cited by graduate student, Jen Schero (Figure 3) are male-centered, we can make the connection between these filmic character examples and classroom spaces, which often portray a White protagonist who goes into "dangerous" or "failing" areas to make them "safe." Thus, the White protagonist is often portrayed as becoming more superior than the indigenous inhabitants.

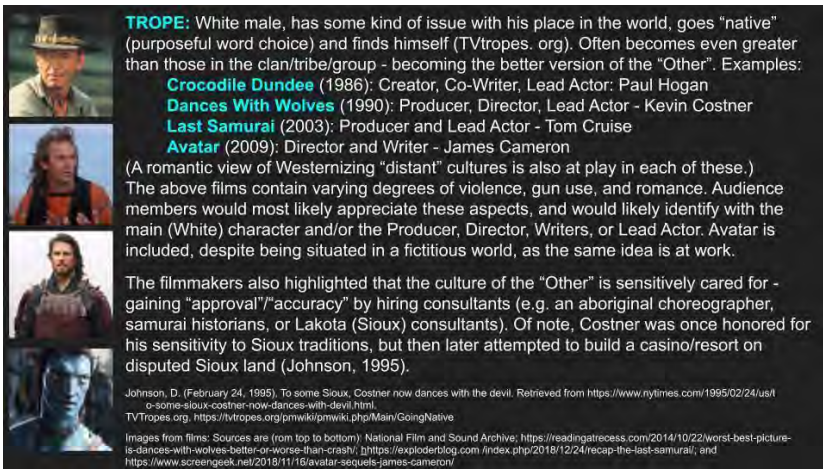

Figure 3. "The Savior" trope. Courtesy of VCU student, Jen Schero, 2018

The White savior female protagonist in movies like *Dangerous Minds* and *Freedom Writers*, more accurately reflects the demographics of the teaching profession (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Here, the potential for danger exists in these enduring cyclical tropes of "White = goodness = White" and less a critique of a deficit-based mindset, which undercuts the goodness already present in the minoritized student (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003; Valencia, 2010). If both of these cultural texts (films and education) are put through the circuit of culture, it is easier to see the underpinnings of a broader and historic narrative of White supremacy.

Figure 4. Innocence. Images courtesy of G.J. Wilson and VCU student, Danielle Houdek, 2018.

The second example trope of "White innocence" (Figure 4), lends itself to a deeper investigation of what might be considered a hidden curriculum of culture (Wren, 1999). If we use *Birth of a Nation* as a foundation--because it is a movie that was both informed by and set the tone for an American White supremacist consciousness (Craven, 2018) and identity—and we agree that film serves a pedagogical function (hooks, 1996; Wilson, 2019), then we can begin to unravel the trope of innocence. In other words, the (in)visibility of Whiteness (Craven, 2018) invades and pervades as normative; so much so, that without critical engagement with a systems-thinking approach, dominant actors—those in positions of power (teachers, policy makers, film makers)--are let off the hook to take ownership of the role that they play in its persistence.

The example "trope of innocence" provided is interesting in that it is one from the movie *Get Out* (Figure 4). When put through the circuit of culture, we find a few clear distinctions between prior films (i.e. *Birth of a Nation*) that portray the protagonist (in the case of *Get Out*,

Rose) as pure/innocent. The first distinction is that the director and producer of the film, Jordan Peele, racially self-identifies as Black. As such, he brings a different perspective to film making—that of a Black American male, living in the U.S. In the screenshots offered (Figure 4), the historic trope of innocence, is both portrayed and debunked as the film progresses. The audience, by the end of the film is aware that Rose, the White female character is, in fact, the villain. Peele's social thriller, takes care to reference and challenge the meaning of this trope as a nod toward its historic construction. The central image of the montage (Figure 4) is a collage titled "Spoonfed," and made by Danielle Houdek, a graduate student in my course. Her image broadly references media culture, reflecting a distorted *Leave it to Beaver* character, June Cleaver (mother-figure) within a television set. In creating this image Danielle communicates, "White innocence can be hard to see," and "the old-fashioned television set reminds us that time and place are important contexts to consider" (personal communication, May 10, 2019). Using the circuit of culture allowed for a nuanced discussion and confrontation of a history of White supremacy and hegemonic systems of power in and through media texts and in education.

Confronting Whiteness: Expose, Examine and Challenge

> *A good deal of time and intelligence has been invested in the exposure of racism and the horrific results on its objects. But that well-established study should be joined with another equally important one: the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it...to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination and behavior of the masters.*
>
> Toni Morrison, 1992, pp. 11-12

Toni Morrison's quote resonates with my attempt at a curricular shift--one that turns the lens toward Whiteness, as a constructed culture, and away from the traditional multicultural curriculum which only focuses on the lives of minoritized communities of people. Viewing Whiteness as a cultural text (Hall, 1996), allows an unpacking of a system and institution built on a carefully curated narrative; one that has constructed Whiteness as predicated on normal, innocent and also anti-dialogic (Kuykendall, 2018). In essence, an avoidance of any real acknowledgement of its power and usefulness in maintaining power is inherent in its *meaning*. Through the use of a cultural studies framework, we can begin to unravel the threads of an American racialized consciousness.

So, what does this mean for art education? If the goal of Whiteness studies is to destabilize White identity, it means that educators interested in justice-oriented curricula should examine the systems

and processes created by a White supremacist ideology. This is not an undertaking for the faint of heart. For any initial attempt to unpack this unwieldy construction could be (and will be) clumsy. Perhaps we will experience a systemic silencing (Kuykendall, 2018); one that may begin with school administration, who are necessarily impacted by policy makers or those who enable policy by other unknown means. My initial offering to art educators is that we consider expanding our practice to include arts-based forms of culture such as film, television, music video and time-based social media platforms as pedagogical tools to help facilitate discussion and movement toward White identity reflexivity. It has been irresponsible not to address critical attention to Whiteness in K-12 teacher workforce with demographics of largely White faculty (82%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2016), while student demographics are growing increasingly non-White. These statistical shifts have been occurring since the passage of Brown vs. Board of Education, which also gives insight for the necessity of development of Whiteness education studies in addition to critical multicultural pedagogy (Acuff, 2018; DiAngelo, 2012).

For this expanded arts-based curricular project, I specifically chose to center the theoretical frameworks of two scholars of color (Hall, 1996; hooks, 1996) whose views I consider cornerstones in discourse about race and representation in visual/time-media texts. I also specifically chose to center Whiteness in order to disrupt a hegemonic narrative. That said, I have spent the better part of nine years teaching preservice art teachers, and more often than not, when the topic of race arises, many of my White-identifying students have said: "I don't know much about my race. I'm JUST White!" This has concerned me over the years and has also provided me with the awareness that Whiteness has been normalized and made (in)visible (intentionally so) still, in many spaces of learning. This suggests that White-identifying students are not encouraged to examine what (their) Whiteness means.

Through multicultural educational efforts, there exists a plethora of literature which encourages White pre-service teachers to examine the lives of "other" people and also methods for engaging with racially/culturally minoritized groups (Delpit, 2006; Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). Yet, even with research that examines White racial identity (Bloom, Peters, Margolin & Fragnoli, 2015; Fasching-Varner, 2012, 2013; Groff & Peters, 2012; Lawrence, 1997; Rieger, 2015; Seidl & Hancock, 2011), there seems to be fewer educational investments tied to critically unpacking hegemonic Whiteness within pre-service (and in-service) learning environments. It has also become clear that when educators discuss race as a construct, less attention is given to the pedagogical impact of visual culture/constructed representations of Whiteness (Craven, 2018; Holtzman & Sharpe, 2015) and how these representations successfully maintain hegemonic Whiteness.

Additionally, through a cultural studies framework, it is important to question *who* has been awarded the power to create these representations.

The basis of cultural studies is to ask: *What are the ways we classify and organize the world?* and, *How do we give meaning?* We live in an image-dominated world. It has been argued that across time, media images have helped us to understand other people (Hall, 1997; Holtzman, 2015; hooks, 1996). These images/messages work in complex ways and they are always connected with how power operates within a society. When we also consider the term "race" in the U.S., and how it has played an important role in constructing social status, we reveal the impacts of a set of belief systems about human classification (Omi & Winant, 2015). Therefore, when we consider these systems together (race + image-dominated world), we can better understand their power and influence on social and educational inequities.

If a social justice-oriented curriculum is one that aims to advance the belief that race is a social, therefore relational, construct, we would be remiss to overlook that Whiteness, as a dominant ideology exists relative to all other(ed) existing racialized cultural systems. To these ends, if art educators are interested in preparing pre-service teachers to teach within racially inequitable environments, I argue that we must first be able to expose and de-stabilize Whiteness and specifically White identity and point to the role of varied visual systems (both from the tradition canon of art and popular forms) in creating, supporting and maintaining a caste system of human value based on race. It is my belief that by examining all forms of racial identity construction through these visual/time-based systems within our curricula (Wilson, 2019), we are able to provide a necessary educative element often missing from traditional art education curricula. I propose that centralizing *normative Whiteness* within art education would also include an examination of interconnected systems: 1) policy 2) our professional affiliations, locally, regionally and nationally 3) research practices 4) theoretical musings 5) and publications. This is certainly not a comprehensive list, but it is a start.

As for my curricular efforts, my preservice students were able to scratch a different surface of Whiteness: through the interlocking cultural systems which contribute to the making of Whiteness and through a specific cultural product, the media lens. What was encouraging, is it pulled back the curtain on larger hegemonic systems and have begun to answer my original question: *How might an arts-based pedagogy help to examine the power invested within a visual(ization) education process?*

I am optimistically cautious about my students' direct analyses of media tropes of Whiteness, as I wonder if the fictive narratives of

the lives of the cinematic/television characters analyzed provided just enough distance, that my White students were able to enter into these worlds largely unscathed. They were able to critique the villain without needing to critique themselves, while simultaneously aligning themselves with the hero of the narrative. It is my particular belief that in these fictional portrayals (i.e. film/television characters) there are always kernels of truth. Thus, I continue to align myself with Hall (1996) and hooks' (1996) beliefs that popular culture (i.e. representation of identity) serves as a pedagogical tool for discussions about race. This is important for me to note because as an (art) educator, I look for provocative ways to engage students in and through a variety of lived realities. As a means of understanding larger systems of hegemony, the circuit of culture allows for deeper examination of Whiteness as an ideology and identity. One of the aspects of institutional power is its ability to ubiquitously convey a narrow worldview. Cinema as cultural and already omnipresent text is a beautiful example of this power. As an expanded arts-based pedagogical tool, visual/timed-media texts allows for us to consider the past and imagine and construct a different future.

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The Invisible Standard of White Skin

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I am a white, female artist-teacher working in the northwestern United States. My artistic inquiry investigates cultural contexts around women, mothering, and whiteness in the U.S. middle class. The artworks highlighted in this paper aim to guide viewers to more clearly identify the invisibility of whiteness and "white" skin. Through the artmaking process, which includes researching materials and paint, studying contemporary artists and scholars, and having discussions with colleagues, students, and friends, I have been able to more clearly see the normativity of white identity and privilege. These continued discussions help me decentralize whiteness from the platform where whiteness is presented as normative, default, and superior.

My artmaking began with research on oil paint. I attempted to gather a broad spectrum of Caucasian flesh tones, however, this only made evident the limited category of white. The narrow availability of products that represent the wide spectrum of races illustrates the iron-clad grip that the art supply industry holds on Eurocentric white normative standards. While the Crayola Company replaced "flesh tone" with "peach" in 1962, it took 30 years for the company to introduce multicultural flesh tones, which teachers deeply appreciated in 1992. Remarkably, to this day Gamblin oil paint company carries only one color for flesh and markets it as "Caucasian Flesh Tone." Many painters use Caucasian Flesh Tone as a base, adding other colors to it—which once again, centralizes whiteness. The glacial progress toward racial equity exhibited by companies that manufacture art materials illustrates how whiteness is still seen as central, normative, and as the prominent baseline. Said (2004) captures this assumed universality in his text *Culture and Imperialism:*

> What partly animated my study of Orientalism was my critique of the way in which the alleged universalism of the fields such as the classics (not to mention historiography, anthropology, and sociology) was Eurocentric in the extreme, as if other literatures and societies had an inferior or transcended value. (p. 44)

My art piece, "Caucasian Flesh Tone" (Figure 1) speaks to this Eurocentrism, as it highlights the limited racial awareness held by the

Gamblin paint company which centralizes whiteness in its production of skin tones. By only manufacturing one flesh tone, Caucasian flesh tone, the company sets a standard of holding Caucasian as superior and transcendent.

Figure 1: Caucasian Flesh Tone, 2008, mixed media, 12" x 12"

In my research on contemporary artists who consider the complexities of race, I discovered Korean American Byron Kim's painting "Synecdoche," a large grid of small portraits that solely depict varying sitters' skin tone. Using oil paint, Kim reduces each individual to the racial essence of the sitter. "Synecdoche" is an ongoing piece that now hosts over 400 portraits. Each portrait is on a 10 x 8-inch panel, a common size for portrait photography. By reducing an individual to their racial essence and choosing a size that references portraiture, Kim draws attention to the impossibility of identifying localized color and the trappings of essentialism. The viewer is faced with the reduction of individuals to their prospective races. "Synecdoche" intelligently addresses issues of identity and stereotyping, thus exposing the way representations of others have been deemed truths (Faruqee, 2004). Influenced by Kim's reductive approach, I painted dozens of skin panels, playing with the dynamic interaction of racial signifiers, as seen in 'Welcome to Portland" (figure 2) "Mixed Caucasian Flesh Tones" (figure 3) and "Gentrification I & II" (figures 4 & 5).

Figure 2: Welcome to Portland, 2008, oil on board, 10″ x 18″

Figure 3: Mixed Caucasian Flesh Tones, 2008, mixed media, 7″ x 18″

Figure 4: Gentrification I, 2008, oil on linen, 48″ x 48

Figure 5: Gentrification II, 2008, oil on linen, 48" x 48"

Next, I created "Identity Cards" (figure 6). This project was inspired by Peggy McIntosh's article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," which describes her understanding of white privilege by listing 50 everyday advantages from which she benefits as a white woman. Her motivation for writing this piece was to point out that in order for males to understand their place of privilege in patriarchy she needed to understand her whiteness in the schema of racial privilege. These "invisible" privileges in regard to race, such as shopping without being followed by security (#5) or working a job with without having co-workers on the job suspect that she was hired because of her race (#35), are simply and succinctly laid out in a list.

Aesthetically, I was drawn to the advantage of having adhesive bandages reflect skin tones (#46). Therefore, for one of my artmaking projects, I placed adhesive bandages of the same brand and tone on 50 individuals at a Gay Pride rally on the capitol steps in Olympia, Washington, USA. This act highlighted the individual's skin color in relationship to the bandage. Then, I took photographs of the bandages on the attendees' arms and printed them for exhibition.In addition to comparing skin tones to adhesive bandages, the project also acted as a sampling of the racial makeup of the regional population attending the event. The pieces were then printed to the size of business cards,

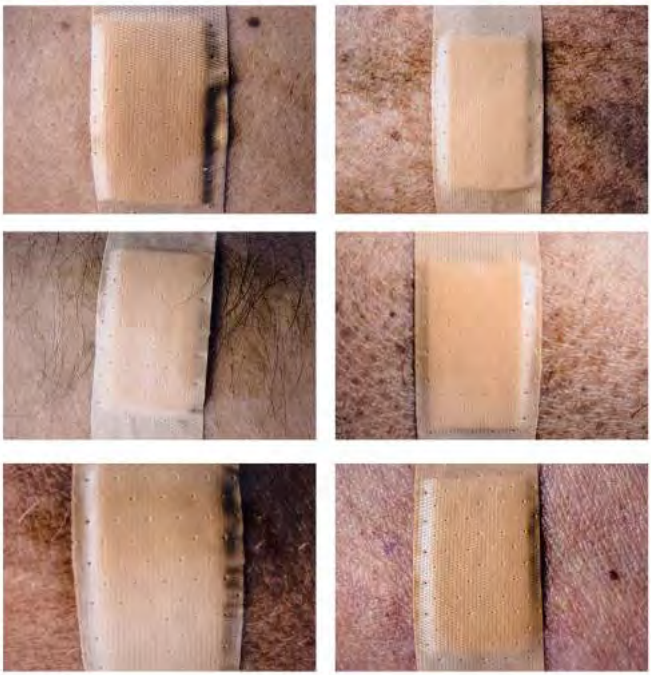

Figure 6: Identity Cards, 2008, archival pigment prints, 3.5" x 2"

suggesting a type of identification card, and stacked in the gallery for the viewers to take. I was surprised by the intimacy cultivated through this project, as I made physical contact with each individual to open the bandage and place it on each arm. Ultimately, the adhesive bandages signify care, but also a superficial covering up of the massive issue of white privilege and supremacy.

In a follow up project, "Adhesive Bandages I-IV," (figures 7-10) I created collages out of adhesive bandages. First, I purchased multiple brands of adhesive bandages in a five-mile radius from the high school where I taught. The source imagery of available bandages was a response to the failure of businesses to supply members of the community with appropriate hair, skin, and first aid products. The pieces reference minimalism as they act as the essence of whiteness, even when I was surprised to see that they were darker than I had predicted. The spectrum did not, however, include all of the races making up the local high school population. While simplistic, this project brought white privilege into dialogue in areas it might not have otherwise. Unwrapping the bandages in public places, such as my classroom and local pubs, and then showing the finished pieces to colleagues and students opened up dialogue around white identity, privilege, and culture.

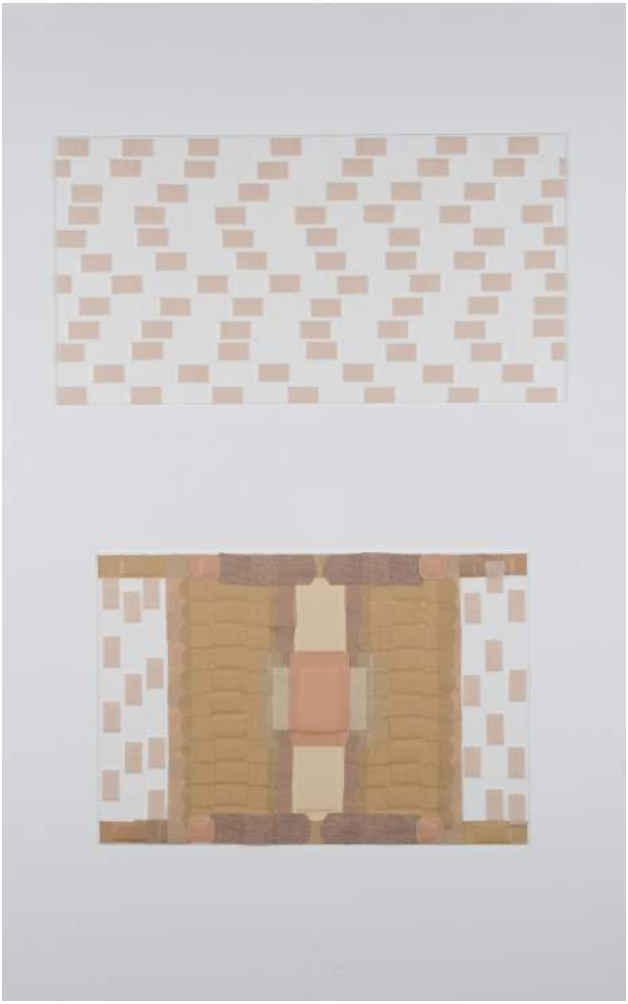

Figure 7: Adhesive Bandages I, 2008, Adhesive bandages on board, 32″ x 20″

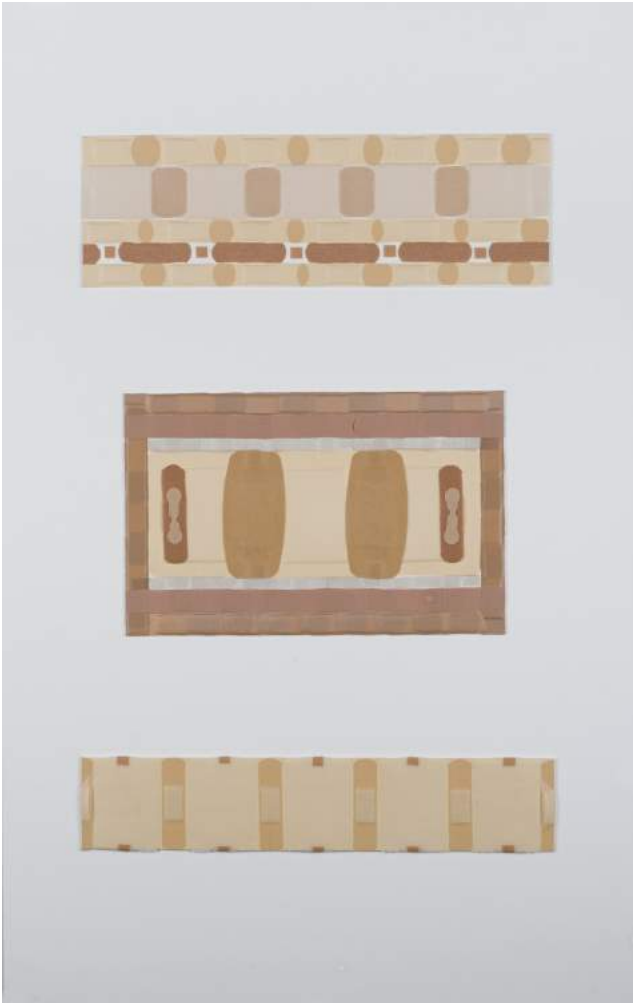

Figure 8: Bandages II, 2008, 2008, Adhesive bandages on board, 32″ x 20″

Figure 9: Bandages III, 2008, Adhesive bandages on board, 32″ x 20″

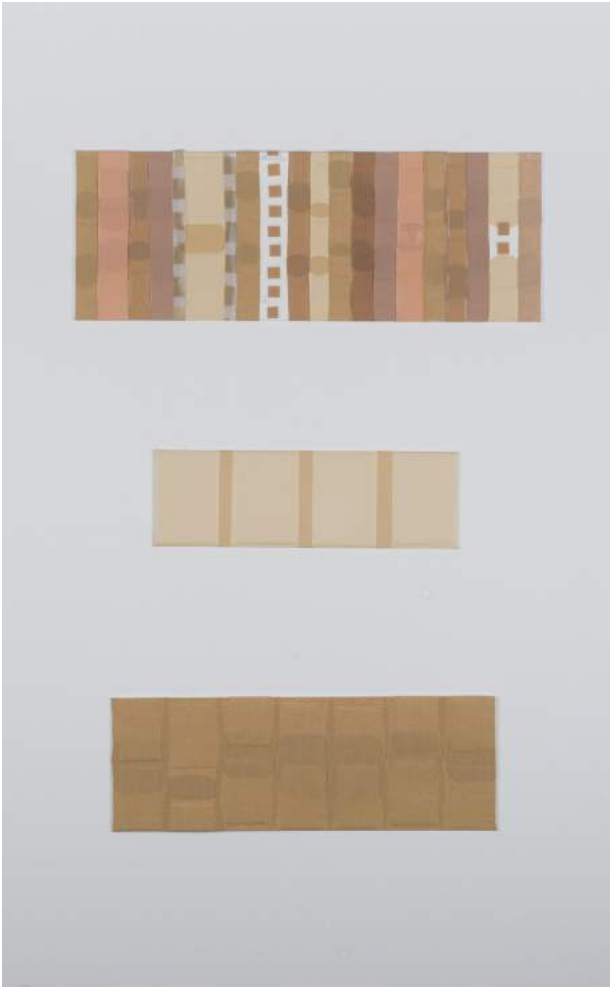

Figure 10: Bandages IV, 2008, Adhesive bandages on board, 32″ x 20″

As white people in positions of power, positioned in a classroom or a gallery, we can continually work to illuminate whiteness as one of the many races, not the universal, natural, standard, or norm—and bring light to its invisibility. Patricia J. Williams (2004) speaks to the silent standard of whiteness:

> (Racial categories) …don't exist in the rational world in any coherent, consistent, or scientific sense, but nevertheless have great power over us…Whiteness is the site of privileged imagining, the invisible standard. It is whatever it wants to be. And blackness has been for too many generations whatever was left over. Race is a careless, deeply unconscious, and highly aesthetic phenomenon, even if that aesthetic ultimately deprives us of greater vision. (pp. 19-20)

My experiences as a white art educator and artist living in primarily white town with primarily white students places me in a critical place to interrogate whiteness with peers, faculty, and students. Educators and artists can make the careless aesthetic structure of race visible by decentralizing the whiteness as a normative standard. In my artmaking, I explored the construct of race and the unexamined culture of whiteness, bringing the invisible standard more clearly into focus.

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Exploring Manifestations of White Supremacy Culture in Art Museum Education and Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

This paper looks specifically at Afro-Caribbean art and culture and explores White and Afro-Caribbean experiences and the impact of Whiteness on the ways that knowledge and practice of the arts in museums have been considered, interpreted, and characterized. Written by co-authors offering an Afro-Caribbean and White perspective, this paper offers various examples from our experiences as art museum educators of the ways Whiteness impacts our work.

KEYWORDS:Whiteness, Caribbean, museum education, colonialism, anti-racism, White supremacy

Introduction

This paper is co-authored by two art museum educators and art education scholar-practitioners; one is a Black biracial Trinidadian and the other a White American. This paper looks at Afro-Caribbean art and culture, and explores the impact of Whiteness on the ways that art and material culture from this region has been considered, interpreted, and characterized in art museums. We first share the definition of Whiteness that we use to analyze the cultural assumptions and ideologies that underpin exhibition displays and interpretation of Caribbean art and cultural content. This analysis reveals important ethical questions of the museums' role in historical revisionism, the development of Afro-Caribbean cultural identity within museum spaces, and how Whiteness negatively impacts pedagogical choices that White art museum educators (WAME's) make when teaching from this content.

We use a qualitative research methodology utilizing two case studies in order to explore our research question that asks how White supremacist culture, over time and geographical location, has impacted contemporary interpretive practice in museums of Afro

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We use a qualitative research methodology utilizing two case studies in order to explore our research question that asks how White supremacist culture, over time and geographical location, has impacted contemporary interpretive practice in museums of Afro

Caribbean art and material culture. In the first case study, we chart the history of exhibition displays of Afro-Caribbean material culture at the Barbados Museum and Historical Society (BMHS). In the second case study, we analyze observations of White museum educators teaching from an installation exhibition at a major New York City art museum by a Jamaican artist named Ebony G. Patterson. Together these cases will illuminate both past and present discrepancies in museological practices concerning Whiteness and the interpretation of museum objects.

By combining geographical locations both in the United States and the Caribbean, and by providing perspectives of Whiteness from a historical and contemporary lens we highlight the far-reaching implications of Whiteness on museum practice, and the continued need to subvert it. Thus, this paper acknowledges the regional specificity of the impacts of Whiteness, but it also presents Whiteness not as a localized phenomenon, but as a global entity whose; potency has proliferated through time and "transcends the nation-state" (Leonardo, 2002, p. 29).

Theoretical Framework

We use a definition of Whiteness offered by critical Whiteness theorists who ground Whiteness in its explicit relationship to White supremacy (Allen, 1995; Frankenberg, 1993; Roediger, 1991). It is important to note that long before Whiteness became acknowledged within the academy, writers and artists of color, particularly African Americans, had been writing about and defining Whiteness. African American writer and sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) named "the problem of the color line"– the distance between White and "darker… races of men" to be the problem of the 20th century (p. 41). Other important Black thinkers such as novelist and literary critic Ralph Ellison (1952), novelist and activist James Baldwin (1985), and philosopher and critical theorist Frantz Fanon (1967) each acknowledged that Whiteness is the root of the problem that is racism. Baldwin (1963) in his book *The Fire Next Time* writes, "White people in this country will have quite enough to do in learning how to accept and love themselves and each other, and when they have achieved this—which will not be tomorrow and may very well be never—the Negro problem will no longer exist, for it will no longer be needed" (p. 22). Historically, Black people studied Whiteness as a survival mechanism (hook, 1992; Ganley; 2003). hooks (1992) notes that despite people of color's invisibility to White people, Black people have been studying them through an anthropological lens since slavery.

While Whiteness has been defined in a variety of ways, it is generally agreed that it is a socially constructed concept, designed to privilege

its members, determined by those already considered part of the category (Giroux, 1997; Karenga, 1999; Roediger, 1999; Stokes-Brown, 2002). For too long, Whiteness has been defined as an expression of what it is not, an ever shifting, contorting construction of "otherness" (Jacobson, 1999). The "Other," a term advocated by Edward Said (1978) has been described as the process of claiming and projecting power and strength through manipulating and exaggerating perceived weaknesses of people of color (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995, p. 90). In Said's (1978) book *Orientalism* he explains, Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction that "tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient [colonized] as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (as cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995, p. 89).

However, defining Whiteness by its proximity to the Other overlooks naming the characteristics of White perpetrators of racist ideology—in other words, what is it about Whiteness that shapes White people's culture, values, and proclivities towards certain racist behaviors?

Whiteness has to do with having White skin—racially identifying as White—but it is more than that. Whiteness refers to aspects of White people's racial identity that are often unconscious and invisible to White people, which shape how White people orient themselves in relation to people from other groups. This orientation is hierarchical, based on the assumption that White people are superior to others. To be more specific, according to Critical Race Theory (CRT), Whiteness refers to certain privileges, as well as behaviors and values associated with privilege (Allen, 1995; McIntosh, 1988).

White privilege is fueled by the normalization of Whiteness (another tenet of CRT)—the sense many White people have that being White is racially "normal" or "neutral"—as opposed to actually being a member of a race with particular characteristics. bell hooks (1994) stated that Whiteness is a state of unconsciousness: it is often invisible to White people, which solidifies a lack of knowledge or understanding of difference, serving to perpetuate oppression. This normalization of Whiteness primarily serves to obfuscate cultural aspects of White supremacy. Naming these values and characteristics of the culture of White supremacy allows us to identify them in practice, and in turn combat them. In their training resources for uncovering Whiteness in majority White workplaces, social justice activists and educators Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun (2001) identify several elements of White supremacy culture. We have selected four to aid in our analysis: either/or thinking, power hoarding, right to comfort, and fear of open conflict. These will each be explained more fully in the sections that follow.

A key component of our research relies on our understanding of the interpretation of museum objects. For the purposes of this paper, we use the term "interpretation" to refer to the myriad of ways that museum curators and educators mediate the relationship between the viewer and the art object on display. Whether through an object label, wall text, or public tours, institutions constantly make choices regarding what information is (or is not) important for the public to know, and how that information is conveyed. Van Mensch's (1990) methodological museology asks us to "(re)integrate the different specialisms within the profession" (p. 141). Here, as Van Mensch has suggested, we cross examine the functions of interpretation of the museum educator (through facilitating tours for example) with the curator (through developing exhibitions) in our analysis of White supremacist culture.

We also acknowledge the revised interpretations of terms such as "art" and "culture" in the Caribbean, where it has become commonplace in some official documentation that these words are used interchangeably. This hybrid paradigm can be found in the official art education documentation in the region, for example in the objectives of the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) in the regional art curriculum (Caribbean Examinations Council, 2011). The updated interpretation of these terms attempts to move away from their Eurocentric classifications assigned under colonial rule; instead, "art" and "culture" are re-contextualized into a hybrid paradigm that reconstructs and conjoins their interpretation and meanings.

Research Design

In this paper, the authors employ a qualitative, case study approach. Case study is an "intensive, in-depth method of enquiry" focusing on "real-life cases" (or units) and utilizes diverse sources of evidence (McGloin, 2008, p. 48). Researchers have concluded that this methodological approach can provide a critical analysis that leads to improved approaches to practice (McGloin, 2008; Corcoran, Walker & Wals, 2004). We analyze some of the far-reaching impacts of White supremacist culture on Afro-Caribbean art and material culture in museum settings by investigating case study units in diverse geographical locations and periods in time: The Barbados Museum and Historical Society (BMHS) in the Caribbean, and White art museum educators (WAME) teaching in a modern/contemporary art and design museum in New York City, USA.

The two case studies offer insights into the global impact of White supremacist culture on Afro-Caribbean art and material culture in museums. The first case study, which is set in the Caribbean, was conducted through the collection of documentation on the curation of

exhibits at BMHS as well as through interviews and correspondence with the curatorial and education staff at the museum, including The Director of the museum Alissandra Cummins and Deputy Director Kevin Farmer. The study examines the collections and history of display at BMHS and the museum's historical role in the formation of Afro-Caribbean cultural identities in Barbados. We then examine *Africa: Connections and Continuities*, a permanent exhibition opened in 2005 at the museum that celebrates the relationship between Africa and the Caribbean and contributes to a new consciousness of Caribbean identity (Russel, 2013). The second case describes and analyzes the collective choices two WAME's at one NYC art museum make when interpreting an art installation by an Afro-Caribbean artist with K-12 group tours. We analyze observations and interviews as primary forms of data.

Case Study #1: The Interpretation of Afro-Caribbean Material Culture in Caribbean Museum Spaces

Colonialism is commonly defined as a process of geographical expansionism and the implications of political and economic control of one country over another (Acemoglu, Johnson, & Robinson, 2005; Rodney, 2018). However, the impact of colonialism spans much broader than commerce and politics. In a lecture at the International Conference on Academic Imperialism, Vinay Lal (2010), a Professor of History and Asian American Studies at UCLA stated that, "Imperialism is not simply to be recognized through economic, military, and administrative categories but also through the project of *knowledge*. Colonialism was also a conquest of knowledge (emphasis in original)." Colonialism was as much a process of deconstructing and reconstructing knowledge systems as much as it was of economic and political domination. Said (1978) adds to this idea, speaking about the varied power structures that colonialism impacts, including knowledge systems, the arts, and culture. He states:

> But rather [the representation of the colonized] is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial and imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, and values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do). (as cited in Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1995, p. 90)

Thus, the oppression of colonialism can be thought of more expansively than geopolitical control and economic exploitation, but also through intangibles such as knowledge systems, thus implicating the pedagogical practices within arts and culture.

The complicated history of the Caribbean brings to light its contested past and battles of control by European colonial powers over the region. It is through this lens that we explore the historical foundations of interpreting the art and material culture of Caribbean people of African descent (Afro-Caribbean) in museum spaces. Here, we specifically address perspectives of colonialism in Barbados that align with aspects of Jones and Okun's (2001) White supremacy cultural characteristics, focusing particularly on power hoarding and either/or thinking.

Representing Culture at the Barbados Museum and Historical Society

During the colonial period, exhibition practices in Barbados sought to ensure that collection policies perpetuated a dominant vision of Empire and European occupation in the region. As a result, objects in collections that captured Afro-Caribbean identity were minuscule in number and if displayed, were exhibited as curios and trophies of conquest (Cummins, 1992; Farmer, 2013). One such example is the late Ms. B. Thorne's Ashanti collection of stools, chairs, drums, and brass musical instruments at the BMHS (Cummins, 1992). The provenance of this collection originated from the British invasion of the Ashanti Kingdom in 1897, and became the centerpiece of the museum's exhibits (Cummins, 1992). The collection was presented, "not as relics of a proud African heritage, but as trophies of the triumph of a civilization over savagery" (Cummins, 1994, p. 18).

Cultural interpretation of Afro-Caribbean content at the BMHS during the colonial era evinces the central role that White supremacy has played in their interpretation, specifically the dynamics of power hoarding and either/or thinking described by Jones and Okun (2001). Either/Or thinking is described as a mindset that categorizes ideas into binary terms and often simplifies complex issues to suit the dominant group's perception of reality, for example simplistically attributing a lack of education as the source of poverty (Jones & Okun, 2001). This either/or mentality can be seen in the way that Afro-Caribbean material culture was interpreted as curios without consultation of those representing their cultural origins. We are reminded again of Ms. B. Thorne's Ashanti collection, which was categorized as trophies of Empire over a barbarian African culture, with little regard for the considerably more complicated narrative an insightful, rigorous interpretation would offer. Unfortunately, images of the African collections and their display at BMHS during the

colonial period are either unavailable or extremely rare to source. Dispositions of colonial power-hoarding are also evident in exhibition practices, as the display of material culture of White colonials held precedence over the display of Afro-Caribbean material culture (Cummins, 1994).

The interpretation and representation of African heritage in Caribbean museums throughout the region did not begin to change until the onset of Black nationalist Marcus Garvey's Pan-African movement, the demands by Caribbean nation states for political enfranchisement in the 1940s and 1950s, and lastly the victory of independence for many Caribbean countries in the 1960s (Farmer, 2013). In the post-independence era, with the emergence of Caribbean nationalism, independent Caribbean nation-states sought to combat classical colonial historiography and imagery and sought to define their own cultural identity and portrayal of self (Farmer, 2013). Caribbean nation-states today are still struggling with the legacy of their colonial histories and face the ethical questions of the nature of history, ownership of artistic and cultural heritage, the development of cultural identity and have turned to their museums to act as stewards of change (Cummins, 2004; Farmer, 2013).

The BMHS today is a Caribbean museum that challenges itself to shape a new Caribbean consciousness of self, cultural identity, and public memories of the past as a central aim for its community and has implemented changes to the interpretation of its collections and its exhibition practices in order to do so (see the below section "Contemporary Connections: Africa: Connections and Continuities"). The goal of revisiting the cultural interpretation of the collections at BMHS is supported by the Barbadian government's The Barbadian Museum Development Plan Committee (Cummins, 2004). This development plan sought to reconstruct the identity of the museum to better serve and reflect its community (Cummins, 2004). In October 1980 the committee considered that:

> The Barbados Museum is not really representative of the various aspects of Barbadian life… The Minister is therefore committed to the development of national museum policy aimed at changing the character of the Museum in order to make it truly representative of the history, culture and development of Barbadian society. (as cited in Cummins, 1992, p. 48)

The report goes on to state that although there is "a great deal of information about Barbadian merchants and planters, their lifestyle and their adoption of European material culture, it says little or nothing about slaves, plantation laborers, peasants, farmers, and fishermen" (as cited in Cummins, 1992, p. 48). African cultural

material, vernacular architecture, chattel house furniture, traditional crafts, and means of transportation were absent in exhibition displays (Cummins, 1992). The collection focuses attention mainly on the colonizing segment of society and culture, therefore, does not present a coherent or complete story of Barbadian history. Cummins stated that, "the process of revamping the Museum and erasing its stigma to social exclusivity to the community has been a hard one for over the past fifty years" (personal communication, Aug 20, 2005). This social stigma, she explains, not only extends to its collections and exhibitions, but also to the building where the museum is housed. The BMHS is housed in a building that was originally a British Military prison in 1853; therefore, the building itself evokes social stigmas that are tied to its colonial history and forms tensions between the museum and its community (Cummins, 2004).

That being said, the museum today has revitalized and created more balance between European and Afro-Caribbean representation in its galleries. Noteworthy additions to the museum include an exhibition of fabricated and furnished laborer quarters in the Children's gallery. This exhibition functions as a living history museum with a laborer quarters that invites the visitor to envision themselves living during these historical periods. The concept of this laborer quarters exhibition directly juxtaposes an exhibition of furbished European period rooms of the eighteenth to nineteenth century (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. An exhibit of plantocracy with furbished periods rooms of the eighteenth to nineteenth century. Image courtesy of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society

The plantocracy period room exhibition consists of a bedroom, a dining room, a living room, and a children's room. The addition of the laborer quarters counter-balances the formerly Eurocentric nature of the period rooms. The exhibition additions show a respectful acknowledgement of multiple aspects of Afro-Caribbean history.

Contemporary Connections: *Africa: Connections and Continuities*

As the title implies, this exhibition seeks to connect Barbadian history with its legacy in Africa. In doing so, the exhibition affords Barbadian viewers an opportunity to better understand their cultural identity by forging connections in local cultural practices with the continent. It also illustrates the continuities and legacies of African traditions in the Caribbean through displays of craftsmanship by displaying metal, wood, and textile artifacts; displays of traditional African festival clothing; and architecture through the display of traditional and modern housing in Africa (Russell, 2013).

Opened in 2005, the introductory panel of the exhibition reads: "Over a period of about 500 years, many Caribbean societies, including ours [Barbados], were created by the forces of capitalism. We are the amalgam of four continents—Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas—an archipelago distilled and anew" (Russell, 2013, para. 11). This exhibition highlights the complex hybridity in the region as well as the intersectionality and evolution of traditional African ceremonial practices and their manifestations in modern Caribbean cultural festivals (Russell, 2013). The display *Masquerade* particularly emphasizes this hybridity by highlighting the overlaps between African and Caribbean artistic and cultural practices and identities (see Figure 2).

Masquerade consists of two festival attires displayed together, one originating from the Republic of Benin, known as an *Egungun,* and the other known as *Shaggy Bear.* Yoruban descendants living in Barbados created the *Shaggy Bear*, thus this display resonates with current Barbadian festival dress and Afro-Barbadian peoples' cultural connections to Africa (Russell, 2013). The descendants of Yoruban people of Nigeria conceived the *Shaggy Bear* in Barbados during slavery and has since become emblematic of legendary Carnival festivities in Barbados and its varied interpretations throughout the region (Russell, 2013). The original costume was made of dried banana leaves, however, over time African descendants on the island substituted leaves for shredded fabric that make up the costume today (Russell, 2013). The *Shaggy Bear* is now a popular traditional Carnival costume in Barbados and bears direct linkages to the *Egungun* costume, as both require the masquerader to dance in circular motions and share specific cultural symbolisms of "the cycle

Figure 2. Masquerade Display Shaggy Bear and Egungun Costumes. Image courtesy of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society

of life" (Russell, 2013, Chapter 11, Section 2, para. 13.).These historical and contemporary examples exemplify a Caribbean museum that plays an important social role in its community as an agent of change in redefining Caribbean cultural and artistic identity through reclaiming invisible histories, and reviving living cultures. The museum combats the challenges entrenched in cultural assumptions in its displays of Afro-Caribbean identities on an island whose demographic is primarily of people of African descent. Through revamping the museum with living history and interactive exhibitions and by introducing new permanent collections that testify to the eloquence of African art and culture, the BMHS made a clear statement that history is not made only by the wealthy and the powerful, but also by the disenfranchised.

Henry Giroux (2005) writes about a politics of difference, saying that suggestions from White people that we should "all just get along" often comes together with the idea that we should forget the inconvenience of our differences as well. The inconvenient part refers to a de-centering of values from a strictly White, Western canon. This de-centering process starts at all levels of our cultural institutions—from individual staff introspection to reconsidering the infrastructure and culture of the institution itself. This is illustrated at BMHS where they have effectively revitalized the cultural interpretation of their exhibitions through a de-centering process, which restructured their curatorial and interpretative approaches in order to illuminate the Black experience of their audiences. This updated approach encourages the everyday Barbadian to rediscover their cultural identities, an initiative that not only enriches Barbadians, but also contributes to wider notions of a collective Caribbean sense of self-actualization throughout the region.

Case Study #2: Whiteness and Museum Education: Interpreting Afro-Caribbean Art in White Cultural Spaces

In the previous section of this paper, we discussed a transitional moment where the BMHS made attempts to correct the ways colonialism and Whiteness inserted themselves into the curation and interpretation of Afro-Caribbean material culture in Barbados. In this section, we examine how cultural aspects of Whiteness insert themselves into the ways that White art museum educators (WAME's) interpret this content in multiple contexts, such as field trips or public tours. As discussed in our introduction, our view of interpretation is expansive, including pedagogical choices educators make on tours, in an effort to demonstrate the wide and varied ways White supremacist thinking inserts itself into this work. This claim is in line with Van Mensch's (1990) ideas mentioned above, which assert that a methodological museology seeks through lines between different specialties within the field.

This case draws from both observation and interview data based on two tours, each given by two different WAME's (WAME 1 and WAME 2). Both work at the same modern/contemporary art and design museum in New York City and interpreted work by artist Ebony G. Patterson. While we acknowledge that the study includes a small sample size of two White museum educators, a pattern emerged from their teaching that signified some of the challenges that Whiteness presents to responsible, critical interpretations of Afro-Caribbean material culture. These emergent issues indicate that there is a need for further research.

Artist Ebony G. Patterson is originally from Kingston, Jamaica, but splits her time between Kingston and Lexington, Kentucky, USA. Her work, especially in the installation described in this paper, primarily explores invisibility, disenfranchisement, and related violence that occurs in marginalized communities of color. Patterson is known for utilizing bright, colorful, shiny found objects and textiles in order to draw the viewer in and compel them to look closer to the violent references hidden just underneath the glitzy and glittery surface (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Patterson, E. G. (2016), … buried again to carry on growing …, [installation]. Photo by Butcher Walsh © Museum of Arts and Design.

The highlighted installation uses the lenses of race, gender and sexuality to explore the visibility of violence enacted against Black communities in the United States and the Caribbean. Through analyzing observation and interviews through Jones and Okun's

framework, we have identified two main areas where Whiteness impacts the WAME's work: fear of open conflict, and right to comfort.

Example 1: Right to Comfort

Throughout the study, we found that the WAME's utilized euphemistic linguistic tools as a way of speaking *around* race, but not necessarily about race itself. Instead they relied on euphemisms like "urban," "diverse," allusions to class, or status, or strived to make references to specific racialized experiences more universally relevant (such as applying a particularly Black experience to all "people of color"). For example, the WAME lead a group of high school students through a discussion about one of the exhibition installations, which consisted of a group of ten brightly dressed mannequins (see Figure 4). During the gallery discussion, the high school students started to describe the figures as "thugs," speculating that they might be drug dealers based on visual evidence, such as the way the mannequins were dressed (in hoodies, for example), as well as the scattered and piles of cash and toy guns on the ground.

While the term "thug" is not itself indicative of race, researchers (Kitossa, 2012; Acuff, 2015; Smiley & Fakunle, 2016) note that certain "signs" become attached to Black culture that "help produce and maintain White fear" (Acuff, 2015, p. 164). Acuff (2015) notes that in the case of young Black men extrajudicially shot and killed by White police officers, hoodies are an example of a sign that has become associated with criminality, and criminality with Blackness in turn. These associations turn quickly to stigmas, which work to justify violent acts perpetrated against Black people (Acuff, 2015). It is (or should be) the responsibility of museums educators to support students in navigating these signs critically, particularly, as in this case, when the artist highlights the signs *in order to* trouble them. Instead of pressing the group on their word choice, which could be read as racialized assumptions about these figures, WAME 1 pivoted to a conversation about class markers, asking the students what they saw that made them think the figures were from "a lower social class." Instead of entering a potentially uncomfortable discussion about race, WAME 1 chose an easier, more comfortable entry highlighting class instead.

Jones and Okun (2001) describe Whiteness' "right to comfort" as the belief that White people "have a right to emotional and psychological comfort" over the needs of people of color to voice their frustrations with systemic racism—so much so that White people often scapegoat those who cause any perceived discomfort by bringing up systemic racism in the first place (para. 13). In order to subvert this, they suggest that White people "understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning," and that they should deepen their

Figure 4. Patterson, E. G. (2016), *Swag Swag Crew*, [installation]. Photo by Butcher Walsh © Museum of Arts and Design.

analysis of racism and oppression in order to develop an understanding of how their feelings, defensiveness, and avoidance strategies fit into the larger context of racial oppression (para. 13). This speaks to the urgency behind Dewhurst and Hendrick's (2016) charge for museum educators to become comfortable using terminology such as systemic violence, institutionalized racism, structural racism, construct of race, etc. Too often White educators avoid these topics out of discomfort stemming from fear of speaking out of turn, offending someone, or citing incorrect information (a sentiment voiced repeatedly by the WAME's in this study). In so doing, we avoid potentially difficult, however productive conversations (Dewhurst & Hendrick, 2016). We would extend this to becoming comfortable with the *particular* cultural content we are interpreting; in this case, the educator might have felt more empowered to engage a conversation about race specifically (rather than class) if she had a better grasp on the particulars of racial dynamics in Jamaica that specifically impacted the artist's choices in this work.

This avoidance in preference of personal comfort does more damage than we may realize. This is particularly true when WAME's linguistic gymnastics not only obfuscate the specific racial experience the artist is referencing, but also erase the complicity of the White perpetrators at the root of the violence. For example, when discussing a different art work that made explicit reference to murders perpetrated

against Black youths, WAME 2 referred to "a child" in Chicago who "had been killed," (note the passive voice) but not his Blackness, nor the circumstances related to his death (police brutality). While subtle at times, the language that we use can be hugely important as far as representing certain values. Fine's (1987, 2003) concept of "naming" speaks to the importance of specificity of our language. Not naming forms of oppression may serve to temporarily alleviate White guilt and help White educators feel more comfortable in their interpretation of art works in the moment, but can have the long-term impact as a "means of silencing students" (p. 249) (specifically students of color) and creating a stark dissonance between their lived experiences and what they are taught in the art museum.

Example 2: Fear of Open Conflict

The literature on museum education makes a strong, ardent case for prioritizing students' interests, lending primacy to student directed inquiry and creating "safe spaces" as counters to a "culture of silence" in traditional schooling contexts (Freire, 1970). While these are not necessarily bad pedagogical elements, our findings support the idea that perhaps WAME's lean too much on this literature, placing student directed-ness and sense of safety over having potentially tense and yet vitally important conversations that students need to be having, and which museums can and should support (Dewhurst & Hendrick, 2016; Sandell, 2004; Sandell & Nightingale, 2012). For example, when asked about whether it was an explicit choice to not refer to the specific racial and/or cultural identity of the figures depicted in the example mentioned above, WAME 2 replied:

> "I honestly—no. I think I just kind of forgot, or I just didn't think about that as an aspect of it… in this one [tour] I felt like I touched on it a little… and it fell a little flat or people weren't responding so then I didn't carry that thread through. So then I decided, all right I'm going to focus more on these other threads."

Jones and Okun (2001) characterize Whiteness' "fear of open conflict" as the tendency of the dominant group to ignore or run from conflict out of fear, and to choose politeness over a potentially uncomfortable or tense discussion, no matter how productive—in fact, raising a difficult issue is seen as being impolite. In the context of museum teaching, being completely student-centered in the interest of avoiding conflict often comes at the expense of perpetuating racist tendencies and biased thinking on both the educator's and students' parts (Autry, 2017), perpetuating what Critical Race theorist and educator Zeus Leonardo (2002) refers to as a "pedagogy of politeness"

(p. 39). In response to this dilemma, a growing number of educators are seeing opportunities to push notions of critical thinking in museum spaces further. Director of the Peoria Playhouse Children's Museum Rebecca Herz (2016) queries the notion that museums need not concern themselves with ensuring visitors come away with the "correct" interpretation of museum objects. She cites museum consultant and educator Meszaros' (2006) lament regarding the "whatever" interpretation, which Meszaros finds characterizes the field's current state of education and transmission of knowledge. If anything goes, Meszaros wonders, does the obligation of museums to ensure responsible interpretation go with it? Meaning making, or developing a personal connection was always meant to be the start of interpretation, not the end goal.

We do not mean to suggest that every museum tour be necessarily anti-racist as a goal, or uncomfortable for that matter. Critical thinking and inquiry of all kinds serves many aims and it is within museum educators' rights to use it in different ways to serve their educational priorities. It is clear though that a typical model of critical thinking may be insufficient for the purposes of exposing the invisible structures of racism within art museums. For example, in reference to Figure 4, WAME 1 asked a series of open-ended questions about skin bleaching, seeking to create a link between the brightly colored textiles Patterson used on the mannequins in the place of skin color and the artist's interest in skin color as an accessory, given readily available methods of skin bleaching in Jamaica. While this connection was achieved, nevertheless the arguably more pressing and relevant question of why someone would want lighter color skin in the first place was never addressed. This omission makes sense given this educator's overall approach to inquiry with the artist's work, an approach that relies on the artwork's drawing people in visually through the use of bright, attractive materials. The educator correlated her approach with the artist's interest in drawing the viewer in visually and then gradually letting the hidden, darker message of the work settle in. WAME 1 explained that she allows her students similarly to start with what they see and develop lines of inquiry based on their observations—a common approach in museum education.

When asked about their choice not to address skin color in the interview, WAME 1 noted the relationship between why a person would want to appear lighter skinned, in order to be perceived as having a higher status within society. However, she never made the connection between light skinned-ness and Whiteness, and why within a nearly all Black society in Jamaica, Whiteness would still be held up as the thing that is "best." Because she felt more comfortable couching her course of inquiry solely within the connections the students generated, they were never compelled to interrogate more

critically relevant issues that may not necessarily occur to them by just looking, such as, what about White skin is desirable in the first place—a query that has nothing to do with class, but rather the values we construct and apply to skin tone (ie, race).

What we choose to examine and what gets left out ends up being a complicated web of potentially contradictory decisions. The following interview exchange with WAME 2 reveals a common sentiment concerning the question of how young is too young to discuss racism:

> "Me: Does the tour look different for younger students?
>
> WAME 2: Yeah, I think it would be a different experience because you -- I think you wouldn't maybe focus on the violence as much, the violent aspect of it.
>
> Me: Is there anything else you would think about?
>
> WAME 2: Although I have to think about that, because how can you leave that out because it's such an inherent part for most of the pieces. I mean, I think you would maybe focus on the first piece longer. And with younger kids maybe talk more formally about the pieces like colors and patterns and rather than the meaning behind them."

By relying on literature reflecting White, dominant ways of thinking that encourage us to pursue students' interests above all else to justify not engaging in tough topics, WAME's may be silencing important messages that artists are trying to uncover through their work. These ideas are closely related to the concept of White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011), or the variety of defense mechanisms White people employ to deflect and avoid race talk (Sue, 2015). These aspects of White culture all serve a common, double pronged goal: to avoid talking about the ways White people are personally complicit in upholding White supremacist structures and systems, and assign blame to anyone who dares bring up these issues, and initiating an uncomfortable conversation by being too "aggressive," or politically correct, et cetera.

Conclusion

In the introduction of this essay the central question focused on how White supremacist culture, over time and geographical location, has impacted contemporary interpretive practice in museums of Afro-Caribbean art and material culture. We explored case studies in institutions based in the Caribbean, as well as the United States that looked at interpretive choices and found that colonialism and Whiteness, both being White supremacist and racist projects, are major influences behind these choices. In approaching colonialism as a conquest of knowledge that subjugates people of color's ways of knowing in preference of White worldviews, we see overlap between contemporary WAMEs' and historical institutional choices concerning cultural interpretation of Afro-Caribbean content.

Each example of art museum interpretation described above reveals a different way that WAME's choose to deflect and avoid, rather than engage with the racial and cultural nuances of Afro-Caribbean content. Whether it is through language choices that characterize neither victim nor perpetrator, object selections that avoid works that treat racism explicitly, leaning on pedagogy that unfairly places the onus of bringing up race related content on our students—all choices prioritize the comfort of the White educator, and the (perceived) comfort of the group. Similarly, during the colonial era in the Caribbean, White curators leaned on mechanisms of White supremacist culture such as power hoarding and either/or thinking as an approach to cultural interpretation of Afro-Caribbean content.

There is a growing movement within the museum world to combat the false notion of neutrality that has been touted in museum interpretation (Autry, 2017; Jennings, 2017). Attempts to represent "both sides" of oppression support an intellectually dishonest stance that can have violent repercussions for our students and audiences (Autry, 2017). As Leonardo (2002) points out, educators need to do more work to reveal to their students the interconnected "long, global arm" of Whiteness and colonialism (p. 33). He advocates for a neo-race theory that "finds it imperative to peer into the lives and consciousness of the White imaginary in attempts to produce a more complete portrait of global racism and ways to combat it" (p. 45). Similar to the original Black scholars of Whiteness, we hope this research contributes to an ongoing effort to name and subvert aspects of White supremacy in both our individual work and institutional cultures.

The success of BMHS comes as the result of decades of transformative, critical self- development, and exemplifies a holistic approach in support of inclusion and social justice. Personal, as well as institutional self-criticism is key; if museum educators,

curators, interpreters, leaders cannot bring themselves to explore the discomfort that inherently lies within uncovering these tangled histories, how can we ask our students and audiences to do the same?

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Displacing Whiteness in the Arts and Education: Dialogues in Action

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In July 2017, Arts House in Melbourne, Australia[1] held an event titled, "Art & Action: Displacing Whiteness in the Arts." The discussion was hosted and developed by invited Latinx artist-researcher Tania Cañas, in collaboration with Arts House producer Naomi Velaphi. The all-female panel included First Nations Australian choreographer, teacher and dancer Mariaa Randall, academic and writer Odette Kelada, and South African performance artist Sethembile Msezane. 'Displacing Whiteness in the Arts' focused on how First Nations Women and Women of Colour navigate and use their arts practice to challenge systemic racism and oppression within the arts writ large, including the whiteness embedded within arts education institutions. The director of Arts House, Angharad Wynne-Jones, was interviewed by Nithya Iyer, an editor for Peril Magazine. The interview focused on how the season's program, especially this event, was a response to the racial homogeneity of the arts. Iyer (2017) writes,

> The arts sector is the least cultural diverse sector in Australia. That's a track to redundancy. How can we possibly be telling meaningful cultural narratives of any sort unless that changes? I can't imagine that that's not evident to mainstream cultural institutions. (Iyer, 2017)

Wynne-Jones noted that the 'Displacing Whiteness in the Arts' panel was the most popular event that season and that 'people are up for it'. 'It' here, appears to signify the need and hunger for critical work on whiteness and deconstructing white supremacy and privilege.
We suggest that many of the moments in which race is confronted and learning occurs most profoundly is through forums and live

1 Arts House is a contemporary performance site based in North Melbourne Town Hall on Kulin Nations Land. It primarily programs new, local live performance, development opportunities as well and critical discussions.

conversations where experiences are exchanged and dialogue is foregrounded. The resonances of the panel conversation continue beyond the day of the event. Thus, here, we present some of the panellists' discussion, questions, observations and stories about displacing whiteness. The panel offered their personal insight regarding the impact of whiteness on artists and the arts, ways to avoid giving more power to whiteness through centralising its placement even while attempting to decentre, and focusing attention on platforms and resources for artists that are marginalised by whiteness. Upon invitation, the panellists were asked to consider : how can art, actions and interventions create sites of resistance within colonial and institutional arts settings?

Public art events that educate audiences through the race narratives of Indigenous and Women of Colour are rare, and moreover, undervalued. Meanwhile, formalised training courses for predominantly white audiences are prioritized and frequent. To activate the audience's awareness of this disparity in organizational values, Tania Cañas, the event host and panel facilitator, opened the night with a performance art piece. Cañas' performance was a satirical take on the type of corporatised race education training delivered at institutions and arts organisations to build "tolerance" for "diversity," and achieve "cultural competency." "Tick-the-box" approaches to race trainings fail to confront a need for core structural and systematic changes that would effectively disrupt dominant power relations and disrupt the construction of whiteness as the assumed "norm." Frankenberg (1997) concludes: In these processes once again whiteness may remerge as the generic place marker, with whites asked to become 'competent' in relating to members of 'marked' cultural groups…(p.18)

Drawing from race educator Robin Di Angelo's work on White Fragility (2018), Cañas' interactive performance sought to reconfigure "marked" cultural groups, and instead apply such language to whiteness. In doing so, whiteness is "marked," it becomes visible, tangible and structural. This shift directly challenges the directional gaze of whiteness as the hubris of zero point (Santiago Castro-Gómez, 2007) and what Rolando Vázquez (2014) later articulates as the epistemological zero point; whiteness as the invisible (to white people), omnipresent and centralised point of analysis, power and structure. In attempting to expose whiteness, the event began with what decolonial theorist Walter Mignolo (2009) describes as an act of epistemic disobedience.

The event's title, "Art & Action: Displacing Whiteness in the Arts", intentionally referenced the book Displacing Whiteness, edited by critical whiteness scholar Ruth Frankenburg. Frankenburg's three-part definition of whiteness articulated in the landmark work White

Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness has been frequently cited by scholars since its publication in 1993. Capturing the layered conceptual complexity of the term, Frankenburg (1993) writes,

> First whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a 'standpoint', a place from white people look at ourselves, at others, at society. Third, 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. (p.1)

The panel queried the notion of displacing whiteness as a possibility given the historic, as well as contemporary, intrinsic nature of whiteness to possess and colonise place and space. Each panellist asked critical questions about how, if at all, an arts practice can displace whiteness. Odette Kelada observed that the word "displacing" is one she hears most often in the context of colonial displacing of people from their land, where the term operates as a "euphemisim for genocide and violence." So, in that sense, the term itself enacts and evokes whiteness as whitewashing. Sethembile Msezane opened her remarks by professing, "I don't know if it is possible to displace whiteness. You can make it uncomfortable. You can challenge it". Mariaa Randall articulated her stance as "my life practice is to instil, reiterate, strengthen and focus on blackness, not displace whiteness."

DIALOGUE

The dialogic potential offered by an event such as "Art & Action: Displacing Whiteness in the Arts" is that it presented an opportunity in which the "experienced reality of racism" amid a historical process of objectification, disregard and silencing may shift into the subjects perspective (Kilombra 2010, p. 41). Subject perspective offers not only a shift in view, but also an interrogation of institutional understandings of individual-collective, knowledge and knowledge-making authority. This shift was also an active and conscious stance to position the panellists as knowing subjects, thus seeking to counter the violence of First Nation and Women of Colour have been historically viewed as subjects that must be known and translated through white institutional practices of research and arts (Smith, 2012).In doing so each speaker challenged the binary of arts as academe and industry being knowing/knowledge maker, object/subject, research/researched, artist/participant, everyday/institutional. For example, Mariaa Randall described her dance practice as "not separate from my life practice" and elaborated that "it is a life practice because my life and my art are not, are never, separate. What goes on in Aboriginal Australia obviously has an effect directly on me."

Kilombra (2010) powerfully argues that the experienced realities of racism are only further exacerbated in "public and academic spheres" (p.40). Therefore this article seeks to make integral the dialogic moments of "Displacing Whiteness" as an event that exposes everyday racism as structural racism, and thus experiences of art making, research and living as interconnected racialised experiences. In this paper, we weave through excerpts of the panel conversation that speaks to themes of whiteness, invisibility/visibility, bodies and institutional power in the arts and education. The dialogue moves from speaking about whiteness to moving on from speaking about whiteness as a politics of refusal (Simpson, 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2014), demonstrating creative resistance and the importance of community for artists within and beyond mainstream educational institutions. It is by nature of the speaking voices and source as a live event for a public audience, fragmentary and non-linear in presentation and method. We contend that to create linearity beyond that required to understand the insights, exchanges and moments of reflection by the speakers, would involve activating a problematic assumption in such editing acts of how words are expected to be tidied and in effect "cleaned up." Adhering to dominant academic form and expectation of texts for consumption can re-inscribe whiteness in restoring a "civilising" textual order over the apparent chaos of the verbal and dialogical.

It was a challenge to resist more containment and controlling of the transcript as text, which speaks to the internalisation of expectations of the "article," the "journal," the "reader". It also speaks to how educational institutions, including arts education, are often experienced as sites where artists/students are moulded and pressured into compliant bodies that learn to conform and then to police the tones, methods, curricula, references and desirable outcomes of those that follow them. Aligning with this destabilization of dominant power, Mariaa Randall described, "I want to find out how my body moved without those foreign movements placed upon my body," referring to the colonial perspective of preoccupation of technique within dance practice. Randall instead asserted that it was more important to have movement itself, as well as have Indigenous language present. With this in mind, in place of neat cuts, we use ellipses. The ellipses are a punctuating form that is commonly described in academic feedback as overused or unnecessary. A full stop should suffice. We deliberately and unapologetically overuse this sign of gaps, pauses, jumps, leaps, tangents, breaks, excesses and omissions as our methodology. Ellipses are how we sample from a fluid dynamic conversation on race, expression and art in text without providing answers, resolutions or conclusions.

We acknowledge that in the choices made of what is buried in the ellipses and not visible in print, there are ethical concerns and questions given the dynamics at play of editorial and authorial power – what is relevant to this topic as determined by us and the shape and forms of our own biases are implicated in this text. We also use [ ] to denote an action that is occurring on stage (eg. mannerisms, a clap).

SPEAKERS

Panellists introductions spoke of context, politics, historical considerations, spirituality, the relational, community and thus a holistic personhood and practice.

Tania Cañas

Host and facilitator. She is a Latinx, Salvadoran born, Australian-based artist-researcher working at the intersection of performance and the politics of border imperialism. Referred to as T.

Mariaa Randall

First Nations Australian independent choreographer, teacher, director and dancer. Mariaa was the female choreographer and co-Artistic Director (2016) for Tanderrum Melbourne Festival's official opening ceremony. It is the meeting of the five clans of the Kulin Nation: Wurundjeri, Boon Wurrung, Taungurung, Dja Dja Wurrung and Wadawurrung. Tanderrum is the opening ceremony and Welcome to Country by the First Peoples, the traditional custodians of this land. Mariaa created the performance Divercity, as part of the 2015 Dance Massive; a bi-annual global meeting place to showcase contemporary dance in Melbourne. Divercity shared the many different ways in which Aboriginal languages, movement, paint up and stories differ depending on whose country you are on. Referred to as M.

Odette Kelada

Australian born with English-Irish and Egyptian heritage. Academic in creative writing, her work focuses on voice, gender and race. In collaboration with Noongar artist and scholar Dianne Jones, she designed and teaches the course Racial Literacy at the University of Melbourne. The interdisciplinary course explores race, constructions of Indigeneity and whiteness, and seeks to develop skills for critically engaging, reading and understanding race representation and histories. She guest lecturers as part of the intensive: Working in First Nations Cultural Contexts at Footscray Community Arts Centre , Melbourne Australia . Her novel Drawing Sybylla explored the lives of women writing in Australia. Referred to as O.

Sethembile Msezane

South African performance artist. Her work explores colonial and gender politics in South African acts of public commemoration. In 2015, during the student-led protests of the Rhodes Must Fall Movement, she presented the performance Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell at the removal of the Cecil John Rhodes statue at the University of Cape Town. Previously she performed a series called Public Holiday in which she placed her body in juxtaposition to Cape Town's colonial monuments.
Sethembile was in Melbourne to perform Excerpts from the Past, a performance installation which interrogates colonial landscape, ancestral memory, remembrance and dispossession. Referred to as S.

TRANSCRIPT

M: Gulibul, Gidabul, Bundjalung,Yaegl, [ ], Boon Wurrung , Wurundjeri, [ ]

My name is Margaret Mariaa Randall, I am named after my mum's mum, my dad's mum and my mum.

I'm named after three very, very strong women. I'm an aunt, I'm a sister, I am a daughter, cousin, a finance, I am a niece, I'm a friend, I'm a sister in law, I'm a Goori woman from the far north coast of New South Wales. I reside on the lands of the Dja Dja Wurrung out in Bendigo. I'm a presence, I'm a voice, I'm an artist too.

I'm an artist with a dance practice. A dance practice that is not separate from my life practice. And my life practice is to instil, reiterate, strengthen and focus on blakness[2], not displace whiteness but to empower blakness in what I do. And how I do that, and for me, saying it is a life practice because my life and my art are not, are never, separate. What goes on in Aboriginal Australia obliviously has an effect directly on me. So today, while I talk, my partner is out on country doing repatriation. Friday, two days before, there was a protest for Elijah Doughty, a young man whose lost his life, again at white hands. So for me to kind of sit and to somewhat feel like I dwell in whiteness, I do that and have done that for most of my life. So then for me to try to displace, that is giving power to whiteness and so for me to empower it [blakness] within me and what it is in what I do, it has to be about instilling blakness, instilling Gulibulness, instilling Aboriginalities, instilling a variety of blakness throughout

2 Blak refers specifically to Aboriginal Australia

what it is that I do.

… one project that I've been able to do that is Tanderrum[3] and a given example of this is that I worked with 5 of the language groups from the Kulin nation which was the Dja Dja Wurrung, Woiwurrung, Wadawurrung, Taungurung and Boon Wurrung. And I was able to come in as the female choreographer. There is never one in those kinds of instances, it's male female, and work with them to find ways to bring back links to culture.

And so for me, being an Aboriginal person, it doesn't instantly qualify me to do that job. So in my life I've been able to work in my own community, in other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other wider communities and so that when I do come into something like Tanderrum, I'm not then appropriating Aboriginal culture from far north Queensland or from the Northern Territory - that I'm actually working with the mob down here to actually find ways to re..to find those links back to culture, so that it's a lot closer to them and it's not a kind of version of someone else's…and so finding those tools you know, finding the research … it's not just working with young people, its working with elders , its working with mob that have never danced before, its working with mob that are starting to learn a language, and so for me as well its somewhat of a privilege to be able to be in that place and so to be able to have the skills and the experience to be placed in that environment is pretty – I find quite lucky- but then also there is a roll out effect as well because then that's part of what it is that is my life practice - that you know one day, whether its 25 years from now, whether its 50 years from now, whether its 100 years from now – that someone from my language group from Gidabul, from Gulibul, from Bundjalung, from Yaegl, is sitting here and speaking fluently in language whether you understand them or not.

So that's my PhD. That's going to be my life practice. I think I can talk quite a lot about that but then when we were doing Tanderrum, one of the Elders, Aunty Fay Carter, a Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta woman who turned 82 that year, said and reminded us all of the importance of an event such as Tanderrum.

So Tanderrum means ceremony in Kulin language and so it's basically the opening of the Melbourne Festival –

3 https://2016.festival.melbourne/events/tanderrum/#.XDBkz1wzaM8

and she basically said that in her 82 years that now she is starting to learn her language and that when she was a kid she was never able to do that and so now that when I find myself presenting stuff on stage, language has to be present, movement has to be present – that is derived from where I come from, so that I'm not necessarily that focused on how well my technique is 'cause I want that to be stripped away, because I want to find out how my body moved without those foreign movements being placed upon my body.. that I want to look at the cycle of ceremony and the way in which it happens and how I put that into space, into place – without explaining it to anybody and that the work that I do create is now focused on blak Aboriginal ideologies, methodologies and philosophies and so I don't intend to explain what it is that I create.

And if you don't get it, it's not my fault because I have and we continue to be educating people about who we are, who our cultures are, and what it is that they encompass. But there has never been a way of people taking that on board and going 'oh shit' I can learn that myself. I can learn about France, why can't I learn about Aboriginal Australia? So you know what I mean? I think that's where that for me it becomes empowering, because in that process I'm basically getting the wheels turning. And so then it's not just that are these spots. That they're kind of this continuum of things that becomes a bigger picture, becomes a bigger movement. So it's not just me creating a project for the sake of being an artist. Its actually this- ok I want this to accomplish this- I want this to accomplish and continue to accomplish this [hand gestures] and so then by those 100 years all those things are closer or somewhere near what it is that I want it to be. Yeh. [clap hands together] so yeh. So that's me. [laughs]

[applause]

T: Thank you…Sethembile…How does your practice displace whiteness?

S: I don't know if it is possible to displace whiteness. You can make it uncomfortable. You can challenge it but yeah…My name is Sethembile Msezane. I am from South Africa. I live in Cape Town but I was brought up in Johannesburg and born in KwaZulu-Natal. So being from these three cities I've had kind of a broad experience of what it is to be like as a young South African and a lot of my work speaks about the black female body and memorialised public spaces and I guess it all started in 2013 when I just finished university and I was now

working and I felt a mutinous in my own existence. I felt like even though I was a part, a functioning member of society, that my voice somehow did not matter or that was I not seen at all.

So on 24 September, which is Heritage Day in South Africa, where we celebrate our cultural identity, I decided that I was going to perform myself and perform my cultural identity which is being Zulu. So on that day, I performed in various spaces which involved standing on a white plinth, statuesque and I was wearing my Zulu regalia that I was wearing on my coming of age ceremony the previous year. Something happened when I was in various spaces, where I experienced people for the first time noticing that I was actually physically there and addressing me, even though I was not speaking to them.

I will tell you more about it later, but where it became most poignant for me to be in a public space, dressed in my Zulu regalia, on a plinth, was opposite Parliament in front of the Louis Botha statue, which is an Afrikaner Nationalist remembrance of Louis Botha as a former statesman and something else, can't remember. So there I started to understand my practice as something that was recognising that there's an absence of the black female body in the memorialised landscape in terms of statues, monuments and even architecture at times.

So after that, I started performing on public holidays, political ones. Christmas didn't really work. I would embody women who had the same symbolism as the history I was talking about, the space that I was talking about and things that I just wanted to draw out. So my practice has been a lot about remembering, acknowledging and highlighting women's existence within our history, as well as mythology, mostly in South Africa, but also branching out within the broader continent….

O: So my name's Odette Kelada… I work as a lecturer at the University of Melbourne…

so I firstly, who am I, I was born in Melbourne and my mother is white. She was born in London, but all the family are Irish, from Tipperary. My father is Egyptian, from Alexandria, Coptic. Growing up in Melbourne, I had no idea about race, not thinking about it. …

Then I met an amazing woman who is here today and I'd like to acknowledge her, Dianne Jones, who is an incredible artist, subverting white colonial histories. In our conversations and even just in walking around spaces, I realised and I learnt that this space changes so much depending on the bodies - sounds so obvious - the bodies that we're in and I would see the way that people would look at her and treat her as an Aboriginal woman and the way they would treat me, because I know whiteness, I was brought up in it…

We do have a course, called Racial Literacy, Indigeneity and Whiteness. I spend time predominantly talking to students who are 'discovering' that they are white. Probably we will get into that, but the journey that they're on is one that I know from the inside and that's what I think makes something happen in those spaces, which is difficult to describe, but pretty powerful.

… I think something like this topic, displacing whiteness, I think there's a lot we could say about the title.

Displacing, I normally use - I hear that word in regards to displacing other peoples, as a euphemism for genocide and violence, so that word is inherently white to me, when I hear something like that in this context. So I'm interested now in the creative ways to come at this, in creative arts, to counter…

T: I guess going off these introductions, the fact that in particular in this context, institutional whiteness, citizenship, it's everywhere and there are different ways of reading whiteness, depending on your social positionality and I think that's another sort of important thing to mention. So whether it's a lack of visibility from reflexivity from the self or whether you inherently feel it every single day, even though you might not call it whiteness per se and then come to that understanding after or through a process.

So I wanted to pass on, I guess specifically when we were talking about your practice, you mentioned methodologies and I think you gave us some really interesting examples around you said there's more than one person involved. So what does that mean in terms of how power is situated different in a creative process? As well the thing you mentioned around improvisation not seen as like, oh we just improv'd this on the side, how you really value that as part of a process and being. Could you speak to that a little bit more?

M: So in regard to something like Tanderrum it's obviously the elders hold - there is the hierarchy, whether people believe it or not, the elders kind of hold the hierarchy. But then in this kind of instance where knowledge is - there's the cultural knowledge and then there's the artistic knowledge and where those two things stand.

So for me, coming in, yeah, so it was kind of like a very, very massive kind of matrix of how to negotiate stuff. You've got obviously because I'm not from down here and working with mob that are from down here and then you've got elders and then you've got their community, majority are the grandmothers, you've got their sons and daughters and their nieces and nephews and their grandchildren there as well. So then kind of placing yourself in the context of being a performance is very different of going your place within that and how you navigate that is, again, very different as well. So when you talk about the improvisation stuff, I think it was your yarning more about one of the works that premiered here actually as part of Dance Massive in March, is called Divercity[4] which is a work I created with Kuku Yalanji woman, Henrietta Baird and Biripi Ngugi woman, Ngioka Bunda-Heath…

…

So when I created Divercity, that's what I wanted to have in the space, so I had - there was the yarn that was happening and that there was that relationship that was happening between the dances. But if Henrietta got totally tired, she could just go and sit on someone's lap and go, hey, how are you doing? So that's part of her personality and so there was kind of that - yeah, so there was no kind of disconnection, no passiveness in that regard to it and so that basically kept them on their toes as well, because then they had to be aware of what was going on in the audience and how they could potentially change it if they wanted to.

…

M: … the dramaturgic of the work was based around cultural protocols and so basically that determined how the work rolled out. So for me, it was - so as I done when I began talking, I acknowledged where I'm from and then I acknowledged on whose country I'm on. So that was then decided, like whenever the dancers walked in, they

4 http://www.artshouse.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Divercity-by-Mariaa-Randall-Show-Program.pdf

acknowledged where they were from and then when they stepped into the space, they acknowledged whose country they were on.

So then the way in which we set that conversation up was that so once they enter, then the work is basically about how we navigate as Aboriginal women going to someone else's country and the idea of how we carry country. So carrying country, where that's language, whether that's movement, there's definitely we carry humour through our bodies and from our country. There's one joke that I can tell someone that the other mob just won't know, or there is a general humour that everyone kind of knows about.

So then it became so as the performers on stage, Henrietta's the oldest, so she's the senior, so she enters the space first and then Ngioka comes in and then there is a space of giving each of the dancers that time of acknowledging what country they come from and what they're carrying and then how a conversation starts between the two, so then how that kind of builds over time.

T: I think what's really great about what you shared now about your process is that those aren't auxiliary things to a core process, they are the core process and that in and of itself as a site of resistance even, that you spoke about.

M: Yeah, yeah.

T to S: If you could share a little bit more about your practice in terms of some monuments and public space, would you say it's a form or re-writing history or making visible certain histories? How would you situate your work?

S: Yeah, so I'm not sure if it's necessarily re-writing just because it's very much a part of history, it's just not official history[5] . I am interested in women who have been marginalised and vilified within history and mythology. So within the first kind of segment of my performances, which was the public holiday series, I found myself I guess trying to acknowledge the existence and looking at them within a space that had already formed around me as a young person and saying, but wait, hold on, I cannot find my own identity within this

5 Something Mignolo (2011) in The darker side of western modernity articulates as the modernity/colonial discourse that histories are present and interconnected but one becomes official and the other, as the book title suggests, becomes is the other side of the coin, the darker, silenced, side of western modernity.

space. So how do we begin to rectify that or to even speak about it? Performance as a medium was the best way that I could kind of counter these thoughts.

… with all of these kinds of public holidays, there is a significance behind them which roots back to the injustices that happened during apartheid and some of the political public holidays changed in name so that it could suit the ideals of a more inclusive democracy, I suppose.

So for instance, Human Rights Day now was called Sharpeville Day before and people knew exactly what Sharpeville Day was, when you said it. It was a day when policemen killed people in the township in Sharpeville and people, yeah, they died. But now it's Human Rights Day, which makes it a big ambiguous.

…

There's a lot of racial tensions in South Africa. We haven't resolved a lot of things. There's class tensions as well and now we're having problems in which we - people are calling it xenophobia, but it's actually Afri-phobia because it's a type of foreigner that is being rejected, killed and harmed, which is African. So we have all of these issues that I kind of just wanted to speak about through using my body and speaking about women's histories as well, because we've always been engaged within our society, politically but even within the home…

I think I kind of just moved into domestic interiors as well to find who I am as a person because I feel that anyone does this, before they leave the house, you either look in the mirror or you prepare yourself for the day. Sometimes the mental preparation is not necessarily, oh I'm going to work, I need to draft these emails, but it's more subconscious. You're like, wow, I am going to a space now where my boss is going to not listen to what I have to say because I'm a woman, they're not going to listen to what I have to say because they don't see me, they see no value in my views, but my male colleague, or a white woman, will say the exact same thing and it will hold more ground.

So yeah, I guess that's where I was in the beginning with trying to be really present and say, I'm here, I'm here, I'm here and this is the reason why I'm here and see me, not me necessarily, but see black women. Now I'm in a space where I'm in a domestic environment and I'm saying, no, but I do

exist, my people exist and we don't have to explain how, we're present and it should be enough, but within the society that we live in, it isn't enough.

T: Yeah and I think what we're beginning to see and some of us know innately, is that practice and research, it's all one in the same. You're constantly doing the double reading, the triple reading especially at the intersections that we find ourselves in. There's a particular quote by a Chicana theorist called Hurtado that she said in the late '80s and she said that women of colour specifically are like urban guerrilla fighters (Aída Hurtado,1989). That's how we have to fight and to navigate every moment, every site.

So Odette, you're in a very interesting site, very problematic site. You work in academia and research and then thinking about how creativity works in that and if you can speak a little bit more about the course and what is it like trying to speak to these things at the heart of the beast, so to speak.

O: … if I've realised that I've been colonised mentally and on deep levels, how - what to do next, how to unravel, how to unwind. That is really tied in with decoding practises and understanding language and understanding histories. Because of that, even though these are words - language, history, representation. They are so much what is creating for me my realities, what I'm standing on.

If I think a word or a concept is what it is, but it's actually not, then I'm just going around being fooled by that for a bit and I'm not going to be able to decode it or find any grounding there. I'm thinking of a specific word, for example, because this is where I start then, with the course - okay, let's take something, like a word, because my background is literature and I do really love words, so race, the word race and we'll do this then as a class.

It's a modern invention, it's not real and there's no biological truth to it. The fact that when I share this with a classroom in Australia in 2017 that some of the students have never heard that before, … called the epistemologies of ignorance (Shannon Sullivan & Nancy Tuana, 2007) how ignorance itself is a tool and keeping people ignorant is such a powerful thing to do…

So then that will change the conversation both for me internally, but also then for the class, because now we're

using the word race, but we're all using it; it's shifted, because it's not just some word where we think if I use that word, I know what I'm saying and you know what you're saying. No, it's actually rooted now, we've got the roots. Then we could look at a word like white and whiteness and that has its own history. That only emerges into print, gets written down in the - I think it's around the mid-1600s and it's through property law and it's about giving - creating this idea of the wages of whiteness it's called, so giving capital through being white in order to break up alliances between working class indentured servants and slaves in America, so all of these histories are hitting us today when we use these words.

If you throw out something like this, the word Caucasian, this is my final one, the word Caucasian is actually from Johann Blumenbach, white scientist, picks up a skull on the Caucasus Mountains, meant to be where the origin of white people come from and says, this is the most beautiful skull, this is where the word Caucasian comes from. It turns out to be a female skull, young female, who is believed to have died from a venereal disease and most likely to have been part of the slave trade of women in that period.

It is a deeply layered history we stand on. All of this will be coded over, all of this will be mystified and instead, in this country, we'll just talk about race…nobody really knows anymore what we're talking about. So that's the start, just the very first start, to me, then of the practice of attempting to unwind or decode, if it's possible, some of the impacts of being colonised internally.

…

T: Research as a tool, to begin to unpack how research then became an oppressive tool in and of itself is really interesting and probably quite role modelling to students when you [inaudible]. But also in saying that, how it is innate, it's everywhere, it's every day, it's every moment, as I mentioned and that's kind of what I want to pick to talk about for the next bit, is that those every day moments and we talk about doing a performance in space, we talk about this talk here, but it's actually those moments that happen beforehand that are sites of struggle in and of themselves.

So just to give you a quick example, in my practise, I was writing a book chapter that's - and I specifically in my practise and in my methodology always write we and us when I talk about [theatre] sites of resistance for community that I identify with. Then one of the feedbacks that the editor

gave me, the number one feedback was you're assuming that the readers of this are of the refugee and asylum seeker. How is that? Well you're assuming they're not. So even to say we and even to say us is a fight, like these seemingly simple things. [Speaking to M] So I remember we had a conversation about your first chapter in your masters pieces and even having to capitalise the H, like can you speak to a little bit more about those daily annoyances, the struggles?

M: Yes I can [laughter] how much time are we allowed to actually - yeah, so during - when I done my master's thesis, I was basically wanting to hold history accountable, so I basically capitalised it and turned it into a - when I spoke about it, I spoke as him being a man. That just became quite problematic with my assessors and kind of going, I don't get what you mean. Because I'd also quite for a lot of my first chapter quoted quite frequently and so it was like obviously it was I'm wanting history speaking, so let him talk, so I'm not going to try and quote and what is it, paraphrase anything to make it sound any better.

So it just became a bit of a struggle and I said, well what if I write, I'm going to hold my tongue and I'll let history speak, does that work? They were like, oh okay, yeah, it does, it does. So it was just such a small thing, but for me, yeah, it was - at least if it's a thing or it's a person, it's right here, right now, I can actually talk to it as if I'm having a conversation, whereas if it's way back then, I can't and so that's, just by capitalising H, turned it to a person, so that just became very problematic, which I don't think it should have, yeah.

S: Yeah, well, academia. So throughout my masters, I'd have phrases like my people, my people and my supervisors were just kind of like, you have to specific, you can't just say your people. I'm like, obviously I'm talking about black people, you know? They're like, no but it's not so - not everyone knows that. But also, my people was a spiritual my people as well and I found that I had to explain a lot of things that I didn't want to necessarily explain and when it came to speaking about the spirituality in my work, I really froze up and really didn't know how to engage with that at all, because, well, education system in South Africa is still quite Eurocentric… and spirituality, African spirituality or whatever you want to call it, is still kind of a grey area. South Africa is a Christian society mostly and the books that I wanted to read up on the ideas I was having and what I was experiencing and feeling weren't really accessible and available. So I found myself - it was a good challenge in the

end because then I had to become more reflective, speak to my elders about it and I found other books that kind of somewhat linked to what I was speaking about, but I'm not quite sure if that base - they found the holistic-ness of what I was feeling when I would be performing or I would be creating a work.

Animism has been now a term that - or new animism, rather, has been a term that I kind of identify with in my practice, but yeah and also in the beginning of my masters, you know, I was like, I'm interested in black women's histories and those of which are also mythology, that are not so much based on what I've read before, which is quite negative and very marginal….

So I was told to go read more on some of these women I was interested in and I just ignored my supervisors. Something amazing happened because during that time I was also trying to figure out what my masters was about, it was called Kwasuka Sukela: Reimagined Bodies of a (South African) 90s Born [Black] Woman (Team, 2017) During that time, there were talks about the Rhodes statue being removed and I was excited of course because my previous series paid attention to public statutory and how it's so dominant within white colonial and Afrikaner national identity. But I wasn't focusing so much on that anymore, I was quite reflective and within myself and I started having dreams about a bird, that I hadn't told anyone about during that time.

The next meeting came and they were like, right, so what did you learn, what did you read? I was just kind of like, so I hear the Rhodes statue is coming down and we're just candidly talking about the statue and not really as a part of my practice or this meeting, but more as a way to divert them from what they wanted me to do. Then they were like, oh yeah and it's coming down today. She's like, wait, what? We have a meeting today, I mean there's a mass meeting about the statue. They're like, yeah, there was a meeting with council and they decided that it's coming down today.

So then I had to postpone my meeting because I had already decided in that moment that this woman that I was conjuring inside my head and who had come to me was going to be there when he was going to be removed. I think that had I been in a position where I listened to my supervisors and not that I'm being disrespectful of them or anything, they were amazing throughout the whole time, but had I listened to the direction that they gave me, my work probably wouldn't

have been where it is now and I probably wouldn't have been ready for that moment when the statue was being removed, because in making some of the elements that would be a part of the performance, I was almost done, but not quite and it took me a long time to get to that point. So academia can be great, but it can be a problem as well.

Figure 1: Sethembile Msezane's performance: Chapungu – The Day Rhodes Fell, 2015[6]

T: Yeah, there's a really good article called Fight the Tower (Kieu-Linh Caroline Valverde, 2013) - and it specifically problematises around academia and sort of how to define site, see resistance and navigating, because what we're seeing here is these happen and these are the ethical and political decisions you make every day about practise, about what words you use, about what's capitalised. They're everywhere. Did you want to speak a little bit more to maybe theory and how theory situates itself in this context?

O: … one of the things about whiteness is that we're using these words in very general terms, but if it was a racialised theorist, we would use that and that would be signalled and that would be labelled. But academia can just exist as academia, but what we are talking about is whiteness and theory, what

6 http://www.sethembile-msezane.com/kwasukasukela/

was I guess the conversation we were having and I'm really interested to hear your response and learn more and keep having a dialogue, because I was starting to feel like it was being used in a very exclusive way and on many levels.

So sometimes there is a sense that it - institutions don't even need to be in any way explicitly racist because the very makeup, because from their very roots of how they came in, was - is the core model, will exclude by what it is and how it runs, it is in itself, but it can appear totally invisible. That can create such a sense and I think what gets me is how much insecurity and the impact and the confidence of a very cool people who come in to work in this space because it can feel like they don't belong and I have conversations with very, very bright, amazing people. It's like, this is not my space, this space doesn't belong, I don't look like this space, I don't see myself in this space.
So I'm wondering, I've been wondering about theory being used as one of the kind of neutralised mechanisms to do it, because of who is this canon of theorists who get seen as worthy, who's even taught… why is my curriculum so white movement? …

But your response also, if I could throw it back over, was really interesting …

S: Can I just interject here? With these institutions not really reflecting the students sometimes who are within that institution, so in the performance that I just did, Excerpts from the Past[7] , there's a part where there's a sound clip and there's a student at Rhodes University who says, I want the people to know what happens behind those walls, right? Then the policeman, well some other things happens, he's like, [ ] you know and then there's another student who's like, are you going to shoot us now? So [ ] and then they start shooting. So for me, that moment, wow, was so powerful and so poignant because having been within an academic institution for my second degree now, you know, I felt like you go in there a whole person and then the institution unpicks at your identity and it's like having these bullets coming at you, you know and that's exactly what happens behind those walls, you know?

They strip at your identity and they strip at your selfhood that when you come out, you have some students so - during the movement, the Fees Must Fall and the Rhodes Must

7 https://www.artshouse.com.au/events/excerpts-from-the-past/

Fall movement, a lot of students realised that they were having shared experiences of covert, mostly covert, but also overt racism within the institution. Some students left the institution not really knowing who they are, or assimilating because it's just easier and some students had mental illness, some sort of mental illness, by the time they left the institution, which was quite interesting as well.

T: … this is something I spoke about during the Women of the World conference which is theory has always been part of us. It became institutionalised, it became externalised from the body and my argument was that it wasn't something that we were then supposed to do, but it was supposed to be done to us. So it became part of a dichotomy and part of [pathologising] and [violent] dichotomies.

This realisation is just growing up quite politicised and one example I give is that we're walking our dog, Tito, a little Chihuahua dog and I was like, oh he walks a bit crooked, maybe I'm pulling this. Then my dad was like, what you did just there was theorise (Cañas, 2018) I was like, that's what academics do. So it's always been everywhere, so the idea that it's not for us is actually serving whiteness.

So let's open it up to questions… Before I do, I just wanted to make a point about reflecting about your social position and positionality outside of this space and to think about that before talking. …

Question from audience member:

… why we keep on going back to these institutions, even though they are such harmful spaces... making work that goes against the institution is a trap and sometimes I really feel like that…

S: … In my abstract, I did mention that I'm making this work because I think it sits outside of the canon and I don't understand why that is. I'm not doing it to kind of reveal subjugated knowledge, which is what a lot of white academics do, but to place these histories within mainstream history, because it is important. I think by someone alluding to it being a trap, that is in essence trying to silence these histories, these views that are so present and yet are muted within our society, so yeah… a lot of other mob that have come before, that their defiance of the system has kind of made me come in even more defiant of actually going, yeah, I'm going to speak up louder and yeah, I'm going to jump up

and down and yeah, you are going to see me and I don't give a fuck, you know? It's just, yeah, lack of - because it's either that or it is shrinking into the corner and that's not an option. …

Question:

…So how has being black or a woman of colour affected you outside of other - within other arts institutions other than academia? I guess that's what I'm asking.

S: Oh okay. Well my work exists within a public and a private setting in which the - most of my performances have been in public spaces and that's outside of the institution, I suppose. But then the work goes into galleries as well, which is another kind of institution where there's a different kind of audience, not sure every day passer-by. I suppose my work has always been unapologetic.

I remember being in a competition once where I knew I was not going to win, I knew it, but they always present you with this kind of glossed over, no, but it could be you, like you've got a possibility, your work is really strong. But truth be told, it was a big institution and sometimes within these institutions, white supremacy is still within the cracks and within the clientele that institution kind of exists for. So to accept a person like me, …who stands boldly in public spaces, as a black woman and institutions that were previously catered for white people and saying that I am here in present, that my people have a story to tell and it is not the one of you conquering me, I mean which white institution is going to give a prize to that? You know? It's like, I knew, but I was just like, I'll just go for the free food and stuff.

[Laughter]
…

M: So one thing, for me, one of the things I've started to do a lot more is actually be conscious of who I'm making the work for and that is for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander peoples. So in an instance here is the work Divercity that I created, it was actually - it premiered here as part of Dance Massive and then was actually part of YIRRAMBOI[8] which was six weeks later. So the audience were very, very, very different and so it was nerve wracking in premiering a work in the context of an international context, the majority

8 First Nations Arts Festival https://yirramboi.net.au/

of white people being in the audience, but then taking it to YIRRAMBOI basically was my biggest indicator that's where I'm going and that's what I'm doing and I'm on the right track.

Throughout the process and with a lot of the stuff that I do, intend to do in the future, is that I've done up the little blurbs about my work and then had it sent back going, have you thought about this? I was going, no, no, no, those are my words, you use that, there's no editing. This is what I - like even to that point of going, what's the music that people are coming in, I was playing TLC, all that kind of stuff, because I was building that kind of thing. So it's not just I'm being conscious of what it is that I'm saying that's out there that's my language, it's not someone else's that editing and putting it grammatically together, what image it is.

The majority of what I'm kind of starting to do now is that thing of a lot of my identity is and the way I look has been kind of defined or judged back to me from the outside, so I'm changing my image from me and I'm not giving anyone else the power to do that. So that is like - and I'm looking at that throughout all the things that I do, whether that's teaching with kids or whatever and so that the language with which I use and all that kind of stuff, so it's all part of that, so it's not - yeah, I'm not just conforming again to this template that I should be part of.

…

T: I wanted to offer some concluding sort of thoughts around what each of the panellists have said and even some of the questions coming up around, you know, if we're talking about a context of society, if we're talking about fields of representation and interpretation being systematically unequal then when we talk about exchange or sites of resistance, it's not about an exchange with the idea of equal, I can sit next to the person here, I can sit next to the person there. Because with the idea that the exchange is equal, it's actually not going to be because the field itself is not, the institute of academia is not. They exist in very politicised spaces, so how do these power dynamics change through a practice, through an intervention, through a glitch, through a decoding.

Resistance, I guess and what we've seen by each of the speakers, whether speaking from within whiteness, around whiteness, with whiteness, is that resistance doesn't look

like the shiny way of resistance all the time, these everyday moments are a protest. So thank you very much.

"Displacing Whiteness in the Arts" offered a rare opportunity to have an all female public panel discuss the challenges of everyday resistance practice and strategies necessary when living, learning, working and creating within contexts of institutional whiteness. The panellists spoke about this navigation as a tangible, contemporary and daily reality. The space highlighted how such navigation differs across contexts, however, more importantly how these struggles are interlinked. All four speakers, including the facilitator, spoke from the intersections of being, thinking and practice. From the opening introductions, speakers described themselves as family members, learners and offered their socio-positionalities rather than listing degrees, career positions and awards. This shift destabilized expectations of what constitutes "expert" and moved away from values of western academia and who has the right to knowledge production, authority and dominance.

Importantly, identifying socio-positionality allowed for exploration of the self and lens within critical theory, and by extension, opened up nuanced situated approaches to critique theory via embodied and lived realities. Listening to voices emphasising the interconnected nature of community, research and art works to resist the dichotomy of colonial approaches that seek to compartmentalize disciplines and art practices as separate. The dialogic moments in "Displacing Whiteness in the Arts" challenged linear frameworks by asserting that fragmentation, ellipses, gaps and pauses heard through the transcription of live events. These are necessary moments and valued elements for actively examining pluralistic knowledges and genuine exchanges. Such breaks in expectation and assumptions interrupt preconceived notions of knowledge transferral exemplifying alternative strategies for giving space to the unheard and the unspeakable.

Mariaa Randall describes the example of Tanderrum in which she navigates Elder knowledges, cultural knowledges and artistic knowledges differently; as a "massive kind of matrix" one needs to negotiate. Even as institutional whiteness attempts to "strip at your identity and they strip at your selfhood" as described by Sethembile Msezane, there are still opportunities for resistance. Moments such as capitalizing 'H' in history as Mariaa demonstrated, asserting the spiritual practice of "People" as Sethembile spoke about, and an alternative "we" that is not whiteness as the facilitator argued trouble, subvert and counter white norms. Perhaps therefore, as Mariaa asserts, the more important question to ask is not how one can displace whiteness but rather critically ask oneself, "who is this for?" This question invites a decolonial shift of marginal and centre,

offering creative options and a sense of community responsibility. "Who is this for?" is not necessarily displacing whiteness – which as the frame for the question, keeps whiteness as the focus - but reframing the question itself towards actively centering non-whiteness.

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Reflecting on a Paradigm of Solidarity? Moving from niceness to dismantle whiteness in art education

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ABSTRACT

This essay uses personal reflections interwoven with critical analyses of whiteness to explore how whiteness is upheld and perpetuated in art education. Through a discussion of the pervasiveness of white-centered cultural values that maintain the power of white ways of being, the author argues that the field must seek different values and practices. Drawing on the work of several anti-racism educators, this essay highlights several values and practices that, if embraced, might move the field of art education towards a paradigm of solidarity.

Keywords: whiteness, white cultural values, art education

A note to the reader: As you read this essay, you'll notice several unconventional notes in the text. I have included the comments of one of the reviewers as they provide important markers of the ways in which the very whiteness I am trying to write about seeps through in my writing. Although I admit an initial defensive reaction to some of the reviewers notes, after a little time I realized that these comments generously offered me a chance to think more critically about my own writing and thinking. A few months after the initial reviews, I am grateful for the generosity of the reviewer's comments; they have encouraged me to reach for the kind of humility necessary for white people like me to learn how to hold. With this in mind, I have included my own thoughts in reaction to the reviewers' comments (demarcated with an MD) in an effort to make visible my own processing of these important critiques. I hope that in trying to make my missteps visible, and in grappling with them publicly, it might help other writers see how whiteness shapes every aspect of our collective work.

That's so nice!

It's the end of an anti-racism workshop that my colleague, Keonna Hendrick and I have just facilitated for a group of docents in a large art museum. As usual, we are greeted by several participants who come up to tell us how great the session was and to politely thank us

for our time and preparation. And as usual, our collegial conversation is peppered with teasing comments about being New Yorkers ("headed back to the subway—hope it's working today!") or about the inclement weather ("so hot! so cold!") or about how cold the galleries were so we all needed scarves to keep us warm ("what a lovely one, where did you get it?") or about our excitement about the creative programming for an upcoming exhibition ("what a fantastic idea to involve the public!"). We laugh and smile. We exchange business cards. We hug. We thank everyone profusely for engaging in the work of anti-racism and proclaim faith in their ability to carry on without us.

I think about these moments often as my colleague and I head home. Each time there is a similar pattern, a comfortable repetition to the performance of gratitude at the end of a workshop. I don't mean to suggest here that the gratitude here is not genuine, as I truly believe it is, I merely note that there is a specific way of offering and receiving appreciation and feedback that is unique to museums—and more broadly arts education. There is much celebration and, for lack of a more robust word, niceness in these interactions. When I speak to colleagues in other domains—the sciences, technology, or engineering, for example—they often describe a different form of post-presentation communication, one with less small-talk and scarf-compliments. Sometimes they cut straight to the chase with biting criticism; other times they jump immediately into comparisons about upcoming grant deadlines. Certainly, this is not surprising. We know that each domain has its own culture—its own way of interacting, of behaving professionally, of even defining what that professionalism looks like. We assume someone is an architect by the style of their glasses or a tech entrepreneur by how often they consult their phones.

In art education, I've noticed that we are often guided by a code of composed niceness; when we greet each other, we smile, we cheer each other on, we compliment, and we make small talk about art, travel, the claimed busy-ness of life. But recently, I've started to wonder about the unspoken codes and performances of our field. Although I certainly wouldn't want to give up the sense of kindness I have often felt, I've been listening closer to colleagues who tell a different story, who do not experience interactions in art education the same way I do. I've listened as colleagues have shared how the code of composed niceness has often turned a cold shoulder to their perspectives and their very existence.[1] And I've started to see it in

1 I realize that non-white cultures can certainly exhibit this kind of niceness, however, they typically do not have access to the same levers of power as white people. Here, I'm trying to pinpoint a particular kind of cultural communication that people point to as a form of censorship and exclusion. Akin to DiAngelo's concept of "White Fragility" this niceness can be a common individual personality trait to be sensitive or fragile, however as a cultur-

glimmers myself—how the very niceness I've always embraced might actually be harming people. Now let's be clear, these unspoken codes—the cultural values and practices of arts education—are specifically harming our colleagues and students who are not identified as white in our society.[2] Something is amiss here; and it's definitely not nice.

This reflective essay is my attempt to start examining the cultural values and practices of my own work with an eye towards unraveling the ways in which I am upholding a culture that maintains white power. In this essay, I reflect on how my current cultural practices maintain whiteness and try to imagine a different set of cultural values that might help me turn towards solidarity (and away from whiteness and racism). Mostly I write this essay to speak to the white people in the field of art education (and we are plentiful), though I hope that many people who do not identify as white will find value in naming what they likely already know to be true: that our field is dominated by specific white cultural values. Hopefully, there will be something in here that supports a collective dialogue about what we want to do about this. I realize already that this work is a flawed and problematic attempt; but it's where I am at today. And it comes, thanks in part, because of an invitation to engage more deeply in concepts of whiteness in art education; an invitation, I hope to accept in my writing, teaching, and daily being.

Side story: Reflecting on an Invitation

On the flight home from the 2018 Art Education Research Institute, I typed so furiously on my laptop that my fingers ached. In one of the final sessions, Dr. Joni B. Acuff, Dr. Amelia Kraehe, Dr. Michelle Bae-Dimitriadis, Dr. B. Stephen Carpenter, II, Dr. Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, and Dr. Sunny Spillane (in absentia) offered the audience of almost entirely white researchers a generous gift: they invited us all to think critically about how whiteness shapes our field. While many of us are taught to conclude our academic presentations with calls to action of this sort, I name this specific invitation as a gift because it was offered from an esteemed group of colleagues who courageously recalled the many times in which their white colleagues have failed to value them as scholars and people, who have persevered with

al mode of communication shared by many groups of white professional arts educators, it has more damaging affects. Such is the conundrum of whiteness!

2 Note: They are also harming our queer, transgender, and gender non-conforming colleagues and students as well, however, in this essay I am focusing primarily on the lens of racial categories. This is not to say that these categories don't intersect and overlap, but for purposes of a short essay, I'm asking the reader to bear with me as I make the problematic move of pulling out one layer of our identities to examine it more closely.

humanity in a field that regularly fails to acknowledge, let alone try to change patterns of racism, and who still, that morning, trusted the audience enough to invite us all (yet again) to work in solidarity against racism. Risking both professional and personal vulnerability, they trusted that maybe their invitation would (this time) be accepted.

Reviewing my frantic mid-air notes in response to this invitation, I'm struck by one line in particular: "In my white body I both represent/embody oppression and contain the potential to reject/resist this embodied oppression." In other words, as a person in a body that is seen and valued as white in our society, I move through the world insulated by a cultural belief in whiteness that protects me. The very existence of my white body is a visual reminder of the cultural power of whiteness—a power maintained by the control of and violence enacted upon brown, black, and indigenous bodies. No matter how friendly, how nice I try to be, my body conveys a history of oppression from the vantage point of power (Yancy, 2015; Alcoff, 2006). And yet, when the scholars trusted their colleagues with an invitation to dismantle white supremacist ideologies, I remembered something else. Alongside the ways in which I will always embody the very same racist ideologies I hope to destroy, I also contain the *potential* to resist this oppression. We all do;** the trick is to recognize our specific roles and responsibilities within this resistance—roles and responsibilities shaped by our racial identities.

> *****Reviewer 71:*** *Is this we a reference to people or white people? What about the "we" in the following para? Please clarify.*
>
> ***MD:*** *How quickly I fall into the trap of the supposedly inclusive "we." I was consciously trying to avoid it, but only made it a few pages in before I fell back on it. Here, the we upholds whiteness by clouding out the multitude of voices and perspectives contained within this pronoun. In using "we" here, I nominate myself as the spokesperson for everyone—and my views are certainly not shared by everyone.*

Although we are often taught that many ideas and ways of being are mutually exclusive, this is rarely the case in reality. In countless indigenous cultures and in queer studies, we hear stories that illustrate how we can hold multiple truths—even seemingly contradictory ones—within us at the same time (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, 1981). It is possible to be both the source of oppression and to have the potential to work against it at the same time. The process might not be pretty or easy, but it is possible (Frankenburg, 1996; Aaneraud, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018). Many people already know what it means to live within this complexity, to live with what Du Bois (1903/1969) famously termed a "double-consciousness" (p.45). Certainly the scholars on that panel did. So, when they invited a room of predominantly white-bodied art education researchers to join them in an analysis of racism in our

field, they knew they were challenging many of us to think beyond how we've been taught to see the world (and ourselves). I believe they were asking us to honestly recognize the ways in which we uphold a *culture of whiteness* in our scholarship and teaching, causing harm to marginalized people—an awareness that would likely pull the rug out from many of our white feet, destabilizing our sense of who we are and who we could be. But, I also believe their invitation was also asking us to *join* them in deconstructing the very essence of whiteness, to participate in imagining new ways of teaching art. In this invitation, I believe that they were appealing to my/our potential to hold this multiplicity central while stepping into new paradigm of solidarity. In other words, to be able to work towards the destruction of the white power I embody while simultaneously recreating a world no longer dominated by whiteness. This reflective essay is my attempt (as a white person seeking to upend my own power) to heed their call.

Some background: Terminology, givens, and positionality

Much has been written about definitions of racism, whiteness, and positionality (i.e. Tatum, 1997; DiAngelo, 2012; hooks, 1992; Crenshaw, 1991; Moraga, C., & Anzaldúa, 1981) so I will not go deeply into these terms and ideas in this essay. That said, I offer a few brief descriptions of the ideas upon which this essay stands. These concepts are based heavily on the literature cited in the bibliography as well as several online resources such as Racial Equity Tools (racialequitytools.org) and Dismantling Racism (dismantlingracism.org).

Race is socially constructed: As a society, we give meaning to the color of our skin; there is no biological definition of race. Since the Enlightenment, race as a concept has been used to rank some people (those with paler shades of skin) as superior to others (those with browner shades of skin). This essay focuses on how race is socially constructed in the United States; in other parts of the world, the social construction of race takes on different forms.

Whiteness shapes our realities: The belief that people with pale skin color (who we typically refer to as white) are superior affects how we see ourselves and each other. When we value one group of people over others, we often tend to uphold their cultural practices as superior as well. When we talk about whiteness, we are typically talking about a system of values, beliefs, and practices that shape our attitudes and behaviors. Because we are all raised in a world that ranks white people as better than others, we are all raised with a view of whiteness as right-ness (even if we don't actively notice it).

Whiteness is inherently a signifier of violent racial categories that are used to maintain the power of people who have white skin: Whiteness is violent by

nature because it stems from a belief that people with white skin are inherently better than others and has always been tied to actions that seek to limit—and often destroy—access to power, land, and even life by those who do not also have white skin. It is impossible to separate whiteness from this legacy because separating people with white skin from this ideological legacy is part of the task of anti-racism.

All people are harmed by racism; though differently and disproportionately: people—both those who are identified as white and those who are not—are hurt by racism. However, this violence takes different forms and occurs to different levels based on one's identity. Historically, people who are not identified as white have suffered physical, emotional, economic, political, and social violence. People who are identified as white are harmed by limitations of their own capacity to be humane—perhaps a more psychic or spiritual violence. Additionally, the concept of intersectionality reminds us that various aspects of our identity result in different forms of violence and that violence is based on who we are and in what context we are operating. The layering of the violence associated with our various social identities can result in greater levels of violence for those people who belong to multiple communities of marginalized people.

My perspective here is limited: My positionality—the way I view the world based on my own social identities—absolutely shapes my writing here (and always). As a white person, while I work to undo the damage caused by whiteness, I also embody it, represent it to people, and have absorbed it myself. As many times as I try to think, teach, write, and behave in a way that seeks to dismantle the oppression caused by whiteness, I cannot escape it. It limits my capacity to understand many concepts. There are many points in this essay (and everyday) in which I think I am doing or saying something that will dismantle the status quo of racism, but I am actually upholding and perpetuating it. Whiteness itself prevents me from seeing the whole picture. (The reader will witness this in action as I continue.)

As these foundational ideas suggest, this essay focuses on the cultural practices and ideologies that maintain whiteness within art education research (i.e. our composed niceness), in an effort to help envision what a new paradigm of solidarity might look like. How might we work together from our different positionalities to create an entirely different way of constructing, analyzing, interpreting, and sharing knowledge in the arts? I choose solidarity here with an intention of highlighting how we must all be in this struggle together—no simple allyship will truly dismantle whiteness. It is too pervasive. But solidarity—the action of working alongside each other, with shared visions, and strategic actions—perhaps that might help us imagine a world beyond whiteness (and perhaps a different form of niceness)?

What does art education research have to do with it?

It is hard to imagine three words that might contain more access to cultural power and social transformation than art, education, and research. As we know, art as a form of cultural production is about documenting the world as we see it, conveying a community's values, expressing complex ideas and experiences, and imagining alternative realities. It is through art that communities communicate ideas about who they are and why that matters. There is significant power in an artist's ability to create those messages and to have them heard by others. Likewise, education captures how knowledge is constructed, shared, learned, and taught. How, why, and who we teach is connected to who we are, who and what we value, and who we want people to be. Those who make decisions about education hold tremendous power in a society. Akin to art, research is fundamentally about constructing, interpreting, and sharing knowledge. Those who have access to shaping research can control the messages and values that are upheld in a society.

Unfortunately, the dominant approaches to art, education, and research are—like everything else—built on ideologies rooted in whiteness. These approaches maintain the cultural power of whiteness and uphold the ideology that white people, and their associated cultural values, are superior to all other people. Pause for a moment to consider some examples: the overwhelming majority of artwork taught in schools or displayed in museums has been created by white artists; our conventional pedagogies prioritize didactic teaching whereby the expert teacher (who, in the United States is almost always white) gives knowledge to her naïve students; and in research, academic standards rarely value oral histories, auto-ethnographies, or arts-based methodologies that decenter the primacy of the written word. In each of these examples, the cultural values of whiteness are prioritized over so-called alternative approaches to art, education, and research.** In doing so, the consequences are dire.

***Reviewer 71:** There is a rich body of research on this – rephrase to indicate that this is your experience that echoes the findings of decades of research that has said this.*

***MD:** Oops. Here is a classic example of the ways in which whiteness plays out in academic writing. When I fail to cite the scholars before me who have worked on these ideas and who have informed my thinking, I benefit from their work without acknowledging them. This perpetuates their exclusion and lifts up my own scholarship. It does not expand the conversation to recognize the work—and with it, the humanity of—the many people who have dedicated their careers to these ideas. In doing so, I steal ownership of their ideas (even if unintentionally). And yet, I did not revise this here. I did not include extensive citations because my focus in this essay is not a scholarly literature review—others can and have done that excellent work before me. My aim here is rather a personal reflective essay about how I am thinking about my own work. I am concerned that if I begin to veer more towards the formal conventions of academic writing and citing here, I will lose the tone and the intention to write in a slightly different mode. I have tried to reiterate the idea that may of the ideas I write about in this essay are nothing new and that I am merely repeating what many unrecognized artists, scholars, educators, and writers have wondered and advocated before me (many of whom do not have formal publication records to cite). I struggle with whether or not I, as a white person, have a role in such a seemingly self-indulgent form of reflective writing, and yet, here is such an essay. The conundrum of writing about whiteness from within, as another reviewer points out, seems to be both problematic and necessary at the same time. So here, I lean towards the goal of multiplicity and an attempt to be vulnerable in my musings (without doing harm, I hope). I welcome suggestions about how to navigate this.*

But what if, as the panel of scholars in 2018 suggested, I (and others committed to deconstructing white domination) retrained my/our practices? What if we could all approach our work with the intention of destroying the whiteness that inherently limits our collective capacity? What might art, education, research, and therefore, art education research look like, in a paradigm of solidarity?**

***Reviewer 71:** Isn't this the point of the panel, and others at 2018 NAEA? Rephrase this to clarify that you are thinking on this. You could do this by saying that the panel raised this question for you. – Replace"we" with "me" and "I" so its focus is clear.*

***MD:** Oops, another example of the danger of "we.*

Towards a Paradigm of Solidarity

Recently, I've been reading the work of educators Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun (2001), who write about the characteristics of a culture of white superiority.[3] In their list, they include the following concepts: perfectionism, a sense of urgency, defensiveness, valuing quantity over quality, worship of the written word, belief in only one right way, paternalism, either/or thinking, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, individualism, belief that I'm the only one (who can do this 'right'), the belief that progress is bigger and more, a belief in objectivity, and claiming a right to comfort. When I first read this list of characteristics, I was struck by how familiar they felt to my daily life; they echoed the lessons my grandparents instilled in me, and the ways I had been groomed to behave by managers and professors in my field. It felt as if I was reading a list of my own unspoken behaviors and beliefs—none of which I had ever thought of as being tied to racism. In my experience, these are the values of my people—namely, white people[4]—and, because these are the dominant modes of our society, it means that *my* white way of seeing the world, *my* white way of being, is maintained. **

***Reviewer 71:** Be careful of generalizations.. what happened to intersectionality?*

***MD:** I tried to address this by highlighting which aspect of my identity—my whiteness—I'm referring to, but the reviewer is right: without a clearer discussion of intersectionality my arguments flatten my identities into a myopic perspective. I haven't entirely fixed this in this essay. When teaching about whiteness I always stumble over how I need to falsely pull it out for a minute to analyze it as if it is not connected to all of my other identities. However, I have not yet figured out how to teach other white people about our own whiteness without focusing on it alone for the sake of conversation. I am deeply puzzled by how to do this in my writing and don't know the answer.*

I fit right into this set of cultural practices with ease—it's home! However, for those people who practice different values or uphold

3 In true collaborative fashion, Jones & Okun attribute their work to many other scholars. I include their names here as well as they cite them in their own words: "Andrea Ayvazian, Bree Carlson, Beverly Daniel Tatum, Eli Dueker, Nancy Emond, Jonn Lunsford, Sharon Martinas, Joan Olsson, David Rogers, James Williams, Sally Yee, as well as the work of Grassroots Leadership, Equity Institute Inc., the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, the Challenging White Supremacy workshop, the Lillie Allen Institute, the Western States Center, and the contributions of hundreds of participants in the Dismantling Racism process."

4 In this statement, I intentionally focus on my racial identity over my other intersecting identities, such as gender, sexual orientation, citizenship, economic class, formal education, religion, etc. I ask the reader to understand that I pull out my racial identity here not to neglect the other elements of who I am, but to continue my analysis of how whiteness affects my work.

different beliefs, there is *no place to exist* within the limits of these values. If we are what we value and believe, then the fact that thesedominant values reign supreme means that people who do not ascribe to these values cannot participate in this culture; they are segregated out as misfits. Who has time for the indigenous elder who slowly recounts a story in the oral tradition of their ancestors? How can I cite something that does not exist in text? Who cares if someone is excluded when I teach in what I know to be the best way (according to the scholars)? And what if my niceness makes someone uncomfortable, or worse, silences their contributions? In other words, in maintaining these values, we maintain a white way of being as the dominant—and only—way of being; you're either in, or you're out. Whiteness as rightness.

Again and again, I've been drawn to this work on white cultural practices as I've engaged more deeply in co-facilitating anti-racism workshops for art and museum educators. The niceness of our field has been one of the comforts I've enjoyed for years. And yet, in these anti-racism workshops, surrounded by other white people, I have been struck by how hard it is for white people to move beyond our composed niceness to understand how our cultural practices reinforce whiteness and therefore perpetuate racism. We[5] seem content to focus on condemning individual acts of interpersonal racism (i.e. a racist comment, an unjust hiring decision, or a discriminatory action by a school leader) rather than consider the institutional and ideological manifestations of the idea of whiteness as rightness. It is hard for us to hold up our cultural practices as potentially problematic; we like our niceness. We are so steeped in our whiteness that we cannot see a way out of it (and this is part of the work of whiteness itself—to keep those of us in power lulled into complacent ignorance).

The switch to thinking about the ideologies of whiteness, not just the interpersonal examples of racism is hard for many white people. In these museum-based workshops I've been co-facilitating, where the overwhelming majority of participants are white, all too often our discussions of the pervasiveness of whiteness are met with an exasperated plea: "OK, fine, I don't want to be racist, but now what? What can I actually do?" As a white person, I'm sympathetic to this exclamation since I feel it myself regularly. When whiteness is so powerful, what can I, as a solitary white person—an arts educator and researcher, not a policy maker or legislator—do to topple an ideology that is far older, deeper, and more powerful than I am? How can I transform my own limited thinking and transform my daily activities

5 A reminder to the reader that I employ the collective "we" here to refer to people who are identified as or identify themselves as white. In this essay, I continue to pull on our white identities over our other identities to focus attention on the role of race and racism. Certainly, there are people who do not fit these experiences; however I have found many of these patterns to be prevalent in my own work.

into actions that lift people up, rather then extend and deepen harm?

What does it even look like to be a person in a white body trying to resist the whiteness I embody? In the past few years, these questions have regularly rattled me, causing me to question how and why I approach my work, my teaching, my activism, my relationships, and even, more personally my parenting. As someone who likes to think of myself as an activist, my scholarship has always focused on the intersection of art and social justice and I have always claimed to try to teach in a way that emphasizes liberatory education. However, as I've begun to interrogate my own values and practices, I've started to see how whiteness colors even my best intentions as an educator, researcher, and activist. While I think I know intellectually how to argue and discuss whiteness and how to encourage others to work towards anti-racism, I'm still operating within a culture that prioritizes white people above all others—and that culture has felt both comfortable and hard to re-imagine.

Drawing on the work of many anti-racism educators, especially the aforementioned work of Jones & Okun (2001; see also Okun, n.d.), I turn to their clear descriptions of the underlying cultural practices within white superiority culture to help me examine the cultural practices of art education researchers and practitioners with an eye towards unraveling how those practices are bound up in whiteness. By looking closely at the dominant modes of being that are common to our field (and often beyond it), I have started to better understand how the values and practices that I take for granted ultimately serve to maintain whiteness. As **I**** do this, **I** can seek what Okun and Jones term, "antidotes"—values in complementary opposition to whiteness—that might enable me (and more of us) to disrupt our current practices in art education research to move towards a paradigm not of whiteness, but of solidarity.

***MD:** *Oops—I used we as the primary pronoun in this entire section, forgetting that I was lumping in a lot of people with different perspectives by using we. Classic example of the omniscient white voice in action.*

In other words, if **I** can learn to disrupt **my** normal routines—the ways in which **I** enter **my** daily work, respond to emails, conceive of research or teaching questions, mentor juniors, prepare lesson plans, communicate with colleagues and students, facilitate classes, collect data, publish and present work, participate in critiques, measure our success, build coalitions, and even create art—then maybe, I, along with a community of others committed to this work, can construct a field that prioritizes solidarity over whiteness. Certainly, many scholars, artists, and educators are already doing this; by no means is this thinking new. I share it here as a public reflection of my own wondering in hopes of inviting others who might be new to these

ideas to join in a re-imagining of our collective work**.

***MD:** Thanks to the reviewer, I am trying to remind all readers (and myself) that my ideas are not original here; many others before me, particularly many Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have been advocating these ideas—often without formal academic recognition—for years.*

In what follows, I draw on Okun's (n.d.) list of white supremacy culture characteristics to try to name some values and practices that seek to challenge the power of whiteness in art education research. While many of the values they describe apply to our domain, I have identified three dominant cultural modes in art education that I have been analyzing in my own teaching and research work: binary categories, individualism, and defensive pride. For each of these, I describe some of the consequences of the current mode of operation (as best I can from a limited vantage point), and some possibilities for solidarity and racial equity that could come from learning towards a value of solidarity. I try to keep the emphasis here on what I have experienced and observed in the fields of art education and research simply to focus our work as a field. It is likely that these values and practices affect each of us differently based on who we are; I am surely missing key elements as I try to unpack them. And this list itself is by no means definitive; a richer, more nuanced list would require some of the very values I mention below such as collaboration and expansive thinking. However, it's a start. I refer to it here as a reflective tool to help direct my own work and perhaps, to collectively imagine what a field of art education (and art education research) might look like if it were built on an ideology of solidarity instead of whiteness.**

***Reviewer 71**: I am a little concerned here – the categories you offer are part of existing research, yet the way you write these indicate that these are original thoughts based on your experience only.. this makes for a weak literature review, in a scholarly paper. It makes the entire next section problematic. One way to amend this is to clarify how these ideas and categories are leading you to revise your teaching.*

***MD:** The reviewer is right here in pointing out the danger of avoiding a comprehensive literature review. As I mention above, I did not set out to write a literature review. On one hand, I do want to maintain the tone and reflective perspective of this piece for two main reasons: first, I want to practice a kind of writing that is not typically acknowledged as useful in academic circles—a reflective and openly vulnerable essay. Because whiteness tells us to be guarded and confident in our writing, to write in the passive voice, to prioritize ideas that have backing in other academically approved sources (i.e. journals), I think there is value in writing that tries to undermine that convention*

MD (cont'd): *And secondly, I think there is something about writing in an accessible voice without the interruptions of constant citations that can invite readers to feel like we are in conversation. My hope with this essay was to spark conversation amongst other white arts educators. What that means for me as a white author is still confusing to me since it still causes the harm that the reviewer has pointed out here. Is that harm worth it? How do I hold these two conflicting truths at the same time?*

A note on the "we": Using the language of imagination in the sections that follow, I use the collective "we" as an invitation to envision possibilities. The "we" in these sections is one that does not yet exist, but one for which many before and around me have imagined for decades. I add my thoughts here to the chorus of voices that have wondered about new ways of doing things long before I even knew that art education existed. Again, I write in many ways here primarily for my white colleagues who may be newly re-thinking their own work as a springboard towards more self-criticality and coalition-building**

*****MD****: Thanks to the reviewer, I'm trying to practice clarifying who I mean by we. All too often, when white authors use we, we obliterate the nuanced and important differences of the many perspectives included within any group of people, thereby silencing those important voices.*

From Binary Categories to Multiplicity and Expansiveness

Despite claims that art education is a creative, open-minded field, we (the field) are in effect, a domain dominated by white artists, white scholars, white historians, and white educators; there is primarily one way of viewing the world, and it's through the lens of whiteness. In our current binary-loving paradigm, only those scholars, artists, and educators who work within already determined categories (categories that were, historically and today, defined by white people and are largely occupied by white people) are valued. Consider the following white-created categories: art vs. craft (whereas many non-Western cultures do not differentiate the two); historical art movements (largely populated and determined by white artists and scholars); nation-based classifications for discussing art (even though the borders of many countries were created by white colonialists). The categories prevent multiple perspectives; they do not accommodate holding multiple categories simultaneously. There is no intersectionality. Within this paradigm we are missing so many perspectives and approaches. Our binary thinking prevents us from a deeper understanding of art and of pedagogy that could come from including more perspectives and approaches in our work. By prioritizing only dominant voices (aka white views) we have maintained the commitment to whiteness in our work; in doing so, our field suffers from a lack of multiple understandings and unacknowledged categories. I feel this often in teaching about

artwork from cultures outside of my own, when I wonder if I'm using limiting language or forcing categories on artists or artworks or objects that are antithetical to what the culture believes. While we may not always agree with perspectives different than our own, it is no doubt that including them in conversations deepens our own knowledge and understanding. Without this, our field will grow only more insular and narrow in focus.

What if, **as many scholars, artists, and educators have wondered before**, the primary mode of intellectual work, collegial conversation, and pedagogy in our field was built on a deep commitment to multiplicity and expansive thinking? Beyond binary thinking, there would be a sense that conflicting and contradictory concepts can exist simultaneously, and that the more multi-faceted our understanding of something was, be it an idea, a work of art, a student, or ourselves, the richer our scholarship and teaching would be. **

***Reviewer 71:** Again, there are entire bodies of work that are dedicated to discussing and showing what this looks like in an art classroom.*

***MD:** Yep, here is another example of how I, as a white person, unintentionally lay claim to ideas that have existed long before I was even born. By leaving out references to the many other people who have thought, talked, taught, and written about these ideas before, I erase them from the conversation and lift my own voice up over theirs. My excuses for this are weak (I didn't have enough time to look up all the citations, I didn't have access to my library while writing this from another country, etc.) but it basically comes down to a certain amount of laziness whereby I don't always make time to prioritize reading, tracking, and citing the many other people writing on these topics. This perpetuates their exclusion from the cannon of art education scholarship.*

We would be rewarded for moving beyond surface-level or conventional thinking and making. Our curricula would reflect this through including forms of art-making from all cultures and we would discuss them through the lenses of many different perspectives—the makers, the users, the critics, the historians, the socio-cultural anthropologists, the learners, the elders, and so forth. We would question dominant discourses of art that tell us that art is only one thing and can only be made by someone deemed an artist by white standards. We would seek out multiple epistemologies to make sense of the act of making. Our research would reflect these layers of expansive thinking, calling into question moments when we say "that can't possibly be true." Because, maybe it could be. [6]

6 A reminder here that *many* scholars, particularly scholars of color—both in formal spaces and outside of them—have long argued for these ideas. Little of what I offer here is new, but rather my own reflections on what might be possible if I, and others can collectively dismantle whiteness.

From Individualism to Collaboration and Community

Whereas whiteness teaches us to seek out the individual and praise him/her/them above all else, resulting in a sense of competition and power-hoarding; this has been the foundation of colonialism, nationalism, and capitalism. A field that clings to individualism can only benefit a limited number of people; and almost always, those people are the ones already in power, namely, the white people. In art education, we see this play out when we credit only one author or maker for our work, when we celebrate individual artists as geniuses, and when we fail to teach about the interconnected networks of thinkers, makers, and educators who all contribute to the growth of ideas. This results in extending the dominance of whiteness by failing to name the countless people (conventionally those who are not identified as white) who have contributed to the world of art and ideas; their contributions remain ignored. In my own work, I feel this pull towards individualism in my hunger for professional accolades and the pangs of jealously when a colleague—even a beloved friend who deserves the credit—receives a grant or publication. I fail to see their success as interconnected with my own. Not only do these reactions harm my relationships, they also harm my own work, framing it as a solo endeavor, rather than connected to a lineage and network of others.

A move towards collaboration would re-center our work on lifting up all people with equity (meaning a redistribution of power especially to those who have had none) in mind. What if we could build on a commitment to multiplicity by actually incorporating and building on each other's ideas, art-making, and teaching to create new and collective ways of thinking about art, education, and research? With collaboration in mind, we could write articles that weave together our multiple voices; name the many contributors to our ideas publicly; co-teach classes that model the very collaboration we seek to promote; conduct research on questions that we've generated in working groups; and share ideas freely with colleagues across the field. In this paradigm, we would be rewarded not for our individual production, but rather for how we have contributed to a community.

From Defensive Pride to Humble Discomfort

In order to maintain power, white people are taught to defend themselves from critiques of their position and perspectives. As Robin Di'Angelo (2018) notes, this results in "white fragility" whereby white people react to questions about their motives, beliefs, and values with defensiveness—they are fragile in moments of racial conflict. Connected to the pride of individualism, this cultural practice prevents us from actively listening to perspectives outside of our own. When confronted with new ideas or critiques, this defensiveness

creates a barrier to deeper learning. In art education, we see this in the posturing or pontificating in our faculty meetings in reaction to so-called conflicting ideas and in the wounding anonymous critiques in teaching observations and on our publications. I feel it regularly when I respond with empty excuses to comments from students or colleagues about the ways in which my teaching or writing is racist. This defensiveness maintains white power by building a wall around deeper understanding about our identities, our blindspots, and the areas in which we must work harder to overcome our limited awareness. Whiteness teaches me to concede no ground to the critiques that don't match my way of thinking.

What if we acknowledged how our work was shaped by others and continues to evolve, where we humbly seek each other's advice and encouragement on our teaching, our research, and our art-making? To choose humility over pride would significantly alter the day-to-day realities of our field. Rather than defensive rebukes of critiques, we would seek to learn from what colleagues and students are gracious enough to share with us about our work. The consequences for our teaching would be dramatic: the practice of humility with students would empower them to see themselves as agents in pursuit of collective knowledge. In stepping back as the primary expert in the classroom, we could lift up the voices of each member to contribute to a holistic understanding of art and art-making. In our research, humility would allow us to shed the omniscient passive voice in writing, to pose research questions that expose our lack of knowledge, and to approach data collection with a deep desire to learn and grow—and potentially (likely) learn that our original assumptions were incorrect. In other words, this move would enable us to move beyond the limitations a whiteness that fears losing power into a space of solidarity towards the pursuit of shared power. Our research and teaching would undoubtedly stretch into deeper understanding as we lost a desire to be the sole expert.

In a field where humility is paramount, we can let go of pretenses of expertise in all things to become open to the truth that we are always growing and learning—that we cannot possibly be right about everything. By embracing the value of humility, we put into practice a different mode of interaction with colleagues and students that can open up opportunities for us to learn in solidarity about each other's perspectives. With humility can come an unsettling discomfort as our ideas are challenged. But what if we lean into that discomfort in order to deepen our understandings? When a colleague or student suggests that our thinking might be limited by the confines of whiteness, we graciously ask them if they would be generous enough to tell us more. When our research is critiqued as supporting binary thinking or dominant discourses, we seek to understand why, even (and especially) when we feel pained by the critique. Just as we've always

asked our students to step out of their comfort zones to analyze contemporary art or to experiment with a new material or to embark on a first interview, we must follow their lead into that which feels intimidating or unsettling.

For deeper consideration; the list continues

Needless to say, the three cultural values and practices above are only the start of a list of modes of being that dominate our field. Whiteness touches everything. In a move towards solidarity**, I*, and many other white people**, must also consider other cultural values and practices that perpetuate whiteness.

> ****MD:*** *Oops, I had slipped back into the use of the blanket "we" again, despite my best efforts to speak from my own experience and not on behalf of other people.*

We might note how our sense of urgency prevents us from devoting the time necessary to build relationships with people across difference or how an emphasis on quantity over quality limits our capacity to dig deeply into our research questions, to give them the time and space they need to move beyond the barriers of dominant thinking. We might consider how a reliance on the written word means that we neglect so many other cultural perspectives who operate from an oral tradition, or who value song, dance, movement, or other forms of documentation. **

> *****Reviewer:*** *Again, there are areas of research methods/ art education methods that cover these, but here it reads like it's your original ideas.*
>
> ***MD****: I agree. And yet, I didn't change this. I left it because I'm hopeful that my earlier revisions highlight how I'm reflecting aloud in an effort to call in other white educators and scholars into the conversation without being "bogged down" by citations and academic-speak. But I am doubtful if that is a good enough reason*

We might begin to notice that our belief that progress is linear and always better has led us into a way of thinking that devalues historical knowledge or ancestral ways of being, again preventing us from learning cultural perspectives outside of those aligned with the post-Enlightenment quest for progress. We might also note that a fear of conflict has prevented us from experiencing productive points of rupture—moments that might lead us into new ways of understanding the world, perhaps one towards solidarity.

Closing thoughts: From niceness to radical disruption?

Attentive readers might notice that I have not yet begun to unpack

the concept of niceness—a form of polite interaction that often prevents deeper engagement and critique of ideas, silences divergent perspectives, glosses over important nuance, and precludes trusting, honest relationships. It is from behind a screen of niceness that we maintain the status quo by quieting discomfort and conflict. This particular kind of niceness keeps us all in line—and the line we keep is one created by white people. **

***Reviewer**: Erm – not sure how I feel about this.. It sounds like you're saying niceness / being nice is a white cultural concepts. Non white cultures can be (im)perfectly nice too!*

***MD:** Agreed! However white people also have control of power, and so my niceness carries a different kind of political and cultural weight that can be used (even unintentionally) to oppress, silence, and control other people.*

When participants at an anti-racism workshop approach me afterwards to say they learned so much, I often worry that niceness is preventing them from speaking honestly about how scared they are of committing to anti-racism. When I speak nicely about whiteness, I do so in an effort to calm the anxieties of my white colleagues (and myself as well). Even this essay, I'm pretty sure, is drenched in niceness; I've said little to dramatically upend the system of academic writing in art education.

Now, in critiquing niceness, I don't mean to turn away from the idea of treating each other with kindness, dignity, and humanity. Certainly, solidarity is built on these values. But how can we reach for those values if we don't step out from our composed niceness to really recognize ourselves for who we are—both the keepers of the cultural values that uphold whiteness and their potential disruptors?

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