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## **A Portrait in Black and White: An Analysis of Race in the Adult Education Classroom**

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A Portrait in Black and White: An Analysis of Race in the Adult Education Classroom

by

Tealia N. DeBerry

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
In Curriculum and Instruction with an Emphasis in Adult Education  
Department of Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career, and Higher Education  
College of Education  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Adult education is a reciprocal relationship between adult learners and adult education practitioners. As such, it is essential to understand the experiences of adult educators and adult education practitioners as they teach adults. This study focuses on how ideas about race and racism are examined in the graduate-level classroom and the adult learners' experience as they focus on subject matter that challenges their assumptions and forces them to create new understandings about race. This study examines, through the portraiture methodology, the experiences of a White researcher and the adult learners engaging in dialogues about race in a CRT course.

The findings of this study include an examination of my role as a White researcher engaging in dialogues in this CRT course, including an inquiry into my silences, trepidations, and feelings of helplessness during the classroom interactions. I also examine the ways in which the adult learners who participated in this course communicated their ideas to their peers as well as the understandings and misunderstandings of the themes presented in the course.

## **CHAPTER ONE:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In my second year as a doctoral student in the department of adult education, I took Critical Race Theory as part of my curriculum of study. I prepared myself in the weeks prior to the course to personally engage in critical reflection about my own experiences with race and racism. I gathered the materials, found time to preview some of the content, and I began thinking seriously about what this class may hold for me. On the first day of class, a sunny Saturday in late May, I had to walk across campus because an event had forced USF to block off every road to the education building. Walking across campus, I realized that I too was putting up barriers but to learning, and I had not even gotten to class yet. Perhaps if I had been able to park closer to the building, I would not have had time to think about what this class was really about. But, because of the road block, I had ample time to begin dreading the class. I dreaded actually sharing my feelings, exploring my understandings, and accepting my misunderstandings about race. I had done some preliminary reading to prepare for the first class meeting, which focused on the history and definition of race, but I didn't feel prepared to speak. How could I speak? As a White person, race is almost a non-entity. I had never had to think about race--really think about race--in my life. How would I measure up to my classmates who might have had to deal with race every day? I began to feel very insignificant as if my contributions as a White person could not possibly

measure up to the experiences of my peers of color. And part of me began to think that maybe I shouldn't be in this class in the first place. Was the very fact I was participating in this course some kind of colonization? Were my ideas even welcomed?

My discomfort grew as I walked, and I silently hoped that Dr. Closson would end up cancelling the class because of the physical barriers that had been placed around campus. I triple checked the room number, and walked through the door. The dread I felt was only amplified when I saw my classmates and Dr. Closson moving the tables into a small "U" formation--a sign that discussion was not only welcome, but required. Reflecting on my walk now, I think what put the heaviness in my heels was the impending sense that I was about to embark on an uncomfortable but transformative experience. I felt it in my heart that what this class held for me was the realization that race is a central facet of society and that, as a White person, I am privileged beyond my comprehension; at least I would like to think that I was not just having first day jitters.

As a student in the course, I began to study my own thoughts and my own understandings of what race is and how I benefit from White privilege, but this reflection did not come about in a vacuum; instead, my understanding grew from the misunderstandings and reflections of my peers and through our discussion about race and racism. We were led willingly into a space in which that taboo was discussed in sometimes painful detail, and where experiences, fears, and racist thoughts were brought into the light and then examined. Through our portfolios, biographies, and presentations, we began to learn about each other and how we, as a group, made our own meaning of race and racism. I reflected on my past as a White person growing up in the south while others reflected on their experiences growing up as people of color, or



growing up with interracial parents. Everything was illuminated, and nothing was off limits.

As our class came to an end, I began to wonder what it looked like when other groups got together to cover the same material. Would the focus change? Would other aspects of the course materials be covered in more depth simply because there was a different dynamic? How would the conversation flow differently if there were more students of color and fewer White students? These questions led me to revisit my time in CRT later in my doctoral program. In my final class, Qualitative Research Methods, I was tasked with completing a qualitative research project. I chose to focus on CRT and the dialogue in the course. I spoke with Dr. Closson, who allowed me to observe her CRT course for an evening.

Observing Dr. Closson's CRT class after having already taken CRT reminded me that important meaning is made when students and faculty focus their attention on often uncomfortable themes of race and racism and allow themselves to explore their understandings and misunderstandings. Although I grappled with the notion of myself, as a White person, focusing on race, I was reminded when reading an essay by Dr. Stephen Brookfield (2014) that Whites have a responsibility to explore race in order to highlight how race is whitewashed by the academy in favor of the liberal, Euro-American raciality. I would assert that it is essential for adult educators to explore themes of race in their classrooms in order to allow adult learners to have a place in which to explore difficult concepts together in order to transform their understanding. It is for this reason that I chose to observe a graduate Critical Race Theory class that focused on race and racism and to create a portraiture that illuminates how, in a graduate classroom, an

adult educator and her students make new meaning and challenge pre-existing understandings about race and racism.

Critical Race Theory at USF is unique in that it was developed to allow potential educators to reflect on their own understandings of race. This objective differs from other courses in the college of education curriculum, such as International Adult Education or the History of Higher Education. These courses touch on issues of race, but rarely ask for reflections or deeper dives into how race impacts students, faculty, curriculum, or policies in such a personal way as Critical Race Theory has been designed to do. Other universities, such as Rutgers, Harvard, and UNC offer courses in critical race theory, but there is a focus on CRT in the law or CRT and Black studies. USF's Critical Race Theory course, instead, focuses on the tenets of CRT and how they impact not only people of color and the legal system, but how race and racism impacts Whites and non-Whites in a social and personal context. The ultimate goal is for the students in the Critical Race Theory course at USF to experience perspective transformation and to "go inwards" to explore how race and racism have impacted their lived experiences (Closson, Interview). The level of dialogue and critical reflection in USF's Critical Race Theory class is akin to what Brookfield (2014) envisioned when he discusses shucking the "color-blind perspective" that perpetuates an "unproblematized Eurocentrism" in the adult education landscape in favor of embracing a racialized classroom that seeks to celebrate and explore how individuals and their racial histories inform how they make meaning about race and racism (p. 21). Although Brookfield (2014) laments that adult education has become increasingly Eurocentric over the last thirty years, he does call for breaking the bonds of this individualistic, unproblematized

Eurocentrism in favor of racialization in the adult education classroom. It is for this reason that I chose to observe USF's Critical Race Theory class. Not only does it reject the liberal idea of colorblindness, it brings lived experiences to the forefront. This study, a portrait of this particular class, describes how meaning is made when graduate students and their professor reject the confines of color-blindness that pervade the academy and confront ideas and experiences with race and racism head on.

It is interesting to me to know the origins of the course that impacted me so much and the course that ultimately inspired this study. It is also important to me to understand why this course was developed within the department of adult education. For these reasons an interview with Dr. Closson was conducted. It provided necessary context and is included in Chapter Four.

The portraiture itself is an artistic rendering of these experiences in the classroom as I observed them (Lawrence-Lightfoot 1983). Details about the physical space, the conversations, the body language, are all included to create an artistic artifact of the course. It is my goal that by creating this artifact, someone who has never experienced teaching or taking a course that deals with race and racism will have a basic description of how adult learners grapple with controversial, and sometimes life-changing revelations. By creating this rendering, it is my hope that, like reading fiction, the reader becomes immersed in the conversations and the meaning making that takes place, and can then reflect on their own understandings of the concepts that were explored.

## **Statement of the Problem**

There are studies that examine CRT in adult education (Rothschild, 2003; Brookfield, 2005; Closson, 2010; Brookfield, 2013), and there are studies that examine how portraiture can be used as a means to express lived experience, particularly the lived experience of teachers (Hill, 2005; Newton, 2005; Chapman, 2007). Missing from existing research are descriptions of how adult learners make meaning of their experiences learning about and discussing themes of race and racism in the graduate-level classroom. This problem matters to the field of adult education because race and racism are inextricable facets of lived experience. However, even though race and racism are a part of the lives of adult educators and students, the Adult Education curriculum is generally Eurocentric, focusing attention away from personal experiences with race and racism and focusing, instead, on what is measurable and objective.

In today's society, race is a factor that can no longer be ignored; rather, because race has become a constant topic of discourse in the media, it must be discussed. After the United States elected its first Black president, Barack Obama, the general consensus was that we had entered into an era of post-racialism, which meant that, we as a country, were no longer racist (Wilder, Osborne, & Jackson, 2012). Unfortunately, the some of the very first televised images that greeted our first Black president were of lynched effigies of him burned and brandished by White protestors. Shortly into his second term, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American teenager was murdered by a man who was intimidated by Martin's appearance. More recently, African-American men have found themselves targeted and murdered by police officers, which has given rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement asserts that Black lives do, in

fact, matter, but their protests have been met with controversy. Whites proclaim that “All lives matter,” which is an unfair reimagining of the original purpose of the movement. These instances are symptoms of a larger project of social injustice and inequity in the United States, which remains unchecked because of the fear that discussing race elicits in people, particularly White people.

All of these incidents illuminate the dire need for racial dialogue, and the gap in research that I identify above is problematic because, at this moment in United States history, to be Black is to be targeted. Therefore, it is essential for adult educators to examine the ways in which race and racism are presented and challenged in the classroom. As I mentioned in my introduction, I was inspired by the dialogue in the first CRT course that I observed. I thought to myself, “if only someone could capture these conversations, they would understand how significant conversations like these are.” This study is my attempt, as a White researcher, to bring these dialogues forward and to examine their importance and to examine my own role in making meaning as a White researcher. CRT is not a course that is taught at every university, but perhaps it should be. A course like this, which focuses on race and racism, is difficult to engage in, but the discomfort is essential to understanding America today. My attempt at illuminating the dialogues in this course is my way of filling the gap in the research and to present the dialogues of this course as essential components of adult education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of these portraits is to describe meaning is made about race and racism in the graduate-level classroom. For this study, I used the portraiture methodology to create a narrative depiction of the course that would serve as an artifact

of the course. The purpose of creating these portraits is to illuminate and describe for the reader how adult learners make meaning when dialogue about race and racism is encouraged in a graduate-level classroom. Chapman's (2007) is similar to this study in method, but her study deals with students in a K-12 environment. Hill's (2005) portrait deals with race, specifically with African American faculty members teaching in multicultural classrooms. Although these studies are similar in method and thematic focus, a study using the portraiture method, focusing on graduate students and on their classroom dialogues regarding themes of race and racism, has not yet been conducted, so this study will fill in a gap in the research and it will illuminate the importance of these dialogues for myself and my role as a White researcher conducting this study, as well as the adult learners who participated in this course.

The participants in this study were graduate students in the college of education and a professor in the department of Leadership, Counseling, Adult, Career, and Higher Education at USF. The course, ADE7677--Critical Race Theory--was held at the USF Tampa campus in the fall of 2016. This group of students were chosen because they chose to participate in this particular course, which deals heavily with themes of race and racism. This course itself was chosen because it was developed to emphasize the importance of, and to elicit discussion about, personal experiences with race and racism that would lend to the overall richness of the portrait.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. In what ways does a White woman make meaning of her role as a researcher in a Critical Race Theory course

2. In what ways to adult learners make meaning of race and racism in a Critical Race Theory course?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The epistemological framework for this study is critical race theory. For nearly 20 years, scholars and researchers in the field of education have acknowledged the integral role that culture plays within the context of education, and recently, with race being at the forefront of the American media, acknowledging and exploring race within the context of higher education is a means to begin understanding how race impacts the areas of adult and higher education (Sheared, Johnson-Bailey, Colin & Brookfield, 2010; Bryan, Wilson & Wills, 2012). I believe that critical race theory relates to my research study because the experience analyzed is done so within a framework of lived racial experience—the lived experience of the participants in the class that I will be studying. For critical race theorists, an effective way to construct an understanding of experience is by analyzing written narratives, or personal stories of racial experience. This, too, relates to my research in that I will be composing an artistic portraiture that is intended to portray the meaning-making that occurs between students in a course that deals with race and racism.

Critical race theory acknowledges the cyclical relationship between the researcher and the participant, the participant with his or her story, and the researcher's own story. From a critical race perspective, stories of experience are treated and interpreted as empirical evidence with an emphasis on the "verstehen," or understanding of the meaning-making processes, "which permit[s] individuals and groups...to co-create shared knowledge and to construct meaning within their lives"

(Paul, 2005 p. 61). The critical race perspective disagrees with the positivist assumption that personal narratives are biased and unreliable; rather, the analysis of personal narratives, to critical race theorists, is important because personal narratives are a way through which to make meaning of experience. It is only through these stories that individuals who have been subject to racial inequities can be understood.

## **Limitations**

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of qualitative studies in general and this study in particular. Qualitative studies are difficult to replicate because the population will inherently be different from one study to the next (Weirisma, 2000). This study, then does not focus on replicability, but rather on transferability. Given a different cohort of students, this study's findings would inevitably vary, and the portrait would most certainly look different, but the methods and findings could be relevant to future researchers conducting similar studies.

One limitation to the portraiture method is that a single author is writing about a lived experience of one or a group of people (Chapman, 2007). Portraiture is inherently observationalist with hints of the author's own positionality peeking through. As such, a portrait can be seen as essentializing the experience of the participants or the researcher (Lincoln, 2000). With regard to race, this is problematic because, as a White researcher, I would not want to be accused of speaking for the participants in this course. In this research, I strived to create a balanced portrait in which the participants' understandings and misunderstandings, my own included, could be illuminated through dialogue and reflection.



Having written the portraits in this study, I can confirm that, as a White researcher, it is uncomfortable to have my thoughts and reflections about race and racism examined by the reader. It was uncomfortable at times to write my impressions and reflections into this study. To some, this could be interpreted as a limitation of this study. When faced with the possibility of exposing one's own racism or ignorance, a researcher may choose to censor their thoughts. English (2000) and LeCompte and Schensul (1999) write about keeping the researcher outside of the research in order to keep the research uncontaminated. Yet others, (VanMaanen, 1988; Wolcott, 1999; Hackmann, 2002), discuss the benefits of the researcher's unique voice. For portraiture, the researcher's voice becomes a lens through which the research scenario can be viewed, and their imprint on the research, though sometimes noticeable, adds an important element of authenticity and depth to the portrait that is absent from most other forms of research (Hackman, 2002).

## **Delimitations**

The Critical Race Theory course at USF was chosen, not only because of the convenience of location, but because it was a course I had taken. I had previously taken this course with Dr. Closson, who developed and facilitates it, and, because I had taken the course, I know the basic structure of the course, which was discussion. Had I chosen to observe another CRT course, I might not have been able to successfully predict the amount of discussion that would take place in the course or the level of engagement of the students. At USF, this course is an elective, so the students who choose to take it are interested in having a serious discussion about race. Observing a Critical Race Theory course was also important to me because I personally know the

level of discomfort that can arise when presented with the central tenets of CRT. For example, a White person such as myself having to grapple with the idea that race and racism are endemic facets of society is difficult and eye-opening. I could have chosen to observe a course of multicultural or international adult education, but, having taken those courses as well, I feel as though discussions about multiculturalism and cultural sensitivity merely Whitewash any actual dialogue surrounding the complexities of race and racism in our society and intentionally do not push any boundaries of comfort. Studies conducted by Pollock (2004), Thompson (2005), and Theodore (2008) underscore this idea by examining the ways in which multi-cultural courses often neutralize racial dialogue for the sake of making the conversation more comfortable for White participants. It was important to me to examine this particular course because I am acutely aware of how challenging and impactful the dialogue in this course can be.

I chose the portraiture method because, in terms of the final product, I felt that it would be the best way to reach the objectives of my research questions. My goal was to examine the ways in which I made meaning about my role of a White researcher in a CRT course, and to examine the ways in which adult learners made meaning of race and racism in the same CRT course. I felt that, given my background in literature, a portrait would be the most effective way to demonstrate how this occurs. Since CRT emphasizes lived experiences, I felt that this method would also effectively capture adult learners sharing their lived experiences while they engaged in dialogue within the classroom. By using description and story-telling techniques, my goal is to allow the reader become immersed in the dialogue (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2008).

In terms of population, I could have chosen to focus on myself as a White researcher and on the adult learners enrolled in a graduate level CRT course. I felt that given the choice of method that it was important to include all participants in this course in order to create a more comprehensive portrait.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Adult Education.* Adult education is a problematic term to define because it encompasses any time, either formally or informally, that adult learning takes place (Elias & Merriam, 2005; Bierema, 2011). For the purposes of this study, adult education is more narrowly defined as the occurrence of adult learning in in the university setting. This is known as formal adult education. Interaction in the classroom between adult learner and adult education practitioner is paramount to this study, so although adult education as a field of study and practice is more widely defined, for this research the formal aspect of adult education will be the setting on which I will focus.

*Critical Race Theory.* Critical Race Theory is a branch of critical theory that emerged in the early 1970s from scholarly dialogue surrounding the impact that race has on society. Critical Race Theory, or CRT, is focused on creating a consciousness of the ways in which race and racism drive social constructs such as the law, societal norms, and most relevant to this study, the education system. In this study, CRT will be used as an epistemological framework for uncovering ways in which race colors the classroom by negatively impacting student and faculty experience (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

*Adult Learners.* The term adult learner, much like the field adult education, is difficult to define because there is no agreed upon definition for adulthood. In this study, adult learners are graduate students in a higher education setting. Graduate students were chosen because they demonstrate self-directedness, which is an undisputed defining trait of adult learners. It is because they are self-directed that adult students enter into the learning situation with a more critical eye than traditional learners, who tend to be younger with less life experience.

*Race.* For this study, race is defined as an endemic social construct, rather than a scientific truth, which frames, and sometimes shapes, people's experiences with the world and other individuals around them. Race as a social construct means that it is "neither an essence nor an illusion, but rather an ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing process subject to the macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily decisions" (I.H. Lopez, 1994)

*Racism.* For this study, racism is defined as "any set of beliefs which classifies humanity into distinct collectivities, defined in terms of natural and/or cultural attributes and ranks these attributes in a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority" (Outhwaite & Bottomore, 1993, p 538)

*White Privilege.* White privilege encompasses any social privilege afforded to individuals who are White or who appear White. In this study, the participants define White privilege, in part, as the ability to ignore race.

*Passing.* Passing is the ability for a person of one race to be perceived as a member of another race. In this study, passing is discussed as the ability for African Americans to pass as White, and for Caucasians to pass as Black in order to benefit socially.

## **Significance**

This research is significant because a classroom is a space in which ideas are shared and pre-existing understandings are challenged while new meaning is made. Particularly, the adult education classroom is a place in which social change is a goal and personal growth is essential to giving meaning to the whole life (Lindeman, 1925; Beder, 1987; Armstrong & Miller, 2006). Given the historic and current racial climate in the United States, as I mentioned earlier, it is essential that conversations centering on race and racism continue to happen in higher education and continue to be valued because issues of racism have become prevalent in U.S. society. Rarely are there spaces in which this dialogue is encouraged. White people, in particular, are either not interested in discussing race because they ascribe to the neo-liberal ideal of post-racialism, or they ignore race simply because they can. I believe that by providing a description of what it looks like when these difficult conversations take place will provide the reader with an understanding of how transformative these conversations can be, particularly for a White researcher, and that, while sometimes uncomfortable or contradictory, dialogues about race and racism are essential for individuals who are aspiring to become educators. I would also hope that by presenting my own feelings as White researcher encountering uncomfortable dialogues about race and racism might

persuade other White researchers to explore themes of race and racism and to examine their own Whiteness.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided a background of this study, which includes my own personal experience as a student in a previous iteration of this course. I identify the problem that this research is attempting to address, which is that we do not know as much as we should about how adult learners make meaning of race and racism in a CRT class. I also include my purpose, which is to create a narrative portrait that illuminates and describes this experience. I also include the theoretical framework, critical race theory, and how it relates to my research study. To offer clarification, I have defined common terms that are used throughout this research as they apply to this particular research project. In the limitations and delimitations I discuss my choices for this research process, and in the significance section I discuss the ultimate goal of this study, which is to offer a depiction of this course and its participants and to examine I made meaning of my experiences as a White researcher engaging in this course.

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe how a White researcher makes meaning of her role in a CRT course. It also examines how new meaning is made about race and racism by Adult Learners in a CRT course. This chapter reviews the relevant literature as it relates to critical race theory and the themes discussed in the course I observed. This review begins with an overview of critical race theory and its tenets, and moves on to an exploration of critical race theory as it is discussed in both higher education and adult education literature. Then I explore particularly poignant and recurring themes that came up in the dialogue in the course. These themes include, White privilege, Whiteness as property, and the historical development of structures of race in America. The chapter summary will provide a synopsis of the literature that provides the context for this qualitative study.

#### **Procedure for the Literature Review**

To search for the terms related to this study, I first used the combined terms (a) adult education (b) critical race theory and (c) higher education in the USF Library database. I also used these search terms in independent searches and in combinations, but I yielded results that were either too broad or the results were duplicated. For my second search, I focused on specific terms relating to critical race theory that were brought up as major themes during classroom discussion. I combined (a) White privilege (b) Whiteness as property (c) the history of race and (d) race and racism in the United States all with the tag “critical race theory” to prevent the search results from

being too broad. After I gathered relevant articles, I used the linear snowballing method to examine the first set of documents and expand my resources. When I found relevant citations in the first article set, I examined the referenced materials and included those in the literature review. The relevant literature based on these searches and related to these terms is examined below.

### **Critical Race Theory and Its Tenets**

As a theoretical framework, CRT emerged in the 1970s as a response to the lack of emphasis given to race in the legal system (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2008). An earlier movement, critical legal studies, created the foundation for CRT by legitimizing critical dialogue surrounding race and the legal system. Rather than merely critiquing the law as it pertained to race and racism, however, critical legal studies also focused on “the specificity of individuals and groups in social and cultural contexts” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 10). In other words, critical legal studies began looking at individual stories as a means to determine how inequities affect individuals and groups of marginalized people in order to work toward social transformation (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Critical legal studies both critiqued legal doctrines for inequities and rejected the idea of meritocracy; it was this scholarly focus that gave rise to critical race theory. Critical race theory (CRT) as a movement seeks to unearth the systemic and endemic nature of racism in the United States in order to expose how race and racism affect social and political systems and, in turn, the lives of people of color. CRT has maintained its activist perspective, meaning that CRT “sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 3).



CRT scholars have examined post-Civil Rights legislation, and asserted that race and racism were still embedded facets of American society, and that the everyday lives of people of color were adversely affected by race and racism even after the supposed victories of the Civil Rights movements (Bell, 1980). Even with victories such as *Brown v. Board of Education*, scholars such as professor Derrick Bell and Allan Freedman still found that the systemic and endemic nature of racism after the Civil Rights movement perpetuated inequities in the law and in socio-political systems (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2005; Closson, 2010). Bell asserted that the successes of Civil Rights movement was nothing more than interest convergence in which the United States benefited abroad from the appearance that racial inequality was in the past and not a part of the new America (Bell, 1980).

Since the advent of CRT, several “spin-off” movements have sprung up as a response to inequities outside or alongside of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For example, Queer-crit, which has developed its own body of scholarship, maintains that members of the LGBTQ+ communities are subject to endemic inequities because their sexuality or gender identity deviates from heterosexual and cisgender. In the same vein, LatCrit and TribalCrit movements have taken critical stances regarding ethnicity, and focus on language rights, people’s rights, and, specific to TribalCrit, rights to sovereignty and land claims (Delgado & Stefancic 2001; Brayboy, 2005). Each spin-off movement cites CRT as a main catalyst for the examination of systems that keep people of non-heterosexual, non-White status marginalized.

Though Bell (1980), Delgado (1996), Solorzano & Yosso (2006), Delgado and Stefancic (2006), and Ladson-Billings (1998, 2000) have all attempted to define the

central tenets of critical race theory in their own words. For this research, the following tenets emerged as themes in the classroom dialogue that informed the portraits:

1. That racism is endemic
2. Whiteness is property
3. Race is socially constructed

These tenets, though not accepted by all critical race theorists, underscore the significance of analyzing race and racism and are relevant to this research.

The first tenet is the most relevant to my research, and it serves as a theoretical basis for understanding the rest of the tenets. This tenet asserts that racism is endemic and is a facet of everyday life, most notably, for people of color, and that race and racism have become ingrained in the fabric of American society. With this assumption comes a critique of liberal anti-racism. Liberal anti-racism, or liberalism, asserts that people can be color-blind and that individuals are judged and rewarded as a result of merit rather than race. Appeals to colorblindness have been a social issue since the Civil Rights movement because most Whites would like to believe that race is no longer an issue (Tate, 1997; Dickinson, 2012). Tate (1997) makes the statement that racism is not merely enacted by White supremacists; instead, racism is actually perpetuated by liberal Whites who claim to be colorblind but end up perpetuating the myth of post-racial America.

If race is a facet of everyday experience, and race is socially constructed. Ideas of what race is and what it represents about a person have been constructed to draw racial lines that serve to pinfold individuals into categories based on stereotypes. As Delgado and Stefancic (2012) note, “people with common origins share certain physical

traits...these constitute only an extremely small portion of their genetic endowment...and have little or nothing to do with distinctly human, higher-order traits, such as personality, intelligence, and moral behavior” (p. 8). Dar-nimrod and Heine (2012) underscore this argument against racial determinism by detailing the social construction of behaviors by examining genetic attributions for human conditions. In their article the authors assert that traits attributed to race are actually socially, or psychologically constructed and are not attributed to genetic information.

Because race is experienced socially, it would follow that experiences surrounding race and racism would become personal, lived experiences. Therefore, CRT is not relegated to race studies alone; instead, CRT is a framework for analyzing lived experience in all disciplines such as anthropology, social studies, history, literature, and many more. Love (2004) contends that CRT “represents a paradigm shift in the discourse about race and racism... by challenging existing methods of conducting research on race and inequality” (p. 228). CRT scholars often seek alternative methods for conducting research that allows them to understand feelings and values as well as varying perspectives. The point of qualitative research is to provide a more human way to research values and feelings. The use of narrative storytelling, such as the narrative portrait that is the center of this research study, is one example of how CRT scholars reject the assumption that research is observed and factual, and instead investigate the impact that racism has on people of color by seeking to illuminate their lived experiences. It is through narratives, both fictional and nonfictional, that CRT exposes ideas of race and personal experiences with racism (Dickinson, 2012). It should be noted that storytelling is typically relegated to certain areas of study; therefore, this use

of storytelling as research is unconventional, which often brings CRT into the forefront of arguments about legitimacy in research.

When using CRT as an analytical tool for education research, Solorzano and Yosso (2002) assert that research: (a) should center on race and racism in all aspects of the research process; (b) should challenge traditional research paradigms as well as texts and theories that have been used to explain people of color's experiences; (c) should provide a transformative response to subordination; (d) should focus on people of color's racialized, gendered, and classed experiences; and (e) should apply an interdisciplinary knowledge base drawing from all areas of higher education in order to develop an understanding of students' of color's experiences in higher education (p. 35). These aspects of CRT as an analytical tool are similar to the central tenets of CRT in that they focus primarily on the acknowledgement of lived experiences of race and racism as a tool to understanding how race is experienced.

### **Critical Race Theory and Higher Education**

Since adult educators may also identify with the field of higher education, it is important to explore how race has been written about in the higher education literature. In this study, I am primarily concerned with "race talk" in the college and university classroom, and the extent to which graduate education prepares graduates for coping with issues dealing with race (Pollock, 2004, p. 4; Thompson, 2005).

Theodore (2008) conducted a study in which race became the focus of conversation in her International Relations (IR) course. She noted student responses to the concept. The author asserts that, since American students come to University with "fairly inflexible ideas about what race is, what it means, and where and how it is and is

not relevant to their studies,” a conversation surrounding race in the classroom is not only uncomfortable, but unexpected. The student responses in her article detail an unwillingness to admit that race still has a bearing on people of color after what they cite as the success of the Civil Rights movement. Relatedly, the student responses also point to a tendency to view the world as color-blind, and were uncomfortable with the notion that policy-makers might make their decisions based on racial bias.

Ortiz (2015) makes many of the same assertions that Theodore does, concluding that neo liberal ideas of race and racism have infiltrated higher education enforcing the idea that race is no longer an issue, so it does not need to be discussed. Ortiz then makes the case for race talk to become a focus of contemporary American educational institutions and pedagogical practice. However, Ortiz reminds the reader that these institutions are situated within a racial context and exist “as sites that are meant to primarily develop and train minds and bodies in order to maintain the dominant and structural status quo... while simultaneously claiming to be centers for equitable multiculturalism and student empowerment” (p. 67). Ortiz concludes with a call to action for both educators and learners to elevate their consciousness by “decolonizing ways of knowing” and redefining their understanding of what it really means to be educated (p. 75). With this elevation of consciousness, comes the responsibility of embracing expansive and alternative pedagogies that include discussions that focus on race and racism.

Several higher education studies follow the theme of silence about race in the higher education classroom and express the lack of preparation that graduate students receive with regard to talking about and experiencing race (Zuniga, Nagada, & Sevig,

2002; Shulman, Golde, Conklin Bueschel, & Garabedian, 2006; Sealy-Ruiz, 2010).

Castagno (2008) makes the argument that issues of race are effectively silenced in the interest of keeping the balance of power favoring the majority, stating, “even though issues of race are always present and are often at the surface of school-related discourse, practice, and policies, educators are consistently silent and are socializing students to be silent about them” (p. 315). This leads to a color-blind racial ideology, which presupposes that race is irrelevant in this day and age, and that progress and equity are formed solely on the basis of meritocracy. If, as the studies show, graduate students have been trained to remain silent about race, this could significantly impact the experiences that adult education practitioners may have while teaching courses that deal with themes of race and racism. If students are taught to be silent and to view race and racism as an archaic social structure that no longer truly affects social institutions such as the classroom, the outcome may be that they embrace ideas of meritocracy. Such an outcome could also influence the experiences of adult education practitioners as they teach courses that deal with themes of race and racism because adult education practitioners are then charged with reflecting on their own (mis)understandings of meritocracy and race before they begin an inquiry with their students.

### **Critical Race Theory and Adult Education**

Like critical race theory, adult education as a field began as a movement for social change (Armstrong & Miller, 2006). For example, Phyllis Cunningham, a renowned adult educator whose legacy is social and ethical responsibility, wrote a 1996 article describing the early stages of the adult education graduate program at Northern

Illinois University. In this program, she actively engaged people of color to enter into the program in order to combat the systemic marginalization of the graduate programs and to build a program that focused on inclusion and diversity. The cohort's goal was to "extend the progressive social change agenda" (p. 1). At this time, adult education was still a progressive movement, and had not yet shifted to a focus on professionalization; however, as the program gained ground, aspects of it were criticized as being irrelevant in post-racial America. For example, she notes that the African American student conference was criticized by some faculty members because it was not a priority they could understand. As she details the program's "war of attrition" against curricular issues and discusses the academy and its confusion about progressive issues, she brings up an interesting point: When did adult education as a field begin to change from a progressive movement to one that became non-critical in focus? Though there is no real answer to this question, the details surrounding this particular program seem to point to the forced Whitewashing of the program by NIU.

From the White European perspective, race since the Civil Rights movement is a non-issue, so why should the focus be one of race? What the institution and critical faculty members failed to realize is that adult education is a progressive movement, and that race, though perhaps not as salient for Whites as it is for Blacks, has a place in the adult education space because it is an issue created and transformed by society.

As Beder (1987) states, the purposes of adult education have consistently been 1. to facilitate change in a dynamic society; 2. to support and maintain a good social order; 3. to promote productivity; and 4. to enhance personal growth. Graduate education, one could argue, is primarily concerned with facilitating change and

enhancing personal growth. In response to these responsibilities, pedagogy and praxis have evolved to include teaching from the margins. Ideas like culturally responsive teaching and multicultural education have become buzzwords in the field of education and have informed current practices specifically in the field of adult education (Guy, 2000). Recently, the discussion of race and teaching race in the classroom has shifted focus to preparing an inclusive and safe environment for race to be discussed, and the classroom has also become a place to investigate the social background of racial ideologies (Rothschild, 2003; Brookfield, 2005; Brookfield, 2013). This is where the goals of adult education and the purpose of critical race theory converge. Because adult education is seen as a means through which to enhance social transformation, it is enriched by framing this transformation within the context of critical race theory because critical race theory itself is a means through which to explore and assess our understandings of race and racism.

Brookfield's (2005) *The Power of Critical Theory for Adult Learning and Teaching*, begins with the admission that the word *theory* typically leaves individuals with a sense of apprehension because theories rarely provide a sense of completion. Theories are ideas and hypotheses that serve as an inquiry into a subject matter, but unlike the traditional sciences, which focus on "proving" theories, the education field is largely interested in the conversation that theories spark. Brookfield's book focuses on explaining what Critical Theory is and how it applies to the field of adult education; additionally, he focuses on justifying the use of Critical Theory. As Brookfield states, "A critical approach to understanding adult learning sees it as comprising a number of crucial tasks such as learning how to perceive and challenge dominant ideology,



unmask power, contest hegemony, and practice democracy” (p. 2). This is the daunting task of the critical theorist. The question is, are these tasks practicable?

Developing and understanding theories is an important part of being an educator because, as Brookfield states, “Theory is eminently practical” (p. 3). Not only is our understanding of the world largely based on theories, but very practically, our teaching begins with a theory about what our students should learn and how we think we can help them learn. Not every class is the same, so when an educator approaches his or her class for the first time, he or she is basing current lessons, current ideas about classroom interactions, and current ideas about grading on past interactions. If these ideas change due to a different classroom environment, it is important that the educator reflect on his or her new class and respond with an eagerness to theorize about a new educational situation in response to a new environment. Without the willingness to theorize and experiment, an instructor becomes stagnant and less effective. This willingness and enthusiasm to theorize about adult learning and development is a necessary facet of educating adults; without it, an adult educator is ill prepared to advance in his or her field.

Race matters to the field of adult education because the classroom environment that adult education practitioners create mirrors the world we live in, the social structures that frame our understanding and the relationships we build both personally and professionally. As Lindeman put it, adult education is “where vocational education leaves off. Adult Education’s purpose is to put meaning into the whole of life” (1925, p. 5). As adult education practitioners, it is our collective responsibility to prepare our students to be successful; as such, an understanding of race is essential for students to

explore and understand not only their own experiences with race, but to be able to formulate their own understanding of others' experiences with race and racism. As adult education practitioners we are also given the opportunity to challenge racism by revealing its systemic reach.

W.E.B. Du Bois was the first to acknowledge the social and personal aspects of race. Du Bois established racial identity as having an impact both on how individuals see themselves and experience the world as well as how racial groups perceive other groups. Because racial identity is socially constructed, it is important for adult learners, who find themselves navigating a social landscape riddled with racial baggage, to be able to understand race as both individuals and as members of society.

### **Critical Race Theory and Portraiture**

The purpose of portraiture as a method for qualitative research is to vividly portray contexts, interactions, and participants. When portraiture is used alongside CRT in a research context, these contexts are often political, acknowledging and exploring the participants' personal lived experiences with race and racism. Chapman (2007) details the intersectionality of CRT and portraiture, stating "using portraiture and CRT, a researcher connects participants' experiential knowledge as racialized subjects to the multiple ways in which people of color understand and navigate their communities, schools, and professional lives" (pp. 157). For this research study, portraiture was chosen as an effective means to explore these contexts and experiences within a narrative framework.

Portraiture is a method used less often in educational research than in the social sciences or in the liberal arts (Chapman, 2007). However, there have been several

narrative portraits that have studied the ways in which teachers and students experience discussions around race and racism in the classroom. Dixon's (2005) portrait detailed the struggles of African American women as they navigate multiracial classrooms in a K-12 setting and set the groundwork for exploring the misconceptions of multicultural teaching. In her article, Newton (2005) explored the challenges facing two Arab American women preservice teachers after 9/11. Newton's portrait details these teachers' use of art-based inquiry, including poetry and collage, to create a space for examining their own struggles. Chapman (2007), an assistant professor of urban education at the University of Wisconsin, composed a brief, but poignant, portrait of a multiracial class exploring the idea of lineage. As she depicts in the portrait, the African American students had difficulty tracing their lineage because many of the students did not know one side of their family. As Chapman explains, this portrait is a counterstory to the majoritarian tale that "reinstates the status quo and captures students of color primarily through negative images" (pp. 156). By writing and examining this portrait, Chapman sets up her article that explores the intersections between CRT, portraiture, and education research. Although she creates a portrait to examine women in education, Hill's (2005) portrait moved away from K-12 teaching and explored the ways in which African Americans experience teaching multi-racial classes in higher education.

In each research instance, regardless of K-12 or higher education status, portraiture is used in tandem with CRT to examine how participants come together to create meaning regarding the complexity of race and lived experience. Portraits demonstrate how people create meaning in what Lawrence-Lightfoot (1986) calls, "a search for goodness" (pp. 23). The researcher, according to Chapman, must embrace

and “consciously explore the strengths of the research site and the ways in which challenges are approached and handled, but it does not exclude the messy contradictory nature of human experience and behaviors” (pp. 160). It is examining these experiences, regardless of how controversial or uncomfortable that makes portraiture inherently good. This examination allows for the ability to “embrace contradictions” and to “document the beautiful/ ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, pp. 9). For example, in Chapman's portrait, the harsh reality is that the African American students felt marginalized by the lesson on lineage, which is evidenced by the dialogue and mannerisms captured by the portrait. The students themselves didn't vocalize this, but to read the account, it is obvious that the lesson fell short for them and resulted in frustration and even combative behavior. Chapman's portrait offers insight into how the lesson failed, and she is then able to offer suggestions as to how educators could avoid marginalizing groups by thinking about and offering “different pathways” (pp. 160). Combining portraiture as a qualitative research method with CRT can help educators analyze their classroom interactions and discover the inequities and marginalizations that inevitably occur but often go unnoticed.

### **White Privilege**

As a White researcher studying how meaning is made about race and racism in the graduate classroom, it is important to acknowledge White privilege and how it is examined in the CRT literature. To help Whites understand White privilege, McIntosh (2001) created a list of questions designed to make visible concessions due to race. Some of the questions include:

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on White privilege.

Because of this privilege, Whites have remarkably different lived experiences than their counterparts of color; this includes being the beneficiaries of an educational system that views Whiteness as the standard. This understanding is key to creating a classroom where honesty about race and racism overcomes the liberal view that race does not really matter (Giroux, 1997; Brown, 2003).

A central tenet of critical race theory asserts that racism is an everyday facet of life for people of color. This is not the same for Whites who can ignore race because they do not experience race in the same ways that people of color do. White privilege is this ability to ignore race with the conscious or unconscious result of both perpetuating

marginalization and systemic racism while upholding racial superiority and Whiteness as a standard.

Just as Whiteness has affected social constructs like the law, it has also impacted the field of education. Whiteness has become a symbol of who benefits from education, and the impact that race has on school children reflects the impact that race has on the community at large. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) cite the fact that communities with more valuable tangible property are able to fund schools at higher rates than communities with less income. This has, over time, allowed the schools in White neighborhoods to afford better resources than schools in Black neighborhoods; it has, therefore, become a standard that White schools, benefit from their Whiteness because they maintain the value of being “White,” which reaffirms that Whiteness is valuable property.

In order to understand what White privilege is, it is essential to examine how White people develop racial identity. Helms (1990) detailed a model that examines how White people form racial identity. Helms notes that Whites are not only oblivious to race because whiteness serves as a neutral base from which all other races are measured, but that Whites are also oblivious to their own racism. This lack of racial awareness can stem from having limited experiences with people of color or the inclination to profess color-blindness. Though Helms refers to these changes as stages, I prefer the term phase. Stage implies an evolution, which is not necessarily the case for most Whites who may cycle through the first three phases in a nonlinear way, or who may experience these phases out of order depending on their interactions with people of color. The six phases that Helms details are contact, disintegration, reintegration,

pseudo-independence, immersion, and autonomy. Each phase details a new way that Whites begin to perceive race. The contact phase marks a perpetuation of stereotypes and a dichotomy based on superiority and inferiority. In the next phase, disintegration, Whites can perpetuate color-blindness, believing that they are not racist because they simply do not see race as an important societal factor. Once Whites encounter and recognize race, the reintegration phase often dredges up feelings of White superiority. During this phase, Whites begin to idealize their own race and begin to express beliefs that people of color are responsible for their own marginalization. In the pseudo-independence phase, Whites begin to explore understandings of other races and cultures; however, this phase does not engender change in thought, but instead leads to an inquiry that could potentially lead to the immersion phase in which Whites begin to understand themselves as racial beings. In this phase, the concept of Whiteness is explored, and Whites begin to understand that they do benefit from their Whiteness. Helms's final phase is autonomy, in which Whites learn to become non-racist and can truly reflect on White privilege. That it takes phases of reflection, and exposure to people of color to convince Whites that race is a factor in American society speaks to the salience of White privilege. This White privilege has also influenced property laws, and as a result, Whiteness has become property.

### **Whiteness as Property**

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) discuss the importance of acknowledging Whiteness as property when exploring race and themes of social inequity within a framework of CRT. Within their central propositions regarding social and school inequities, the authors conclude that the U.S. society is based on property rights and

that the intersection of property rights and race, “creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social and consequently school inequity” (p. 48).

Dubois (1903) recognized that there was a double-standard of justice in the United States, and that an intangible benefit of Whiteness was the ability to claim innocence and to be believed. Nearly one hundred years after DuBois, Harris (1993) defined Whiteness as property citing the laws in the United States which refers to physical objects and intangible ideas to which a value has been assigned as property. Harris also cited that, during slavery, Whiteness defined the legal status of a person as free; whereas, Blackness meant slavery.

Though most Americans tacitly believe that the foundation of our country lies in the idea of human or Civil Rights, the early United States was more concerned with property rights than the rights of individuals. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) begin their discussion of race as property with the origins of racial discord between the Native American Indians and the White colonizers. The White argument with regard to land acquisition in the early U.S. was that the Native Americans had no claim to land that they had not tilled. This was a complaint grounded in the desire to acquire land. Colonizers did not know, or did not care, that the land had cultural and religious significance for the Indian people; this ignorance allowed the Whites to petition the new government for land rights despite Indian protests. This conflict between natural rights and Civil Rights allowed the White settlers to justify their encroachment and eventual overtaking of Indian land without the guilt of having stripped an entire population of its rights to what was theirs. This tension continued through the development of the Constitution, and, according to Ladson-Billings, “was greatly exacerbated by the



presence of African peoples as slaves in America” (53). The idea that people could be property perpetuated the notion that property rights had precedence over civil or human rights because, without this ideal, slavery could not be justified by law. The history of the U.S. is rife with such struggles between the ideals of humanity and base notions of property. These struggles have created untold tensions regarding race, racism and privilege.

Though many individuals, when asked, would consider property to be a tangible object, property, according to Dixson and Rousseau (2005), “is a right rather than a physical object” (8). Working with this more abstract definition of property, it is possible, then, to conceive of property as an intangible value attributed to irrevocable assets. Whiteness as a property is an idea firmly grounded in the notion that Whiteness is a valued asset which, as a property, serves the purpose of maintaining the status quo and dominating other races by forcing them to conform to White ideologies.

A historical example of Whiteness as a property was the foundation for the Plessy v. Ferguson case. According to the statute of Louisiana acts of 1890, the state was required to provide separate but equal accommodations for Whites and Blacks. These acts and the subsequent accommodations affected all aspects of life. A Black passenger was not permitted to ride in a White coach because he or she did not hold, what was defined as “Whiteness.” On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1892, Homer Adolph Plessy, a passenger, was denied entrance onto a White carriage because, though he was predominantly White, he had one-eighth Black ancestry. This proportion of Blackness negated his Whiteness, leading to his “forcible ejection from the White carriage” (Cornell

University Law School). Plessy's case was brought to Louisiana's Supreme Court, and "race as property" was at the forefront of the case.

Plessy claimed that he was denied admittance into a White carriage because of his Black ancestry. Essentially, Plessy, by being deprived of access to a first-class White carriage and relegated to the poorer quality Black carriage, was stripped of his Whiteness. Plessy's case was rejected by a seven to one vote on the grounds that "separate but equal" facilities were provided to the two races, and that Plessy, having even a small amount of Black ancestry, was required, by law, to board a carriage designated for people of color. Though the segregation was established on this principle of, "separate but equal," public facilities designated for people of color were generally of lesser quality than the facilities offered to Whites. White facilities were a literal representation of the status quo, and the facilities provided for "others" were significantly inferior, maintaining the idea that if an individual was White, he or she maintained a valuable property. The right guaranteed to holders of this property was "the absolute right to exclude" which meant that they could determine what made a person White (Dixson p. 8). Plessy, by having even a small amount of Black ancestry, looked Black; therefore, he was denied his rights as a White man.

The racism masked by the "separate but equal" principle still persists in the field of education. Both Dixson and Rousseau as well as Ladson-Billings and Tate center their articles regarding Critical Race Theory around the reality of persistent inequality in education. The "color-blind" mentality, they assert, is a direct cause of the inconsistencies in the quality of education for students of color versus the quality of education provided for White students. This bold claim is supported by both qualitative

and quantitative research which reveals that schools that have a high proportion of students of color tend to have poorer facilities, less experienced faculty, and a lower rate of public funding. In addition to—and possibly a product of—this inequality, the high school dropout rates and incarceration rates is disproportionately high for African American students as opposed to White students in the same areas (Dixson p. 8). When it comes to the education system in America, Whiteness is becoming an increasingly valuable commodity because, as the statistics show, White students are at the receiving end of privilege while African American students and other students of color, are subject to inferior educational environments. This structural inequality not only maintains the status quo by advantaging White students, it works to subordinate people of color. With the increase in democratic rhetoric promoting a “color-blind” society, this inequality is left unchecked, unexplored, and essentially ignored.

### **White Scholars and Race**

As a White researcher looking at race, I feel that it is necessary to present the dialogue surrounding White scholars and Black studies.

While, generally speaking, CRT scholars have not been proponents of excluding White scholars from researching and writing about race, they have expressed the belief that subjects that deal with race, particularly narratives or stories that treat race as a central theme, are often better understood and written by scholars of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Delgado (1984), debates some of the finer points of this argument, but from the perspective of legal scholarship. Delgado composes an a priori list of reasons why “we look with concern on a situation in which the scholarship about group A [minorities] is written by member of group B [Whites]” (pp. 567). First, Delgado states

that persons in group B may lack information or passion about the struggles of group A. This lack of information and passion could lead to faulty research scenarios, or to follow Delgado's legal interest, lack of passion and information could lead to poor legal counsel. Additionally, Delgado asserts that scholarship from group B may "tend to be sentimental, diffusing passion in useless directions, or wasting time on unproductive breast-beating" (pp. 567). Delgado also states that, despite the positive intentions of scholars from group B, their agenda may be different from that of group A, and that they may shy away from solutions or topics that may make being a member of group B uncomfortable. This particular idea supports Bell's (1973) concept of interest convergence, in which progress made by the Civil Rights movement was only made because it suited the interests of group B. Delgado's argument that group B scholars may not be able to fully investigate matters of race if it makes them uncomfortable or does not fully support their agenda aligns with the notion that progress is made only but for the support of group B. Along these same lines, Delgado asserts that group A's ability to dominate group B could "paralyze members of group A" (pp. 567). This domination could call into question how trustworthy or reliable research by Whites about race or about people of color can be.

This debate over White scholars in Black spaces began in the early 1970s around the time when the first degree-granting Black studies program at Fordham University hired its first White faculty member to teach African American history (Naison, 2002). This debate began my interest in the subject of this study. I began to wonder about my own ability to teach African American literature, and, having only one colleague of color, whose academic focus is in 17th century British poetry, I wondered

who would teach it if I didn't? Also, I wondered if it was fair that administrators might expect that faculty of color would be interested in taking on racial topics. Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2008) assert that people of color are "almost never permitted to break out of the prism and prison of race that has been imposed by a racially coded and constraining society" and that 'regardless of one's stature and accomplishments, race is recruited to remind one that he or she still remains locked in the racial construction' (pp. 279). In the wake of this debate, Hess and Brookfield (2008), argue that, due to the permanence of racism, Whites must begin to explore and understand race as much, if not more than, groups that have been marginalized in order to challenge systemic forms of racism. To me, this means, not only in liberal arts subject areas, but also in adult education. Naison recalls his initial inquiry letter, proclaiming "first of all, I am White," and adding that "this might exclude me, from the program as you have conceived it, and if so I could hardly object" (pp. 120). Naison describes the program as being born from protests in which the Black students demanded a space in which Black history, Black experience and Black culture could be explored in a scholarly way. Black students, at the beginning, shaped the curriculum, and sought Black faculty members from diverse areas of study such as playwrights, poets, marxist intellectuals, sociologists, political scientists, and historians. What resulted, according to Naison, was an intellectual atmosphere that "could be contentious and highly political, blurring the lines between student and faculty, campus and community, scholarship and political advocacy, and artistic expression and communal therapy" (pp. 120). As Naison waited to hear from Fordham as to whether he was going to be offered the position, he reflected on his trepidations being the only White faculty in a Black studies program. "The prospect of

being the only White person in a Black studies program,” he asserts, “was daunting. I knew that some, and perhaps many, Black students would take offense at my presence” (pp. 121).

Niason’s internal debate mirrors the scholarly debate over race in the classroom and the debate as to the role of White scholars in Black spaces. Some scholars have focused on race and how it impacts the very nature of adult education. Taylor, (1999) and Johnson-Bailey(2002) have argued that adult education should be transformative in nature, so race should be discussed in adult education curriculum. Furthering this argument Brookfield (2014), a White adult educator and author, illuminates the debate as to whether White scholars in adult education should even focus on race. Brookfield, to support his argument that White adult educators and scholars have the responsibility to not only discuss race but to confront race in their research, outlines the Eurocentric nature of adult education in order to highlight how race is whitewashed by the academy in favor of a liberal, Euro-American raciality. It is Brookfield’s assertion, then, that exploring themes of race should be a central facet of the adult education classroom in order to, first and foremost, allow adult learners, and their facilitators, to have a place in which to explore ideas of race and racism together with the goal of furthering their understanding and experiences.

### **Historical Development of Structures of Race in America**

The United States has a complicated history with regard to the concept of race. Fredrickson (1988) in, *The Arrogance of Race*, explores the possible origins of racism in America. Fredrickson states that negative perceptions of Africans could have sprung from an association with “savagery, heathenism, and general failure to conform to

European standards of civilization and propriety” (p. 191). Viewing Africans as ‘libidinous savages’ allowed, and to a certain extent, demanded, that the Caucasian majority cultivate its own system of racial hierarchy and ideology. The idea of fear, Fredrickson states, is also paramount in the development of racial ideology: “the Negro became for European Whites, a symbol of the unconscious self, or what he calls the shadow” (p. 191). This profoundly psychological explanation of the origins of race may seem a bit far-fetched. However, a culture’s literature is an effective lens through which to view the societal view of race because of the psychological implications that go hand-in-hand with artistic representation.

This idea of the Negro portraying the “shadow self,” which Jung explores in his work on archetypes, is an interesting idea given the predominant view of Africans in European, particularly British, literature. In *The madwoman in the attic*, a literary criticism of psychology in 19<sup>th</sup> century women’s literature, Gilbert and Gubar explore the idea that Bertha, Mr. Rochester’s half-creole wife from Jamaica, is a representation of Jane’s “shadow self” and that she merely represents a literally ‘darker’ side of Jane. The very notion that Bertha, with her implied ‘darkness’ because of her half-creole heritage, may represent the darker side of Jane is an important factor with regard to European ideas of race. Because Bertha does not conform to British societal standards for both her otherness and her psychological deterioration, she is a prime example of what the Europeans feared. Another example from colonial Britain’s literary canon include Campbell’s *Heart of darkness*, a terrifying journey through the landscape of Africa, in which the title is as telling of the fear that Africa held as the text itself. The idea of Africans representing “bestial sexuality,” as Fredrickson notes, is present in the writings

of Shakespeare. Of race relations in *Othello*, Fredrickson states, “there is no question, then, that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Englishmen were predisposed to accept an unfavorable stereotype of the Black character” (p. 195). Yet, slavery was so intertwined with the political and financial stability of the south that owning slaves and interacting with Africans, who were feared partly on the basis of their ‘darkness,’ was justifiable to the White majority. Europeans brought what they feared most to the Americas, and this profoundly, and perhaps permanently, affected the country’s notions of race up to the present (Frederickson, 1988).

As Frederickson (1988) states, “if reduction of fear leads to greater tolerance, its increase promotes hostility” (p. 195). Fear perpetuated negative views of Blacks by the White majority and thus perpetuated notions of racial hierarchy and discomfort. Though there were White slaves and indentured servants during the first two hundred years of American colonization, the White slave was replaced by the African American. They were the logical candidate for enslavement due to ‘vulnerability...as well as international precedent’ (p. 195). In the early stages of the establishment of slavery, the dominant rationalization, according to Fredrickson, was not due to a fear or prejudice against but the convenience of enslaving the Negro over the White. It was from slavery itself that, as Fredrickson states, the “virulent prejudice” was developed (p. 195).

For a significant portion of European and American history, the prevailing arguments regarding race supported the notion of the biological inferiority of people of color. Texts such as Arthur de Gobineau’s (1853) *Essay on the Inequality of Races* found their way into the American mainstream and seemed to validate a scientific basis for race. These arguments, though not grounded in scientific fact, shaped racial



ideologies in the U.S. As a result, ideas that Whites were superior from a biological standpoint began to justify social, economic, and political prejudices against people of color. However, as Omi and Winant (1994) assert, race is not a biological property and is, instead, a social construct (p. 55). Omi and Winant go on to state, "There is no biological basis for distinguishing among human groups along the lines of race...categories employed to differentiate among human groups along racial lines reveal themselves...to be at best imprecise and at worst completely arbitrary" (p. 55). Racial formation is instead, "a matter of both social structure and cultural representation" (p. 56).

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the development of race as a consciousness, and America was introduced to the first slave narratives by Solomon Northup, William Wells Brown, and Frederick Douglass (1845). These narratives gave voice to the underrepresented and marginalized Black voice for the first time in U.S. history. Frederick Douglass, son of a slave and a White man, wrote *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* in 1845. The narrative dealt with the themes of identity, self-education, the struggle for freedom, and idea of prejudice. Following the success of Douglass's narrative, he traveled extensively giving lectures and speaking at events in the abolitionist north. Upon being asked to speak at an Independence Day celebration, Douglass stated, "This Fourth of July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn." Nearly 50 years later, W.E.B. DuBois (1903) wrote of his own struggle with identity in *The Souls of Black Folk*, a ground-breaking study of Black identity. DuBois states that, "after the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and the Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted

with second-sight in this American world” (p. 3). The ‘second-sight’ to which DuBois refers is the lens through which many African-Americans at the time viewed the country of their birth. The very term, African-American, is a representation of the “double-self” that characterized their identity. Both an American by birth and an African by descent implies duality. DuBois discusses duality and ‘otherness,’ stating, “the history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self...He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face” (p. 3).

Post-civil war America only perpetuated the confusion about race and racial identity further expounded upon by Douglass and DuBois. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Jim Crow segregation assured that African Americans would remain as “others” in their own communities. This era only illuminated the dangers inherent in American racism; furthermore, fear of otherness and the perpetuation of biological inequalities have characterized America’s views on race and racism. It is disappointing, then, that most Americans today believe they have an understanding of ‘what race is’ and ‘what racism means’ when, in fact, a limited number can actually define either term or begin to understand the implications that these questions have on American identity. These are, perhaps, the greatest unanswered and unexplored questions in America. It is a profoundly disappointing realization that, though founded with extraordinary principles and the formative conviction in equal rights, America has found it difficult to resolve

these inconsistencies and accomplish the goal of political, social, and economic equality for all its citizens.

### **Racializing and Post-racializing the Graduate Classroom**

For this study, it is essential to acknowledge racialism and post-racialism in the graduate classroom as it will become essential to analyzing the evolution of understanding that is reached through discussion about themes of race and racism. Often, the intersection between adult education and racial discourse is uncomfortable because, as Brookfield (2014) argues, adult education is, at present, Eurocentric and prizes individualism in areas such as self-directed learning, transformative learning, and critical reflection, but often refuses to see beyond individualism to investigate uncomfortable issues with race and racism. To ignore race in adult education, not only denies adult education's origins as a social movement, but relies on a liberal ideology of "equality and fraternity" in lieu of a true understanding of race (Brookfield, 2014, p. 21). This is where racialism presents itself as a significant, unavoidable fact which affects the lived experiences of adult education practitioners and adult learners (Outlaw, 1996). Brookfield borrows from Outlaw when he defines racialism as "the positive recognition of how his or her lifeworld, positionality, and sense of identity comprise a set of pre-conscious filters and assumptions that frame how one's life is felt and lived" (p. 21). Essentially, Outlaw and Brookfield make the argument that, because racial identity-- just like gender and ethnicity--is essential and constitutive facets of a person's social being, it is essential to examine race in the graduate classroom in order to ensure that non-White perspectives become represented.

Wilder, Osborne, and Jackson (2012) acknowledge that minor progress has been made for people of color, but they assert that concerns about race and racism remain a reality for most minorities, citing post-racial thought within higher education as a challenge for faculty members of color. Although there has been an increase of Black faculty members since the Civil Rights movement, in 2010, Black faculty members represented only 17% of full-time faculty members and only 3% of full professors in the United States (ACE, 2010). In post-racial America, this increase would be cited as progress for African Americans in the academy, but the dismal numbers suggest that racial progress is not as successful as some would suggest. Because there are few faculty members of color at colleges and universities around the country, the literature surrounding their experiences in the classroom has been limited. Not only that, but Lindsay (2015) cites a reticence for students at colleges and universities to discuss historical and social understandings of race because they ascribe to the false notion that race is no longer a prominent issue in the United States. This falsehood stems, Lindsay argues, from the predominant belief--held mostly by Whites--that, by electing its first Black president, the United States has finally crossed the color line.

Given that post-racial thought is a factor in higher education, it is essential that ideas of race and racism are explored in the graduate classroom and as topics of research. Rather than ignoring race and its impact on the classroom, we must continue the sometimes difficult work of unearthing race, its history, and how it affects the lives of adult learners.

## **Teaching Race in the Graduate Classroom**

Many institutions of higher education are approaching the subject of diversity by requiring that more curriculum includes dialogues about race, racism, diversity, and multiculturalism (Perry, Moore, Edwards, Acosta & Frey, 2009). By introducing these dialogues, professors and students are forced to confront race and racism, and to explore their own experiences as well as the experiences of their faculty members and peers. Faculty members who do teach these courses often find that they are navigating an academic space that is perceived as controversial, tense, negative, and sometimes dangerous (DeSoto, 2008; Tucker, 2008; Closson, Bowman, & Merriweather, 2014). When faculty members teach a class that deals with themes of race and racism, they are subject to criticism, often finding that their “evaluations are impacted significantly” (DeSoto 2008, pp. 20-21). For faculty members who rely on evaluations to advance their careers, teaching classes that deal with race and racism is often professionally risky (Akbar, 2002).

The literature offering pedagogical approaches to teaching race and racism to White students as a White professor include methods for approaching subjects like the systemic nature of racism within the education system and White privilege (King, 1991; Banks, 2002; Heinze, 2008; Grant and Sleeter, 2009; Shine, 2011). King (1991), a professor of Teacher Education at Santa Clara University, writes about the critical theory course she created to enhance critical thinking in teacher preparation students. Although King teaches students of all races, she focuses her article on the reactions of White students. King establishes that the primary goal of her course was to “introduce students to a critical perspective that education is not neutral” and that it can “serve

various cultural interest including social control, socialization, assimilation, domination, or liberation” (pp. 640). White students, King asserts, often find her critical approaches threatening because they themselves are beneficiaries of the economic and cultural privilege that are exposed in the course as systemic racism. The reaction, she states, is typically transformative for the White students, engendering an uncomfortable, but much-needed, space for self-reflection. This course forces White students to see how they have benefitted from systemic racism and their own White privilege, and they are challenged to confront race and racism in a way that they may otherwise not be asked to do in other courses that ignore systemic racism.

In his article, Heinze (2008), assistant professor of clinical psychology at Ramapo College, addresses the subject of White privilege within the context of a multicultural psychology course. The author presents practical pedagogical methods that can be used in the classroom to expose White students to their own privilege. The author asserts that helping White students to think critically about how their own privilege allows them to understand the historical and social impact that race has on people of color.

While information to assist White faculty in developing a race pedagogy is available, Black faculty members find themselves in a place where their experiences are unique (Banks, 2002; Grant & Sleeter, 2009; Perry et al., 2009; Closson et al., 2014). Closson et al. note that, although most institutions include curriculum that deals with race and racism, their own institutions do not provide professional development opportunities that consider faculty race when they teach subjects relating to race. The authors also assert that Black faculty members are in a “unique” and “particularized”

place when teaching race and often experience “racial battle fatigue” and threats to their safety (pp. 83). Smith (2004) defines racial battle fatigue as the “level of physiological, psychological, and emotional stress experienced by African American teachers who are assigned classes of predominantly White students who are, usually reluctantly, taking a course that is part of university diversity requirements” (pp. 179). Kelley and Gayles (2010) conducted focus groups with 37 current and former graduate students and a faculty member who attended a multicultural course that focused on experiences dealing with race and racism. White participants in the study reported feelings of resistance to dialogue about multicultural issues, including resistance to the racialized experiences shared by their peers of color. Participants of color perceived that talks about race effectively silenced their White peers, who felt targeted by the dialogue. Resistance to dialogue about race, on either side of the race line, in the classroom, is discouraging for institutions that have increasingly instituted diversity curriculum for teacher education programs (Perry et al., 2009).

Disciplines outside of teacher education have also implemented racial dialogue in their courses. Schmidt (2011), professor of writing at Lehman College, discusses writing about race in discussion boards in a graduate English classroom. The goal of Schmidt’s study is to redirect writing toward written investigations of race in multiracial classrooms. Schmidt argues that by focusing curriculum on race and writing, students are able to read about the personal experiences of their peers in a non-confrontational way. However, Schmidt admits that fostering these discussions in a strictly online format presents a limitation to these dialogues is a “social detachment and disembodiment for addressing the all-too-embodied topic of race” (pp. 37).

In their research focusing on graduate music education, Bradley, Golner, and Hanson (2007), examined the experiences of students and faculty engaged in a *Race issues in music teaching* course. The students in this particular course were all White and were required to write journal entries in order to provide their understandings and experiences with the course materials that examined Whiteness and how it affects society in the United States. In their journals, the students expressed resistance and discomfort with regard to issues of Whiteness, and the authors assert that they do not believe that a 15-week course in racism could help students overcome a “lifetime of socialization based on Whiteness” (pp. 301).

### **The Role of the Participant Observer**

In order for this Critical Race Theory course to run in the fall of 2016, it needed one more enrolled student. I originally wanted to observe the class without participating because I wanted to keep the research situation from being in any way compromised by my participation in the course. However, because the course needed one more student or it would have been cancelled, I enrolled in the course as a student, and I had to view the research situation from an insider-outsider perspective. I was technically an insider as an enrolled student who had to participate in the course during discussions, and who had to complete the assignments and presentations just like everyone else enrolled in the course. Yet my goal for being in the class was that of an outsider; I wanted to see how this class would come together and make meaning of race and racism. I researched the role of the participant observer to understand a bit more about what it meant to be an insider or outsider.



Even though I was an insider of the course because of my registration status, because of my race, I never quite felt as though I was accepted or, “native” to the course. I think the racial lines of the course, myself and one other student being White in a room of people of color talking about race, kept me from having a true insider’s perspective. Merton (1972) was the first to define the insider-outsider position as it applies to participant observation, asserting that an insider-outsider perspective refers to a researcher who has, or claims to have, hidden knowledge of the group that an outsider would have to acquire. Additionally, Merton asserts that an insider would possess intimate knowledge of the participants under research that would be difficult to an outsider to acquire. Later, Haniff (1985) concluded that the terms ‘native’ or ‘insider’ are problematic to define because they imply a intangible closeness between researcher and participants. Researchers have, for the past four decades, attempted to define *insiderness* and *outsiderness*, and have only become more dichotomous in their definitions of these terms, which, for a time seemed mutually exclusive (Zinn, 1979; Olson, 1977; Surra and Ridley, 1991; and Christensen and Dahl, 1997). By the late 90s, an insider could not be an outsider and vice versa; however, as the early 2000s began, De Andrade (2000) suggested that, rather than ascribing the status of insider or outsider to a research situation, that the status may evolve or change from day to day. In De Andrade’s view, the status is conditional, based on how easily the researcher can identify with the participants of the research study. At certain points in the research situation, the researcher may identify to a greater or lesser extent with the participants, thus shifting the researcher’s status from insider to outsider. Human nature and lived experience is not precise, and are often not easily defined; therefore, it would stand to

reason that a relationship between researcher and participants may not fit into any particular classification from one minute to the next. This is how I saw myself in the research situation as I was a participant observer in the Critical Race Theory course. There were times that I identified with some of the stories and perspectives of the participants, and yet there were other times that I could not identify with the experiences of the participants because, as a White person, I have not had the same lived experiences with race and racism as my counterparts of color.

Mullings (1999), moved away from the debate surrounding insider and outsidership to an inquiry to the extent to which a participant observer should be present within the data output. From this perspective, it is essential for the participant observer, regardless of status of insider or outsider in the research situation, to acknowledge their own place within the research and to reveal how they may have illuminated or limited their own perspectives within the research text and to “describe the participating self in a symbiotic relationship with the observed and the text” and to “reveal the interconnectedness of both” (Labaree, 2002, p. 107).

An issue that came up for me as a participant observer in the course, was the pre-existing knowledge of the subject material that I had acquired during the first time I took the course. Deutsch (1981) acknowledges this and notes that participant observers maintain objectivity, regardless of any “comfortable perquisites” of insidership (p. 190). Deutsch also suggests triangulation and member checks as methods for ensuring objectivity because it forces the researcher to interact closely with the participants, and it provides the researcher with the potential for a disorienting dilemma, which could result in deeper personal reflection. Labaree (2002) asserts that “possession of

advanced knowledge should not lead to a disregard for questioning one's own insider knowledge" and that advanced knowledge should merely provide "guideposts for approaching the setting as an insider participant observer" (pg. 108).

For this research situation, my role as participant observer changed status from insider to outsider constantly. I was in the class, experiencing the class as a student, but I also reminded myself that I was there for a research purpose. At times, I felt that I was simultaneously an insider and an outsider, particularly when I had previous experience with the topic, but I could not understand it from an insider perspective because of my race. It was challenging to traverse these two statuses, and I was constantly reflecting on my understandings, not only of the material, but of the classroom interactions as well. Objectivity is important in any research situation, but because I occupied a third space between the boundaries of insider-outsider status, I present the course objectively, relying heavily on the transcripts to create the portraits, but reflecting on my own thoughts as the dialogues took place.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I examined the related literature surrounding Adult Education and CRT. Understanding the significant intersection between adult education and racial discourse, though uncomfortable, acknowledges adult education's origins as a social movement. This includes information about racializing the classroom, CRT and its central tenets, Whiteness as property, White privilege, and the importance of storytelling as a means to understand how race affects learners and facilitators. Also in this chapter, I examined my understanding of my own racial makeup and how I believe this understanding may impact the study as a participant observer. I also discussed my role

as participant observer as both outsider and insider in the CRT course that I studied. In this chapter, I also reflected about my own race to ensure that I am acknowledging my own Whiteness before I prepare to tell the story of how race and racism is explored in a graduate-level classroom.

By examining this body of literature, I was able to observe the intersections of Adult Education and CRT and I was able to examine the complexities of my own role as a participant observer in this research situation. From analyzing the literature surrounding portraiture, CRT, and Adult Education, I was able to identify an absence of any portrait that ties CRT and Adult Education together and examines and describes a situation in which a group of students gather together to make meaning of race and racism at the graduate level.

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the research design, rationale, method and procedure that I used in this study. I organized this chapter into sections, each providing context for the research. First, I detail the purpose of this study and the research questions that guided me. Next I discuss the research design and the rationale for this study. In this section, I discuss portraiture as a qualitative method and my reasoning behind writing portraits for this particular study. I also describe my methods for data collection, the summary of procedures, and the data analysis. Next, I discuss the trustworthiness of the research, and I include a reflexive statement about my role as a White researcher conducting research about race and racism.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe how a White researcher makes meaning of her role in a CRT course and how new meaning is made about race and racism by Adult Learners in a CRT course. For this study, I used the portraiture method to write four portraits of the class meetings that would serve as an artifact of the dialogues and interactions that occurred within that space. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. In what ways does a White woman make meaning of her role as a researcher in a Critical Race Theory course
2. In what ways to adult learners make meaning of race and racism in a Critical Race Theory course?

## Research Design and Rationale

The research questions that guide this study ask in what ways does a White woman make meaning of her role as a researcher in a CRT course, and in what ways adult learners make meaning of race and racism in a CRT course. These questions can best be responded to by using qualitative research methods. Berkwitz and Inui (1998) describe qualitative research as a form of inquiry that allows the researcher to analyze how and in what ways information is conveyed “through language and behavior in natural settings” (pp. 196). They go on to state that qualitative methods are “appropriate for practical situations in which a fuller understanding of behavior, the meanings and contexts of events, and the influence of values on choices” are needed (pp. 196). Qualitative research methods are particularly useful when attempting to understand a context or to describe events, or when the goal of the study is to provide insight into the human element of a particular research situation; thus, given the goals of the research questions, a qualitative approach was appropriate for this particular study.

Because the purpose of this qualitative study is to examine the ways that new meaning is made in a CRT course, I chose to use the portraiture method, which allowed me to portray the classroom context and to describe the classroom interactions as meaning was made.

Portraiture is an ever-evolving qualitative methodology originally developed by Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, in which the researcher provides detailed accounts of individuals or groups in an artistic rendering that includes research observations and personal reflections (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997; Davis, 2003). Lightfoot herself described portraiture as a “dialogue between science and art,” which at its heart is a

pursuit of truth and insight into the “knowledge projected by the imagination” (p. 14).

Portraiture is, at its core, a method of manifesting a snapshot of a particular context with the intention of illuminating the lived experiences of the participants in that context. The ultimate goal of portraiture is to capture these experience in such a detailed way that the lived experiences come to life for the reader.

Portraiture has been characterized as a case study method, so I have approached the research situation with this in mind (Hackman, 2002; Merriam, 2009). A case study, according to Merriam (1998), is particularistic, heuristic, and descriptive. This study explores a particular situation, it illuminates understanding and meaning-making processes in this particular course, and I describe the classroom setting as it was. So drawing from its connection to case study, portraits allow the researcher to examine and illuminate experience while providing a rich description for the reader that allows the reader to be present at the moment of research. What sets portraiture as a method apart from case studies is the emphasis on the use of art as a means through which to capture the complexities and the dimensionality of the human experience (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1986). Portraiture is not simply a sketch or detailed outline of an experience; rather, portraiture as a method utilizes interviews, observations, field notes, and the researcher's own reflections as a means to collect data for analysis. For this study, portraiture was an appropriate research method to use because the output is an artistic and aesthetic portrait composed with the researcher and participants' experiences at the forefront of the portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1997). The word portrait is often associated with the arts, but in qualitative research, the portrait is typically presented in narrative form. In the arts, portraiture is a method in which an artist creates

a visual representation of a subject in the place where he or she is at that moment in time. A portrait is much more than a picture of a person. A portrait depicts, subtly, the nuances of that individual's personality and physical appearance, and the artist brings his or her own style and personality into that portrait, creating an image that speaks more to the experience of the act of creation than the work of art itself (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). In the social sciences, portraiture is an artistic rendering of a person, group of people, or place which is presented through a narrative that blends the experience of the subject(s) and the researcher with the ultimate goal of demonstrating these experiences as ever-evolving and complex. Davis (2003) makes a connection between artistic portraiture and portraiture as a methodology, stating "like the artist, the research portraitist works to balance elements of context, thematic structure, relationship, and voice into an aesthetic whole that is so carefully constructed that every part seems an essential ingredient in the clarity of cohesive interpretation" (p. 23).

Although portraiture is most widely known to focus on a single person's experiences, these portraits depict the interactions within a classroom context similar to the study conducted by Quigly, Trauth-Nare, and Beeman-Cadwallader (2015). In their study, the authors focused on creating a holistic view of two science classrooms and the experiences of all of the participants therein. Chapman (2007) also used this approach to portraiture when she conducted research in a diverse urban classroom with a White teacher talking to her students about race and racism. In both of these studies, emphasis was given to the group dynamic and the collective experiences of the participants in the classroom while maintaining the perspective of the researcher. Also, in both studies the authors paid specific attention to details of the setting and context,



and provided rich description of the events that took place in order to depict the classroom in such a way that the reader felt immersed in the learning situation.

Two weeks after the course began, I obtained IRB approval to conduct this study. For this study, I acted as a participant observer. I was a registered student in the class, and I was required to fulfill all of the class requirements as a student. I chose to act as a participant observer because I wanted to be fully immersed in the course in order to create fully immersive portraits of particular class meetings. To engage with the course, I felt that it was necessary to complete the assignments, the weekly readings and the supplemental materials, and I wanted to be involved in the classroom dialogue. When I made this decision, I felt if I were fully involved in the class as a student, I might be able to provide a richer description of the classroom dialogue. I also felt that my own reflections as a participant observer would be richer than if I was merely observing the class.

As a class, we met in the University of South Florida College of Education building every Monday night from 5:00 to 7:50, though class meetings often ran over or students stayed to continue the discussion. All of the students as well as Dr. Closson sat around a configuration of desks that were pushed together at the beginning of each class. The class included class discussions, small group discussions, and student presentations.

Having taken this particular course in the past, I know that the dialogue in this particular class can become very personal very quickly. In order to maintain the comfort and openness of the participants, I chose to not include personal background of the participants or interviews. I felt that if I had proposed to the students that they would be

interviewed or that I would be writing about their backgrounds that they may have found this intrusive, and this may have affected the dialogue, causing students to edit their thoughts or to remain silent entirely. I also wanted to ensure the anonymity of the students, and providing a detailed background might have compromised this anonymity. The students did not sign up for the class knowing that I would be conducting this study, so I chose to maintain a degree of unobtrusiveness for their piece of mind and comfort.

### **Data Collection**

In order to gather data to create the portrait, I observed six class meetings, participated in class assignments, conducted one interview with the faculty member, and created an anonymous online survey for the students in the course.

I engaged in the course as a participant observer, completing class readings and assignments, and participating in classroom discussions. From this perspective, I could immerse myself in the research situation, providing detail of how adult learners meaning of race and racism. For this, I recorded each class meeting with a recorder, and had the class meetings transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. All of the participants gave IRB consent, and were given the option to have the recorder turned off at any time, but no participant took this option.

Once the transcriptions were done, I uploaded the transcripts to a private Google Drive document, and shared the link with the participants of the course, allowing them to make comments on the document, so they could member check the transcripts. The purpose of the member check was to allow the students to read the full transcripts and make corrections or request that sections of dialogue be removed.

During classes, I took extensive field notes, remarking on common themes that emerged in that class, and taking note of dialogues that I wanted to listen to again for clarification. I also took notes on the setting, gestures, and overall mood of the evening that would allow me to incorporate details into the portrait.

Each week there were assigned readings centered on a theme or tenet of the CRT research. During the week before class, while reading the articles assigned for the class, I would take notes detailing my own understandings of the major themes of the articles to both prepare for that week's discussion and to add to my understanding of the course concepts. When the class was asked to reflect on particular questions for articles and prepare responses, I would take notes for that purpose. Additionally, I would make note of my own personal experiences that week that may have related to the article; this included conversations with friends regarding race or information I encountered that week about race in the media. I did this not only to prepare contributions to the class, but I added these experiences to my reflection journals, which was not only a class assignment but a contribution to the portrait at the center of this study.

In order to understand the context of the course—why it was created, and the goals of the course—I conducted an interview with Dr. Closson, the professor who developed and facilitated the Critical Race Theory course. The interview was audio recorded and professionally transcribed. The interview took place on the last evening of the class, before the class began, and lasted approximately 45 minutes. I took notes during the interview, and coded the themes of the notes during my data analysis.

There were several questions that I asked the students in the course to answer in an anonymous survey in order to gauge feelings about the course and to learn more about the students, including demographics such as age and race, as well as areas of discomfort that they experienced during the class. During the last week of the course, I sent a Survey Monkey survey that I created, and received responses from 4 out of the 8 student participants in the class, excluding myself and Dr. Closson. The questions were open-ended short responses, and the survey was open for four weeks.

### **Summary of Procedures**

I attended the class a participant observer for the twelve out of fourteen sessions of the course. I was unable to attend two class meetings. For the first four class meetings, I was unable to record audio because I had not yet received IRB approval; instead, I took field notes. I recorded eight of the regular class meetings, and I focused on four of the class meetings to create the portraits. Regardless of whether I recorded the meeting, I took field notes for all of the class meetings I attended.

The interview with Dr. Closson was also audio recorded. I waited until the afternoon of last class meeting so that Dr. Closson could fully reflect on the course. I sent out an anonymous questionnaire to the student participants of the course during the last week of the class. Only two students responded to the questionnaire, which asked about their experiences in the class. Due to low participation, the results of the questionnaire were not used in this study. All recorded transcripts were professionally transcribed and anonymized.

## **Data Analysis**

There is no standard procedure by which data is analyzed to create portraits. For this study, I used the three-phase procedure for selecting, simplifying, organizing, and extracting themes from research data as detailed by Miles & Huberman (1994). These three phases are data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

The data reduction phase is the process of finding themes and patterns in the data texts. The data for this study was from varying sources, but I used the same data reduction method for the transcripts, my field notes, my own reflection journals and assignments, the faculty interview, and the student survey. First, I read and annotated all of the transcripts, field notes, journals, assignments, surveys and the interview with the faculty member, making note of themes that seemed prevalent throughout. Next, I read through the transcripts, highlighting each time a conversation centered on one of the themes I noted. As new themes were discovered, I made a note and added that to my theming framework. I annotated each item, highlighting phrases, words, or entire paragraphs with certain colors indicating that certain themes arose from this section of discourse. I assigned symbols to each theme and then I organized these themes into categories which represented related concepts. I did this to create a data display, which would allow me to analyze the themes by participants, including quotes from each participant. The information gained from the data display informed me of the most frequent themes that I then focused on when writing the portrait.

Once the transcripts were finalized, I then coded the data from all weeks, creating a data display that identifies three major themes: (1) White privilege/ Whiteness as property, (2) social formation of race, (3) endemic nature of race. Each theme had a

sub theme or sub themes that emerged from the class dialogue. I identify sub themes as branches of the larger conversation that focus on tangentially related ideas deriving from the main theme. The sub themes often emerged from the inquiry that stemmed from extended dialogue on the main theme. For White privilege/ Whiteness as property, the sub themes of Blackness as property and passing became a topic of conversation. For social formation of race, historical misrepresentation became a sub theme. For endemic nature of race and racism, challenging ideas of race and racism became a sub theme.

In addition to the themes, I coded for modes of communication. These represent the ways in which the participants communicated their understandings of the major themes. These modes include (1) personal experience, (2) outside materials (3) course materials (4) examples from others. These modes and themes were essential to seeing how students and faculty members communicate their ideas about race and racism. I then used the data display along with my field notes to inform my decisions of what conversations to focus on in the course. I chose to focus on two class periods. I then used the field notes, the data display, and the anonymized transcripts to create the portrait. For the context of the course, I identified particular areas of the interview transcript with Dr. Closson to give the reader a better idea of what the course looked like and what the goals of the developing and facilitating faculty member were.

### **Trustworthiness**

Quantitative research emphasizes validity and reliability to assess the utility of a research study; on the other hand, qualitative research is evaluated based on its trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Amankwaa, 2016).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the term trustworthiness to represent four aspects of qualitative research, which include: (a) credibility of the research, (b) transferability of the research, (c) dependability of the research process and the researcher, and (d) confirmability of the results. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on these four aspects while applying them to this research study.

*Credibility.* In quantitative research, internal validity determines the truth-value of the study; in quantitative research, credibility serves this function. There are three questions, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) that assist the researcher in determining the credibility of the study. These questions are: (a) Do the conclusions made in this research make sense? (b) Do these conclusions describe the research participants' perspectives? (c) Do these conclusions adequately represent the phenomena under study? For this study, I relied on member checks and triangulation to answer these questions. Member checks allowed me to give the data to the participants in the course for their review. I provided the participants with the full transcripts of each class as a google doc. Participants were encouraged to make comments or notes suggesting changes or clarification of statements. Additionally, I triangulated by I referencing my field notes, class transcripts, and my class journals in order to ensure that I was accurately portraying the classroom situation.

*Transferability.* Transferability is akin to the concept of external validity in quantitative studies. External validity and transferability attest to how the results of the study can be generalized and applied to other studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this research study it would be impossible to use this study to generalize the experiences of all graduate classrooms or even graduate courses that deal with race and racism;

however, the themes and ways in which the material was approached in this course could provide a foundation for describing how adult learners make meaning of race and racism. For this study, it was my goal to enhance this transferability by writing a portrait that provides a vivid description of the classroom context. For this study, I maintained detailed field notes of each class meeting, and reflected on my thoughts after each class in a reflexive journal. By keeping these notes and this journal, I was able to enhance my ability to provide the description needed to enhance the transferability for the reader.

*Dependability.* In positivist research, the goal is to show that if, under the same circumstances, using the same methods, a study could be repeated with the same or similar results (Shenton, 2004). For this study, because the goal is to describe how adult learners make meaning about race, it is impossible to say whether, if under the same circumstances, the data collected would be the same or yield the same analysis. To me, these portraits are snapshots of a course, a picture of a moment in time in which these participants met to discuss certain materials and themes. It would be logical to assume that if the same participants met again to discuss the same materials and themes, they may bring different personal narratives, examples, cultural references, and different ideas to the class meetings. As time passes, these students and their faculty members have experienced life and have had new experiences, possibly dealing with race and racism. These experiences, as they are lived, will perpetually create a new outlook and new understandings about race and racism. I acknowledge that this study, if replicated, may not be composed in the same way as my own, but I do believe that the themes identified would also be identified by other researchers. Instead of using the



methods that I used in this study to replicate the exact results of this research, this research could be considered a prototype for further research using the portraiture method (Shenton, 2004).

*Confirmability.* Confirmability, according to Lincoln and Guba (1981) and Shenton (2004), is the assumption that the findings of the study reflect the participants' perspectives as derived from the data. Although I derived the themes that I focused on in the portrait from the class discussions, I must acknowledge my own contributions to this study in terms of voice and description. Since I was a participant observer, my perspectives are also included in this study in both the portrait itself as well as in the findings and discussion. I experienced this class alongside my peers, so my contributions reflect myself as a researcher as well as myself as a student in this Critical Race Theory course. I consciously state and examine my assumptions about race and racism in the portrait in my own voice, most particularly when I use the pronouns "I" or "me," and I further reflect on my own assumptions and biases in the discussion area of this study. This was a conscious effort to enhance the confirmability of this research.

### **Reflexive Statement**

As a researcher who both participated in this course and composed these portraits, my role in this research was complex. Hackman (2002) defined the role of qualitative portraitists: "Portraitists seek to record and interpret the perspectives and experience of the people they are studying, documenting their voices and their visions--their authority, knowledge, and wisdom" (51). As a participant observer in this research situation, I felt as though my responsibility as a portraitist included reflecting on and including my own experiences and perceptions while I was attending the class; it is for

that reason that my reflections and experiences are included within the portrait of the overall class.

Acknowledging my own experiences means that I also have to acknowledge my own biases and my own understandings of CRT. As one of two White students in attendance, I often felt personally attacked for being White and occupying a space seemingly reserved for my Black counterparts. However, these feelings were reflected upon in my notes and my personal reflections journals for the class in order to direct any negative feelings away from classroom interactions and toward a medium in which I could analyze my thoughts and feelings. I discuss this in more detail in the Findings section of this research study.

During this class, I made fewer comments than I probably wanted to, not only because I felt somewhat unwelcome as a White participant, but also because I did not want my knowledge of the subject to influence the thoughts of my peers in the course. I only contributed to the discussion when I felt as though my contribution would add to the discussion or further it. I intentionally did not comment to pivot the discussion in any way toward a particular conclusion or even toward a particular thematic direction.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented my research agenda. I discussed, in detail, the portraiture method, as a qualitative method used, in this context, to create an artistic depiction of classroom interactions for the purpose of examining how students and their faculty member come together in a classroom and make meaning of race and racism. I have included my data collection procedures, and my method for data analysis, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. I also discussed the

trustworthiness of this qualitative study, including my methods for enhancing the transferability, confirmability, and dependability of this research study. In my reflexive statement, I reflected on my contributions as participant observer in this research, and I included the rationale I used regarding my own participation in the course.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

### **PORTRAITS AND FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will establish the context of the course, and I will present the four portraits that were the result of this study. This chapter is made up of several different sections. In the first section, I will present the context of the course, the information for which was derived from my interview with Dr. Closson, who developed and facilitates this Critical Race Theory course at the University of South Florida, and I will present the information from the course syllabus. In the portrait section, I present each of the four portraits, which serve as rendering of the Critical Race Theory course at the center of this research project. First, my self-portrait, "White Girl Names," explores my own feelings of inadequacy and guilt as I presented this research project to the participants of this study. "Asleep," is a rendering of a class discussion about White privilege in which the participants grapple with the idea of White privilege and Whiteness as property as they examine their own experiences with race and racism. "Woke," presents the dilemma of "who can speak about race?" It is also a discussion of whether or not White people can be sensitive to their privilege and whether people of color should be asked to speak about race. Finally, "Black, White, and Red All Over," depicts a difficult conversation regarding the portrayal of race in society.

#### **Context of the Course**

The research for this study centers on the experiences in the Critical Race Theory course offered at the USF College of education. This course was developed by Dr. Rosemary Closson, and has only been facilitated by Dr. Closson since its initial

development. I think it is important to understand Dr. Closson's perceptions of the course because it contributes to the context of the course that was studied for this research. For the purpose of establishing context, it is also important to talk about what the course looks like in terms of assignments and expectations of the students and the opportunities the students have to reflect on their experiences with race and racism. Dr. Closson is a professor in the College of Education at the University of South Florida. Dr. Closson has retired from her position as of May, 2017, so this was scheduled to be the last time she taught this class. In an interview, I spoke with Dr. Closson in her office to ask some questions about what she wanted the course to be when she developed it, her feelings about teaching the course, her perceptions of herself as a facilitator and her goals for the course after her impending retirement.

It is interesting to me to know the origins of the course that impacted me so much. It is also important to me to understand why this course was developed within the department of adult education. I asked Dr. Closson what makes this Critical Race Theory course an adult education course. Dr. Closson responded, saying that she sees this course as an opportunity for future educators to learn how to engage with students about sensitive issues like race and racism. As she spoke, she acknowledged the endemic nature of racism, a tenet of CRT, and explained that she believes potential teachers should be aware of how racism affects students and that the Critical Race Theory course offers them the opportunity to delve into the conversation:

"I think it's important for people who are thinking about...becoming educators, and, at any level, need to think deeply about what that means in terms of what they do when they come face to face with [racism]...when

they work with students, they need to, to me, think about the fact that we are all experiencing some facet of...racism in our society. And I think teachers need to be prepared for that. They need to think about it.” (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016)

The content of the course, Dr. Closson admits, could be placed in nearly any discipline: “It could be in sociology; it could be in psychology, it could be in any facet of the College of Ed” (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016), so the content would not necessarily dictate the course be listed as an adult education course; instead, how the course is taught determined that it is relevant to the field of adult education. Aside from asking the students who are potential educators to think critically about race, Dr. Closson also believes that this course gives students the opportunity to “go inwards” in order to seek perspective transformation (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016). This act of learning through perspective transformation is a hallmark of adult education.

Mezirow (1978) defines perspective transformation as a process resulting from a transformational learning experience in which adults expand their perspectives to include diverse frames of understanding. In CRT, students are asked to reflect upon their own experiences with race and racism by writing journals and reflection papers. I can speak from personal experience having taken Critical Race Theory twice, that reading the articles assigned each week, in tandem with writing my own reflections on my experience does, indeed, create a disorienting dilemma that students have to navigate. It is through these opportunities for reflection and having read the same articles for the weekly assignments, that the students are able to vocalize their

experiences during classroom discussions, and begin to support and challenge one another. In Dr. Closson's words, "there's usually a critical mass of students in there who feel like, 'okay, this is explanatory in some way,' and those people become kind of a support for others who are sort of struggling, trying to understand, 'what just happened to me?'" (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016).

Since she developed the course and has facilitated it four times, I wanted to know from Dr. Closson herself how she envisioned students reflecting on race throughout the course. Having taken the course, I know what activities and assignments made me "go inwards," using Dr. Closson's words, but I wanted to know what she expected that reflection to look like.

Aside from discussions, the course consists of four reflection papers, integrating personal understandings with the readings, a racial autobiography, private journal entries, and an online portfolio, which could include more personal reflections, outside resources, and the deliverables from the course. When asked what the reflection in the course looks like, Dr. Closson mentions the racial autobiography first,

"that's where they're asked questions about, ... their experiences with race, and, ... and I think in the syllabus and in, and when I actually talk to the students, I talk about revising that as you go through the course, ... it's a, initially, it's your racial autobiography but as you go through, sometimes you realize other ways in which your life has been touched by race or racism" (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016)

In the syllabus for the course, Dr. Closson connects the racial autobiography with the course objective, “Judge the nature of his or her own beliefs, biases, and desired future regarding issues raised by CRT” (Appendix 3). The questions Dr. Closson asks them to reflect on when writing are:

1. When and how did you become aware of your racial identity?
2. What role has your race played in your life?
3. In what ways do you benefit?
4. In what ways do you suffer or miss out?
5. How does it affect you in terms of your social activities?
6. How does it affect you at school?
7. Have you ever personally experienced or witnessed racism? How often?
8. Give an example
9. Have you ever done or said something racist or that may have been perceived as racist?
10. Have you ever done something to stop racism?

She asks the students to reflect back on their earliest impressions of race and racism, and she asks them to think about their most recent dealings with race and racism. This type of reflection also occurs, Dr. Closson notes, in the summary reflections, in which students are encouraged to freely express their “confusion, disagreement, or support of different points of view” inspired by the weekly readings (Appendix 3). Dr. Closson notes that the summary papers, though they deal primarily with secondary sources, can often inspire deeper reflection,



“Sometimes students in those papers were also going to talk about their own personal history and, and tie it to, ... the social construction of race. Sometimes students will talk about that and what they didn’t realize in their own experience but after reading this, they recognize some additional ways in which they were influenced by race” (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016).

The goal of this course is not to reflect on the obvious ways in which race influences lived experience, but to draw out and shine a light on deeper ways in which race and racism impacts people.

I asked Dr. Closson if teaching Critical Race Theory as a woman of color has any impact on how her students may engage with her. Dr. Closson mentioned that this experience can be especially enlightening for African-American students, “I think for the, for the African-American students, I think it helps them feel more comfortable about sharing their personal experiences and their frustrations or their surprises, you know, in thinking back about and trying to understand their own experience.”

She also related an anecdote about a student in a previous instance of the Critical Race Theory class who, in class, shared the story of her experience being told by White classmates that they assumed she was on an affirmative action scholarship, “... [S]o I, ... I don’t know, ...I can’t be sure that she wouldn’t have expressed that in a class taught by a White faculty person” (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016).

I wanted to know what topic stands out as the most difficult for students in the Critical Race Theory course to understand. Not surprisingly to me, Dr. Closson

immediately cites Whiteness as property as the most difficult concept for students to understand, “It’s conceptual and it’s close to White privilege and I, and a lot of the students, have heard of White privilege and so they tend to want to make it the same thing” (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016). She notes that this is a problem for both White students and students of color.

At the end of our interview, I asked Dr. Closson to describe for me, and for the reader of this research study, what it is like to teach a Critical Race Theory course. Dr. Closson mentioned the challenges and her own anxiety of potentially not being able to answer a question or solve a particular problem. Dr. Closson cited the personal information in the assignments as a main source of understanding, not only for her students, but for her as she reads them,

“In this course, because so much is in their journals and so much is personalized about their experience and the racial autobiography is very personal, you just never know what’s going to come up in, in there... that’s challenging, a little unnerving because I’m always concerned that somebody’s going to say or ask something, and I’m going to be like, oh my gosh, I don’t really have an answer for this. You know, or I don’t really know how to respond to this because this is a really sensitive issue. And it’s surprising... I don’t think there’s ever been a class that I’ve taught where at some point in the journals or in the racial autobiography, in some of that material, even in the summary papers, where people don’t begin to touch on something spiritual. And it’s just, I think it’s just that kind of issue, racism is, and people’s race and how they identify. I think it just leads people to think about those sorts of things too or to, uh, and that doesn’t come up in

anything else that I teach except this course. (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016)

In addition to challenges and anxieties, Dr. Closson mentioned how rewarding this course can be for both her and her students. “It’s not testing the content knowledge,” she says, “the outcomes are on a much more personal level” (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016).

## **Portraits**

What follows are the portraits I wrote to depict the classroom interactions and discussions as well as my personal reflections that were essential to addressing the research questions of this study. I felt it necessary, as a research participant in this course, to tell the story of this class, and to allow the participants to speak in their own ways—that includes myself. Because I was a participant and not merely an observer, my own thoughts are also included. The descriptions of the classroom and of each participant are based on my own interpretation of the research situation and were derived from my field notes. Each participant chose his or her own pseudonym, with the exception of Dr. Closson and myself.

### **White Girl Names**

The fluorescent lights hum above me as I wait outside of the classroom. I look down at my computer, answering emails from work. A stack of papers sits beside me. These are my IRB student participant forms. The form was copied from the IRB site, and the details were filled out by me two, maybe three weeks before. These forms are the manifestation of the work I have done so far. I am asking this class, the class I have

been a participant in for several weeks now, to participate in what could be the most important research of my life.

Thus far I have felt like an undercover spy, taking my notes, biding my time until my proposal defense was approved, and now it's time to come clean. I haven't been attending the class merely because I was interested. Not that I ever said that, but I think that's the general consensus. Everyone knows I'm working on my dissertation. Some of the students even asked me about qualifying exams and details about how mine went. Tonight, I tell them why I'm really here. I want to study the class and write about how adult learners make meaning about race and racism. To me, this topic is endlessly fascinating. I have experienced this class twice before, and I know that not only will there be deep, interesting discussions, but everyone will come away from it having been changed.

But there's a weight to my ask. I am a White woman, and this class, unlike the previous CRT classes that I have taken and observed, is taken mostly by Black women. I am asking these Black women, as well as the others in the class, to allow me, a White woman, to portray them in a narrative portrait. "Isn't this against the rules?" I silently ask myself. White people can't depict Black experience. To do so would be fraud because White people can't even begin to understand the Black experience. I'm getting nervous now.

But I'm just writing about the classroom experiences, my experiences included. I'll be using the transcripts and my notes, which I know will be accurate because I know that I can write a description. "So it's not fraud if you look at it that way," I tell myself. No harm done.

The sound of high heels make their way down the hall. Angel, a classmate of mine sits across from me on the green leather bench. We lock eyes, but she is the first to say hello. We sit in silence for a few minutes. We still have five minutes before class should start. I look at Angel several times. She's on her computer, typing away. She has no idea that I'm about to ask her if I can study her. I feel like a voyeur, so I go back to my work emails.

Our classmates and Dr. Closson arrive. I'm starting to feel nervous. I have to speak to everyone and propose my research. I have to make sure I don't ruffle any feathers, or I will never get their consent, and I will never graduate. As we scrape our tables and chairs together, metallic sounds emitting from every corner of the room, I practice my speech.

It is a speech in a way. I am making a case for my research. I'm arguing that I should be able to do this research and that they should participate with me. I am asking them to create something special, something that I can write about. I'm asking them to allow me to put their thoughts and words into something that will show everyone outside of that room how we came together and made meaning about a very difficult, nearly impossible subject.

They will participate, right? The pit in my stomach deepens.

Dr. Closson begins to speak, but I don't hear what she says. She's like the adults on Charlie Brown. All I hear is a faint echo of her voice over my own thoughts. Just as I realize that I am not listening to her, I hear Dr. Closson say my name. She's introducing me, and asking me to share a bit about my research.

So I do. I tell them everything. I tell them that I have just had my proposal accepted by IRB, and that I want to study them. That's a terrible choice of words, I think. But I keep going. I explain what a portrait is, and I explain why I chose this class.

There is silence. Monique smiles a gentle smile, but her eyes show slight concern.

"How will you do the member check?" she asks.

I am relieved that I know the answer to this question. I respond with as much nervous detail as I can muster, "I will have the transcripts available to everyone via a Google documents link. Everyone can submit changes and look at the transcripts."

Monique nods and smiles. "Sounds great," she responds.

Angel leans forward. She opens her mouth as if to speak, and closes her mouth again. She wants to ask a question, and by her inability to put it into words, I'm sure that I don't want to answer it.

"How," she finally begins, "as a White person, are you qualified to write about race?"

I'm not surprised by this question. White researchers who study CRT or other subjects that deal with race are often asked to justify why they are interested in studying race.

I mumble my response. Some quote from Stephen Brookfield that effectively states that Whites should study race because if they don't, their silence effectively perpetuates endemic racism. Angel doesn't seem satisfied by my answer, which surprises me. I answered very academically, and I made my point. But then I hear her question again. She asked me how I am qualified to write about race as a White

woman. She's asking me why I feel like I am able to discuss race as a White person because Whites often ignore race, and therefore have no experiences with it. Not experiences like a person of color would have anyway. But I'm not really talking about race and racism with this study, am I? I know that I can speak to this class and to the way in which this class made me feel the first time I took it, and the time that I observed it, and this time. I intend to present this class as it happens. The dialogues that emerge and the meaning that is created. To participate here does not mean I have to fully understand race. Can anyone really?

But the moment has passed. Dr. Closson announces that she is leaving the room to allow the students to sign the consent forms without her being present to see which students will participate in the study.

I feel empty. I want to go back to that moment that Angel asked that question and give her a better response. But what would that response be? I'm not sure I actually am qualified to talk about race. White privilege has kept me safe from racial interactions for my entire life. Who am I to think that I can broach this subject, sitting in an ivory tower? I have to push these thoughts back as I begin to read the consent forms.

As a researcher, I wanted to read the consent forms with the participants in order to detail the subject, the conditions of the research, the expectations, and the risk. This information is important because it sets the groundwork for the research, but as I begin to read, the class begins to talk.

I stop for a moment and look around. They aren't listening. They are making idle chit-chat, as if passing the time while I speak. I continue on, my voice louder, but still drowned out by the ever escalating discussion around me. The scene is absurd. Me,

reading from my paper, providing every last detail of my research to an uninterested crowd. Their words turned to laughter to me. I felt confronted in the most unusual way.

I assume that they won't sign the consent forms that I pass out. I assume that they will stage a protest, walking out, pausing slightly only to throw my crumpled consent forms in the garbage before leaving the room. But they don't.

"Who has a pen I can borrow?" Jessica asks. She signs. They all sign.

At that moment, a warm feeling of relief came over me. So much work on my proposal and my IRB paperwork won't go to waste after all. I might just actually do this.

"When you guys fill out the forms, please choose a pseudonym for yourself" I reminded them. I can't help but smile. "This is actually happening," I thought to myself.

"For my Pseudonym, I'm going to choose a White Girl name," Nikki says. She laughs to herself, and shares this idea across the room to Jessica. "Yes. Let's choose White girl names, just to mess with them," Jessica laughs.

"Who are 'they'?" I ask, but nobody responds. My committee? The reader? Who is this 'they'? Am I lumped in with this anonymous 'they'?

When I came up with the idea to have the students come up with their own pseudonyms, I honestly had the expectations that there would be a Zora, an Alice, a Toni. I never thought they'd choose what they call White girl names. The weight I feel for this project, the love I have for this subject matter, is somehow cheapened by this. I can't account for the feeling of disappointment, but I feel it.

So they laughed, and most of them chose what they called "White girl" names. Bernard, chose a "White dude" name, as he said.



For a girl named Tealia, the idea of White people names is absurd. I remember as a child never being able to find a keychain or coffee mug with my name on it when we went to gas stations on family trips. I was told my name was given to me so that I would grow up to be unique, but I always desperately wanted to see my name somewhere, written in someone else's handwriting. A bold font, maybe. Cursive scrawled on a lunchbox. Anything to show me that I wasn't strange or unusual or an outsider. But over time, decades I guess, I have begun to embrace my name and the meaning that it has for me. I wasn't given a typical "White girl" name because I am not typical White girl. I am not afraid to explore my privilege, as most White people are, and I am not afraid to talk about race, which so many White people ignore out of convenience. So, I continue collecting my consent forms. This marks the beginning of my journey in this class; until now, I have been an imposter. Now that everyone knows why I am here, I am ready to work. I am no longer an imposter, but I acknowledge that I am an outsider in this class because of my race, and I embrace the fact that my experience in this class will be as unique as my name.

### **Asleep**

The class, five Black women, a man of mixed race, one middle eastern student, and one White student, is gathered around five tables, pushed together haphazardly by Dr. Closson, the faculty member of the course and the students. The environment exudes equity. The layout says that our voices are equally important because we are sharing the same space around the same five tables. There is no professor at the front of the room. We sit together.

The class begins like most do. The common pleasantries of “How was your week?” are exchanged between participants as everyone situates themselves, pulling out laptops, taking out binders of paper for notes. I set up the recorder, placing it in the center of the table. The sound of a class before it is called to order is one of brief chaos. Papers shuffle, the incessant whirring of laptops starting up, and the fans slowly cooling them down. Exchanges of food are made, “Would you like some of my chips?” The levity of the banter is contrasted with what we read to prepare for class: three essays detailing White privilege and Whiteness as property as well as the critique of liberalism that pervades adult education. White privilege is a fitting theme for tonight’s class considering that, aware of my Whiteness and the invisible baggage that comes along with it, I have decided to research how meaning is made about race and racism in the college classroom. The class is aware that this is my goal. I know that they know this. I suddenly feel like I’m taking up too much space at the table. I move my notebook to the ground.

After everyone is ready to begin and the clock strikes 5:00, Dr. Closson invites Jessica and Angel to present what they have prepared to discuss. Each student is expected to prepare a discussion on the readings assigned for the week. This preparation and the subsequent discussion is part of our participation grade, but the pedagogy of this assignment is much more important; it allows the students to guide the conversation. Angel and Jessica are the first to present, so all eyes are on them. Jessica, handing a stack of papers to the person at her right begins, “So we’re going to start off by having you take the White privilege checklist. Just read the instructions and we’ll give you some time to do it.”

The space of two minutes passes as the students and Dr. Closson complete the worksheet. The questions on the worksheet are derived from McIntosh's (1989) White privilege checklist. I look down at the paper. I silently tick the boxes, while everyone does the same. The quiet contrasts with voices and noises before class. The ghosts of sound still echoing in my ears, I resume reading the form.

A sudden rush of guilt. I can check every box.

"Thoughts on the evaluation?" Jessica interrupts.

After the pause, Nikki is the first to respond. Nikki is always the first to respond. This has been a pattern since the beginning of class. She is vocal, and she isn't afraid to share her thoughts.

Nikki begins, "It really makes you, like really, really think. One of the things that I pause on was number sixteen." There is a brief pause while we all look back at number sixteen. Number sixteen reads, "I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race" (Appendix 4).

Nikki continues, "I have all of those things, but I had to think, well how did I get them, right?" Nods of agreement follow this statement, silent answers to her unspoken question. "And just in thinking about that, I realized that most of the things that I have are because I went on the internet and got them, which is easier because I just typed it in and it comes to my house. But I ended up not checking it because I thought, why can't I just go into a store?"

Nikki's voice becomes louder as she continues to make her point. Nobody interjects. This is her time to tell her story. They too will have their chance. This course

is an open forum for discussion. The first few classes have established that nothing is off limits.

“But I’ve just been so accustomed to not being able to find it that I, I don’t even bother. I go on the Internet, or when I do see a little brown baby doll or something in the store, I like literally take a picture of it and like, send it to my mom. Like, okay, go to Sam’s club and buy this one.”

Nikki gestures to her phone, pointing directly at it. Her eyes deepen as if she’s recalling this particular memory, this particular day, this particular doll. Whether it is her delivery of the line or an effort to break the awkward silence, Nikki laughs. Others chime in, laughing as well. “So it’s not that easily accessible because I’m having to look at alternative ways to seek it out,” as she finishes this statement, she sits back. A silent signifier. She’s ready to hear what other people have to say.

Jessica waits a moment, and continues, “Hmm. Other thoughts?”

There is more silence. The room is still. Minds silently whirring about their own checklist results.

Dr. Closson breaks the silence, “Well I, for number two, I did check that one.” She pauses, reflecting, and continues, “and I suspect that, um, I think a male might check that differently.” The class agrees with a series of, “um hmms” and nods of agreement. “But in my neighborhood,” she asserts, “in my community, that is true. I can pretty much go into any store and not be followed or harassed.”

A Black woman checking a box on a White privilege checklist might be contrary to what would be expected, but she’s answering with her experience. There are no challenges to what Dr. Closson says.

Dr. Closson pauses briefly, and looks over the checklist. “Um, yeah, and then number three. I think there’s more people of color on television and in ads, but I wouldn’t say they’re widely represented, so that’s what prevented me from checking that one.”

At this point, Nikki agrees, and there are several nods and mumbles of agreement from the rest of the class. Nobody else speaks up about the checklist. Jessica takes the opportunity to move the conversation forward. Now that the activity has been done, it’s time to talk directly about the reading that inspired the activity. “So how does the article address White privilege and supremacy?”

Nikki responds with a summary of the article, but Jessica wants more. Jessica asks Nikki directly, “So how would you define White supremacy?” She emphasizes the word ‘you.’

Nikki retorts, “Me personally?” There is a pause. In this class, questions with easy answers are rarely asked. After the pause, Nikki continues, her eyes search the ceiling for her answer, “I think it has different meanings. I think the way we talk about it in conversation, talking about White supremacy with the average person, it brings to mind like, the Klan.” She pauses, contemplating, “Hmm. Um, political parties or groups and/or movements of people. But I think the other piece of it is what happens within the fabric of society.’

This, we are all aware by now, is one of the central tenets of critical race theory. For the first few classes, we discussed the endemic nature of racism. Not only is racism a facet of social life, it is embedded into institutions like the education system. And with

this embedded nature comes the inability to uncover and uproot this racism. This notion is dire, and the class has lived with this thought since the beginning of class.

Nikki furthers this connection with her example. “Those structures,” she continues, “that are created, the educational system, which I never thought of as a White supremacist organization. However, when we look at graduation rates, not just from college but even high school, you have to think, what’s going on that, you know, 52 percent of African-Americans or whatever that stat was--where African-American and Latinos’ stats are so much lower, like, what’s happening? It has to be something more than just by chance, right?”

Again, Nikki directs a rhetorical question to the class and is met with nods. She doesn’t continue her thought about the created structures. She doesn’t have to. She knows, like everyone present knows, that the created structures were created by Whites to suppress people of color, and this has been the practice since the beginning of time. As a class, we have been reading as supplements to class discussion, readings about the historical construction of race. Most people think of race as a vague genetic material that colors our skin and straightens or coarsens our hair. But that’s not what race is. We have learned in this class that race is a social construct, which holds up these systems in which people with darker skin are kept to a lesser social status, always beneath, never above those with less pigment.

Jessica pushes the conversation forward, “Um hm. Okay. How would you define White privilege?”

There is no immediate response. The class shuffles, a restless shuffle. Monique, a tall African-American woman continues to type on her laptop. Angel, scans the article.

Jessica does not wait for a response. Instead, she follows up her question with a justification. "I think we can't understand the concepts or models in here unless we understand those two kind of ideas."

The article has provided a lot of information to digest, and the two concepts of White privilege and White supremacy have become muddled. Jessica continues, "When we are talking about these things, White supremacy and it's like, oh, that's the Klan. No, White privilege..." There is laughter from the class. Jessica herself, leader of this discussion is having a difficult time with these terms. We feel a kindred misunderstanding that makes us laugh together.

"It's interesting how do we define these pieces in order to have a dialogue with White people, or to have a dialogue with, um, around this racial society. So, um, what do y'all think White supremacy, I mean White privilege is?"

Bernard sits back, crossing his arms over his chest in what one might think is a defensive posture. Bernard, being the only man in the class, and being of mixed race, offers an interesting perspective. Bernard could pass for White, and as a result, he shares stories with the class about encountering racism against Blacks from a White perspective.

Bernard gathers his thoughts, and answers Jessica's question, "I think it's like the ability to be able to go through life and not even have to worry about any of this. Like, just not even a consideration. You get to focus your energy on other things."

"Okay," Jessica says, urging him to continue.

"That's, like, to be the greatest privilege is when you don't have to focus much energy on something, you have a lot more energy to focus on other things."

Making a connection, Jessica finishes Bernard's thought, "Um hm. To not have to actively think about race. Yeah. Or to even question, you know, did he say that because I look like this?"

At this, the class laughs. Some shake their heads slowly in what appears to be sympathy or understanding.

She continues, "Did he say it because I was a woman, or you know, but for that to not even be a consideration would be nice."

There are silent nods of agreement, and mumbles of, "Um hm," and "Yes."

Monique begins to speak. She has an intangible elegant nature. She adds to the discussions rarely, but she always connects the ideas to something she's experienced.

"The thing that I compared it to was having a U.S. passport. When you're outside of the United States, you don't notice how privileged you are to have that passport."

She continues. Relating White privilege to having a passport and being able to travel wherever she wanted to when she lived abroad. She draws an important comparison to being an American and living abroad to being White in American society. "I equate it to that. It's just having to go through life and not knowing what other people have to go through because that's your reality. You have these benefits that cause you not to even think about it."

I silently wonder about the pronoun "you." Who is Monique speaking to? Who is this "you?" Is it me, the only White person present? She doesn't look at me. She's looking at Dr. Closson and around the room, which is filled with people of color. Is Whiteness so pervasive that she thinks there is a White audience that she's speaking directly to?



Jessica looks at her notes, contemplating what to say next. Eyes closed, she is lost for a moment in what she thinks she wants to say. Finally, after a moment, she asks, "So what do people do in order to gain White privilege?"

There are audible laughs, sighs, and mumbles. Jessica continues, "Nothing?" Angel responds, "Nothing. Just be White."

There is more laughter and inaudible banter between the students now. This has touched a nerve.

Jessica brings the class back to order. She shares her own experiences as a staff member at a university. "So that's one of the things I always share with my students when we talk about privilege, especially White privilege is that, you did nothing to get it."

There's that "you" again.

"You just, it, it's there based on who you appear to be because even people who may not associate with being White but have fair skin, so talk about passing when we connect to the readings, so what privilege can people gain and not be White?"

Jessica is losing her idea, but she continues, "One of the things for White supremacy and White privilege that the article talks about is this piece has gone unchallenged."

She is referring to the central theme of the articles, which is that both White privilege and White supremacy exist, and have gone largely unchallenged.

"How do we challenge that?" she asks.

Bernard and Nikki both respond, bringing up the articles, but this question is never answered.

The class continues to try to define White privilege and White supremacy and to understand the difference between these two ideas. Various personal examples are related to the class, but what these things are and how they can be challenged is never brought to a successful conclusion. A successful conclusion would be an agreement, an understanding. Instead, the question evolves into how do people of color get White people to recognize their privilege, or to recognize racism at all.

Like so much of critical race theory, there is no Black and White answer. Those who study critical race theory have to resolve themselves to potentially never seeing real change because of the endemic nature of racism, and to have questions that will never be answered.

The challenging part of this, to me, is that most White people are asleep. Yes, some are actively oppressing people of color. We see more and more of that each day. What is difficult to accept is the fact that White people ignore race because it doesn't affect them. Or they ignore race because they think that racism is over because we had a Black president. We ignore race because we are socially conditioned to think that race does not exist. Our history textbooks are whitewashed and cleaned up, removing anything that soils the White American past. The Tuskegee project is hushed, and Christopher Columbus is celebrated with his own holiday.

Dr. Closson mentioned on the first night of class that she is often surprised by the reaction that she gets when she tells people she teaches a Critical Race Theory course. Some, she says, are interested in hearing more about the course, but often, there is an immediate negative reaction, a rejection of sorts. They ask her, "Why do we need to talk

about that?” and other questions that indicate that race is a thing we shouldn’t speak about or something from the past that should be kept in the past.

One of my undergraduate professors once posed a question to the class: “If you were in the Matrix, and Morpheus asked you whether you wanted to take the red pill or the blue pill, what would you say?” This reference to the blue pill and the red pill refers to a moment in the Matrix where the main character has to determine whether he wants to know the “truth” about what he perceives as reality. The quote is: “You take the blue pill, the story ends. You wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.” If Neo takes the red pill, he will understand the nature of the matrix, and he will understand that everything he has come to believe as real is nothing more than an illusion.

I, too, have noticed that people have one of two reactions when they ask about what my research is about; they are either receptive and show interest, or they recoil and ask why in the world I would want to study THAT. I have even had family members say, “Racism is a thing of the past. Why do people keep bringing that up?” What I find meaningful here is that it seems as though I have encountered two types of people—those who would take the blue pill in order to remain ignorant of the nature of society and ignore that racism is a facet of society, and those who would take the red pill and open themselves up to the possibility that their own reality may not even exist.

I find a connection between what Brookfield (2014) says when he discusses hegemony, and how society is set up to benefit the dominant group. We’re essentially walking around in a matrix, and the ones who are drawn to understanding society and

hegemony are in the process of taking the red pill, of unbundling all of society's baggage and understanding that what has been presented as reality may, in fact, be built on a system that is inherently biased.

In the field of adult education, it is important to understand that discussing things that bring up a sense of hesitation from some, like race, gender and class issues in society may be forcing people to take the red pill, therefore disturbing their reality and shaking up the foundations of everything they have known. Perhaps it is the refusal to see things as they are that keeps this class at smaller numbers. Maybe other grad students do not want to take the red pill. Maybe they want to stay in their blue pill world, remaining ignorant to any notions that the world they live in has been constructed in a way to keep them believing that systemic racism doesn't exist. Maybe they want to stay asleep because it's easier to stay asleep than to be aware that the world you live in isn't real.

### **Woke**

"So I know some woke-ass White folks, I do," Jessica affirms, nodding her head slightly, her dark brown eyes searching the class to see if they understand, her long, intricately braided hair making waves down her back.

The class remains silent, but they nod their heads slightly, slowly as if they aren't quite sure that what she is saying is true.

Dr. Closson replies to Jessica, in a low voice, breaking the uncomfortable silence, an "Okay," spoken slowly as if she's trying to understand what Jessica is really saying.

This was the second time in class that I heard this term, “woke.” It’s a fairly new idiom, born from social media memes used to describe an individual who is enlightened, aware, and awake. In this context, Jessica means that it is possible that White people can be aware of race; it’s possible that a White person can know that they benefit from race. I’ve heard this term on social media, and some of my friends use it to describe people that they interact with that do not seem like drones or sheep. The silence that followed this assertion made my breath catch. Did the class disagree, or did they just misunderstand what she said? As the only White person in the class that night, I wanted to know, did they think I was “Woke”?

After the pause, Jessica continues. “But imagine, because there is a stigma of, like, all White people are ignorant...how many of those people want to be engaged in that conversation?” The conversation Jessica is referring to is White privilege, and “those people” are Whites.

Jessica and Monique just related their experiences attending a conference over the summer. The conference dealt primarily with race in higher education, and there was a round table discussion on Whiteness. Monique and Jessica, both African-American women, attended this round table out of curiosity.

Jessica laughs as she recreates the scene, “We were like, we’re not supposed to be in here.” She and the class laugh heartily at this; meanwhile, I’m wondering the same thing. Do I belong in this space?

She continues, “Then, reading this, thinking about dialogue and thinking about work it takes, whose job is it to do that? So I thought about it, like as an educator, as a person who works with students, especially on this, as a person of color, it is hard to

engage with White people and their Whiteness and their White privilege. And so that made me think, who is going to lead them through that, because I'm not." She laughs again and the class joins her.

Nikki replies quickly, and in a serious tone "You can't." She shakes her head, and looks down at her paper, pen in hand. She taps her pen, it thuds like a gavel.

This comment immediately silences the laughter. So far, this hasn't been a place of cans or cannots, but the way she says it sounds very final, and very true.

After a moment, Jessica continues, "But then we get into this conversation, and one of the things I learned from the roundtable piece is that, as we are talking about social change, as we are talking about social justice, sometimes when White people, we accept, oh I, I understand White privilege and say, check, and we move on."

Jessica's example is startling to me. She's saying that when people of color engage Whites in conversations about race, Whites are easy to dismiss privilege or say they understand. I wonder if there is ever a moment when Whites can prove that they understand their privilege. I don't ask this question out loud. It sounds silly to me as I mull it over. Is there a test I can take to prove my knowledge of my own privilege? Maybe I could write a paper? There is no answer to this ridiculous question. There rarely is a solution to anything dealing with race. Race is too complicated, too ingrained in our consciousness. How can White people be "woke"?

The class moves on swiftly to a new subject. Jamilia brings up culturally competent educators. In my opinion, culturally competent education is another failed attempt for Whites to appear aware of race. It seems that this feeling is not unwarranted.

Nikki interjects, "Oh, but I have issues with cultural competency," she laughs. "Well, whatever the term."

She continues, "Like, no, that's the term we use is culturally competent, but when we, when you, if I say you are competent in that, that means what?"

Jessica responds, "You're an expert." Jessica says this in a low voice, not even she really believes what she has just said. How can people prove they are culturally competent? How can Whites prove that they own their privilege? This is the same question.

Nikki doesn't believe it either. "You're an expert? I've arrived at it, right? I can check that off?" Nikki is harkening back to Jessica's comment about checking a box to prove understanding of White privilege.

Jamilia interrupts, "No one has ever arrived."

Jamilia's comments are typically brief. She contributes to the class rarely, but when she does it's always with bleakness and authority.

Nikki responds, "Exactly. And so that is one of the things that becomes an issue with cultural competency is we have, in essence, and this is my opinion, created yet another system of racism without really meaning to. So now I have this cookbook method. This is how you deal with all Asian people. This is how you deal with all Spanish people. This is how you deal, right? And so we go through and we check that model off. And we see that in helping professions, we see that now in action, now that we've been talking about cultural competency for a couple of decades and teaching it and all of that, you begin to talk to nurses who are like, oh, Hispanic women may over exaggerate pain, so she says her pain is a 7, but it's not really."

This example strikes me. I never thought about what we perceive as cultural competency actually harming someone. My privilege is showing. I make notes.

Nikki continues, “Or you have social workers who are talking to some— oh well you know, Black folks are always loud anyway, so. So we’ve created this cookbook manual with cultural competency that makes us feel like, oh we’ve arrived. I’ve become a culturally competent educator. I’m good. No you’re not. Whereas, utilizing cultural humility says, I see some pieces, and yet, I’m still growing, and I’m still learning. But just this year, in fact that our language now and what we’ve been educated to do is think you go through this cultural competency training, just the, the language of it gives us a false sense of arrival.”

Nikki adjusts in her seat. She sits up, hands folded, and responds, “And I want to say like, schools, even at a higher level, you see people of color being tokenized to be the people, um, talking about these issues.”

She relates the issues she has working with students in a student services capacity. “A big issue in our field is that people of color are always in the multi-cultural centers and are always the advisors of the Black fraternities and sororities. It pigeonholes certain people. So I, I have an issue with saying schools need to do it versus White educators need to do it because, then, they’ll say, since you’re brown, I need you to lead this seminar to teach everyone about race.”

Nikki continues, “Well and it ends up ... pigeonholing White people too because I have a colleague who is interested in teaching a course on diversity and very much, not in my institution but at another one, the sentiment of her moving forward with that would



catch backlash because she is White. And so it's going to be, well, how could you teach? What do you know about diversity? How could you teach about diversity?"

In the class, there are mutterings of, "Interesting" or "Very interesting" as the students and Dr. Closson contemplate this idea that Whites may be discouraged from talking about race.

I can relate to Nikki's example. I presented my idea for researching the course in order to see how learning proceeds when adult learners gather to make meaning about race and racism. I was asked by Angel why I, as a White person, should be able to do this research. "What can you add to the conversation as a White person?" she asked. This was a question I wasn't anticipating. I expected that they would ask me questions about my method, or about their information being confidential and anonymous. I acknowledge my Whiteness, I didn't think of it as being a hindrance or disallowing me to speak about race. I answered, citing Dr. Stephen Brookfield (2014), a noted White adult education author and professor. I mentioned that if Whites ignore race, they perpetuate racial injustice. My response was met with a cold stare. I wasn't sure if I satisfied her with my response, but I didn't offer any other explanation. In that moment, silence felt comforting.

The class continues the dialogue, debating about who should be involved in racial conversations. "Who does it? Or do we work together," Angel asks. Jessica responds, "If it's me and a White person in the room, is that better?"

This doesn't satisfy the class. There is no right answer to this question, no solution to this debate. When Whites are questioned about whether they can talk about race, and people of color do not want to become tokenized simply because of their

color, who can speak about race? If discussions about race can't lead to cultural competency, why bother?

As a White person who owns her Whiteness, this conversation is disheartening to me. Partly, I feel motivated to do more, to learn more, to teach more. Partly, I feel like crawling into my invisible knapsack and forgetting that the word race even exists. I could do that. I could fall back into my White privilege and ignore the social injustices that surround race in this country. I could chalk it up to impossibilities and I could say, "Well, I tried." But there's part of me that wants to solve this problem, part of me that doesn't agree with assumption that there can be no major progress with regard to race in the United States. Is that just post-racialism clouding my vision? Or is being 'woke' really just being pulled incessantly between the hopeful idea of progress and the stark reality of the ugly and hateful world we live in?

Our class doesn't address this. We can't solve this problem meeting once a week for a few hours and talking about race. We never thought we could; in fact, we began this class by talking about the impossibility of solving anything. However, our conversations were important for informing our personal understandings about race and racism. Together, we raised more questions than we answered, and we talked about more problems than solutions, but we left with a deeper understanding of how complex and unsolvable race is.

### **Black, White, and Red All Over**

The class gathers again tonight. The weight of the presidential election tomorrow is felt, but surprisingly we do not discuss it. Tonight, we do not pore over issues of Black

and White like we have for the past few weeks. Instead, tonight we touch on something outside of the Black and White binary, Native American mascots.

Blackhawks. Braves. Seminoles. A list of Native mascots known to me flash through my brain like a ticker at the bottom of a television screen. Indians. Sioux. Chiefs. How many sports teams can I name? Redskins. That one. That one stands out to me.

The rest of the class is buzzing, but the conversation is light-hearted. Nikki has had her braces removed, and has feasted on her favorite foods that she had been denied during her time with braces. The conversation is a distraction, a means to settle in.

Jamilia and Bernard are waiting at the front of the room. Bernard fidgets with the classroom equipment, setting up their presentation, and Jamilia silently reads from her script. Her lips move as she forms the words, but no sound comes from her.

Jamilia begins, and the class quiets, almost on cue. Bernard starts the presentation. The first screen is a title, "Native Mascots." As Jamilia begins, Bernard changes the slide. The first image we see is an advertisement. The color of the paper has yellowed, the tell-tale sign that it is old. The words read, "The State reward for dead Indians has been increased to \$200 for every red-skin sent to Purgatory."

There isn't much reaction to this image other than a few sighs and a few shaking heads. Jamilia reads the text of the advertisement out loud, and Bernard cuts in, "And \$200 back then that was..."

"A lot of money," Jamilia finishes Bernard's thought. She continues, "You got to keep in mind, like, these were being brought to the trappers. You know, so guys who

are out there catching beaver skins and bear furs, and so then the term, redskin was equated to an animal skin. Essentially equating these people to animals.”

The class responds as Jamilia speaks, echoes of “wow” and “I see” fill the room. These interjections continue as Jamilia finishes her thought, “And this was in the newspaper. This was not like something that they printed up, this was in a newspaper. This was taken from the Daily Republican Newspaper in Wynonna, Minnesota in 1863. So, this was something they publicized. So that is the perspective of a Native American when they’re having an issue with this term, redskin, being used so lightly, this is where they are coming from. This is their context.”

Their context. These words sound odd to me, like we’re speaking historically, like we’re talking about ghosts.

Jamilia continues, “And also, because a lot of mascots are generally animals, and being equated to an animal still even today is, you know, it’s problematic.”

She smiles, realizing that what she just said, goes without saying. Her assertion is met with nods. Some members of the class take notes. Some still stare at the advertisement, reading it, and re-reading it.

“So, uh, we kind of came up with these questions to lead you through, like, thoughts on this, about mascots and then kind of where we are situated in this class, and in the school and things like that, but I’ll get to that so, um, so Indian mascots.”

Jamilia shuffles her notes, and continues,

“We kind of broke it into two parts. The first part was Indian mascot, because the other part was about ethnic fraud at the university and how people feel about self-identification. For the purpose of, like, the PowerPoints, that will really only

be for the mascots and I, we got the questions on the handout for the ethnic fraud, but um...”

Jamilia pauses, reading through her notes. Collecting her thoughts, she reads the questions she has prepared that are intended to spark discussion, “So having read the article and seen some examples of logos, have your opinions regarding Native American mascots changed? Why or why not? Is it something you guys thought about or, or I’m sure, like it was pretty prominent in the news. I’m sure you’ve seen it.”

Angel is the first to respond after a moment’s pause, Angel is an international student. Some of the nuances of American culture are difficult for her to grasp. She often relies on her lived experiences to relate her ideas to the class. “Yesterday when I was driving behind someone who was driving a car. Their license plate had FSU on it. And it was Seminole. And, it just came to my mind, even before I, um, started to really read the article and I was like, why do these school have all these, um, Native Indian, ... you know, logos and slogans or whatever? And it just... and why I thought it because [of] how the Native Americans were, you know, run off their properties and so forth and I’m like, so why all these universities and schools and sports use their logo?”

Rarely, in this course, have I contributed to the conversation, but tonight, I feel prepared to speak. On issues of Black and White, I am virtually silent. I understand, that as a participant in the class, I should share my thoughts, but I do not want to speak for White people. As a minority in this course, I feel as though I represent my race. In an early class meeting, I was asked how White women felt about White privilege. My response was that I wasn’t all White women, and I couldn’t respond effectively. The

irony of this is not lost on me. I assume that my Black classmates have been asked to answer similar questions about their race.

But tonight I will contribute. I know a bit about this subject. My grandfather is from Cherokee North Carolina; his mother had Cherokee and Scottish ancestry, and my grandfather, though often silent about his heritage, would take me to Pow-wows as a child, in what I believe was his way of sharing some of his past with me. Having been exposed to the only non-White heritage I have, I was always interested in Native, particularly Cherokee culture.

“Well,” I begin, “I went up to, uh, North Carolina, in Cherokee, and I worked with the language learning center there and got a tour of the town and all of that, and we were driving by the high school and on the side of the high school is that mascot right there. The, basically the Cleveland Indians mascot. And I said, oh, oh my goodness. And he goes, yeah, we voted. That’s what we wanted.”

I remember that drive clearly. I’ve been to Cherokee quite a few times, and I know its small layout well.

Downtown Cherokee is two main roads with one leading up further into the mountains, further into the “rez,” which is what the locals call it. Even as a child I felt like the town was plastic. The roads are lined with shops that proclaim “real Indian moccasins,” and “Indian trading post.” Everything is a parody for Whites because they come here as tourists to experience some semblance of “real” Indian culture. The “Big Chief Inn” is complete with the neon Indian chief, a great plains Indian feathered war bonnet sits on his proud head. The Tom-Tom Restaurant is right beside the general store that has two tipis mounted on the roof. Never mind that the feathered bonnet and

tipis have absolutely nothing to do the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians; these artifacts have been chosen strategically to immerse tourists into what they already think they know about Native Americans: feathers, tipis, and tom-toms.

Just outside of downtown is the high school, and on the side is painted a giant Indian mascot with bold red letters beside it. “The Braves” it reads.

Jamilia responded with a quiet, “Wow.” This example goes against what she has been reading this week, which is that Native Americans do not like native mascots. I continue with my anecdote, “The town of Cherokee voted that they would be the Braves and the Lady Braves. And that’s what they had painted on their wall. So it’s kind of a weird, I mean I guess they figured, ‘oh we’ll take this back’ or I wouldn’t know if there was a thought about whether they were reclaiming it, but they chose that as their mascot, the entire town voted. And that’s their K to 12 school. They have middle school, the elementary school and high school. So that is their only school there.”

I added this last part to emphasize that the Braves, and the Lady Braves, which is the mascot for the girls’ teams in Cherokee, are the mascots for every sports team that hails from Cherokee North Carolina. This is the representation that this town, with its native inhabitants, have chosen. And it was, and remains, their choice. My classmates seem puzzled. Jessica sits with her hand on her chin, eyes forward, examining the advertisement that still remains on the projector. Monique sits back. Her arms are crossed, and she has cocked her head to the side. I have clearly given them an example that they didn’t expect, given that they read articles and researched native mascots and the surrounding controversy.

It was obvious, before I gave this example, that native mascots were disrespectful, vile caricatures of Native Americans meant to further subjugate and mock them. But what about this town, this reservation town, that openly chose a native mascot? Surely they could have chosen something else, but why didn't they? Jessica is the only one to respond to me, pausing briefly to formulate the words, "But it's kind of like the N word, like, it's okay for me to use it but not okay for you to use it." The class laughs at this. Many nod in the affirmative. This seems to have solved it for them. The class moves on.

Bernard advances the slides that he and Jamilia prepared. Nikki points to the mascot at Florida State University that is on the screen. He's perched atop a horse, in the act of throwing a feathered spear into the ground at a football game. His face is painted, a red and White stripe is carefully placed horizontally across the bridge of his nose, all the way to either ear. This same face appears to be the face of a White man, bronzed to appear more native. His expression purposefully aggressive and meant to instill fear in the opponent.

Jamilia gets close to the screen to point to the mascot's face, the light from the projector casting shadows on her face. As she points, she contemplates, "I wonder, one of the things this article made me think of is FSU...something recently that happened like, what, two years ago, three years ago, the mascot turned White." At this, everyone laughs. The idea of turning White is humorous.

She continues, "Yes, like his picture. Like, his features, they changed the features on the mascot."



Nikki interjects, “So even though they’re still the Seminoles, they no longer look...”

Nikki doesn’t finish her thought. We discussed, several weeks ago about the idea that race isn’t genetic. That the idea of having White or Black hair, for example, was an impossibility. She catches herself saying that someone “looks White.”

But Jessica finishes Jamilia’s thought, “He no long, he no longer looks Native American. He looks White,” and Angel follows up, simply stating, “White features.”

I remember the conversation a few weeks ago about passing. Historically speaking, there was a push in the 19th century to link biology to race. My classmates, who at the time, balked at the idea that coarse hair would be a biological determinant of race, just agreed that this mascot “looked” White.

I spoke up, one final time, “What if he just looks White,” I said, putting air quotes around the words ‘looks’ and ‘White’ to emphasize this point, “and he is Seminole?” I ask.

This is more common than the class realizes. I worked at a high school in Okeechobee when I was in my Master’s program. Okeechobee high school was adjacent to a Seminole Indian Reservation, and many of my students were Seminole. But much of the time I didn’t know they were Seminole unless they told me. Not all Seminoles have dark hair, skin, and eyes. I know from having worked in Okeechobee that the Seminoles support, and even create costumes for the Osceola mascot, so who’s to say that he can’t represent the Seminole tribe, or even be a member of the tribe, because he appears White?

Jamilia continues, "Yeah we are. We're going to talk about it." With this statement, she dismisses my question. And we never actually do talk about that. She continues, "So drastic, right? So how would you react to a school athletic team that was known as the Fighting Zulus and had a man in a loin cloth running around with a spear and Black face?" Again, the class laughs at the mental image she has just created. They shake their heads; some cover their eyes as if embarrassed. This is an example meant to shock.

Bernard breaks into the laughter to ask a very pointed question, "Do you think that part of it is because the groups that are represented as mascots are mostly oppressed groups?"

Angel replies, "Yes, yes, yes, yes." As she says this, she is shaking her head, as if the words can't leave her quick enough.

Bernard continues, "You know, it's not, you know, a Russian or a Whities?"

At the word Whities, the class erupts with laughter.

Jamilia, continues to speak through the laughter, "Or that the logo, it's on my computer. There was one that we were going to put up there. It was like a, it was a logo. It was like, the Whities. And it had like this typical White looking guy. And that was the logo. In a baseball hat. You know, what I mean."

What is a "typical White looking guy"? I wonder silently.

She continued, laughing, but trying to contain herself, "Like what if it was, yeah. Think about, about that? Whities? How would you feel about a team called the Whities?" She asks this to no one in particular, but she avoids looking at me directly. Has the class taken my questions as confrontation? This is why I do not typically speak up.

Conversations spring up around the room. What would the mascot look like? I hear someone mention frat boys, and another classmate is doing her best impression of a “White girl.”

Nikki responds, “Let’s just start a team: the Whities.”

Patriots. Texans. Vikings. Celtics. I want to mention, but I do not, that there are several White mascots. I remain silent as the laughter dies down.

Jamilia and Bernard continue their presentation. The slide after the FSU mascot contains several images of Black people in Whiteface.

Jamilia asks, “Okay, which leads to the next one. So is this last equally or more offensive than these images?”

Dr. Closson interjects. “These are Black people painted in White face?” she asks, looking over her classes, chin down. She doesn’t seem to understand the juxtaposition of these images with the native mascots from the slides before.

Jamilia laughs, and the class laughs along with her, “Yeah” she replies. Nikki explains, the last image is a photo for the movie “White Chicks” by the Wayan’s brothers. “That, that movie is hilarious,” she asserts.

The image on the screen is of the two Black stars of the film. Both are blonde with identical hairstyles, wearing different shades of pink. In this film, the characters depict White women as stupid, homogenous, and materialistic. Their voices harken back to the valley girl of the early 90s, and the message by naming the movie “White Chicks,” is that this is what Black people think White women are like. Having heard Angel do her impression of White women, an impression that sounds strikingly like the

Wayan's brothers in this movie, I wonder if this is how I sound in this class or to my Black friends.

Jamilia focuses back on the screen. "Yeah, I love it too, and I didn't put it on there. But then there's those girls at Baylor who did that, you know, the, the green card party, whatever they called it."

I understand that Jamilia is trying to make a connection here. White women perpetuate hateful stereotypes, so, the goal of *White Chicks* is to turn that lens around and expose White women in their most stereotypical and shallow form.

Nikki responds with wide eyes. She sits back in her chair and crosses her arms. "Green card party," she says slowly as she shakes her head in disbelief. "Wow."

Jamilia attempts to bring the class back on track. Some students are still quoting *White Chicks*, some are checking their phones. Everyone is in some state of distraction.

Jamilia clears her throat, "Is this," she points to the picture of the Wayans brothers in *Whiteface*, "equally or more offensive than these images?" She points to images of Whites in Blackface and White men in sombreros and mustaches depicting Mexicans.

A puzzled silence fills the classroom. Jessica starts to say something, but her words are caught. "I mean, I mean," she drifts off.

Jamilia tries again, "meaning these photos," she says. Our blank stares meet hers.

Finally, Jessica has found her words. She responds. "I think it depends on the portrayal. I think the *White chicks*, and that was a great movie." The class laughs again at this.

Still laughing, Jessica continues, “Yeah but like, like the way they were playing them, rich women, like, I think that’s totally different than being the ghetto Black dude. You know what I mean? Like, I just think there’s different consequences and different meanings. So yeah.”

At this point in the conversation, I am feeling frustrated. As a, what I hope to be, “woke” White person, I get it. I understand that portraying White women in a negative way is much different from portraying Black men and women as the stereotypes they have been subject to for centuries. White women are privileged because of their Whiteness, and to subject them to stereotypes is fair game. I get it. But the sense of disconnection I feel from the class at this moment is remarkable. If I sit here, understanding these nuances of race, and I still feel alienated, how would any other White person feel during this conversation? It is moments like these that I feel helpless, as if there will never be a way to talk about race without microaggressions or guilt. I want to say, but I do not, that this is why White people do not want to talk about race. This is why White people choose to ignore race. It is an active choice, and a comfortable one at that. Race and racism aren’t Black and White. There are infinite shades. For example, it is possible for mascots like the Redskins to be wildly inappropriate, yet the Cherokee can still choose the Braves as their mascot. It is possible for me to understand that stereotyping of people of color by Whites is wrong, and still object to the same stereotyping of Whites by people of color. It is wrong that people of color are asked to speak for their race when they are in the minority, yet it is also wrong to do the same thing to Whites.

As a White person in this class, my contributions to this conversation on, what should be native mascots, have been met with silence. I believe that if I had not been a White person, seemingly engulfed in my own privilege, the class may have thought about my comments. We might have had a dialogue. Instead, I was put aside, handled with kid gloves and met with polite nods or blank stares. I am reminded of the night I proposed my project to the class, “what can you contribute to conversations about race as a White woman?” I was asked. I guess they are still asking that question to themselves. I guess I am too.

Now, as the dialogue slowly shifts back to Black and White, and I again retreat to silence. I am afraid to speak because I’m afraid of how I will seem. Will I somehow become that angry White person who becomes combative when their privilege shows?

After more discussion about native mascots, the class moves on to ethnic fraud. The class meeting, as always, ends on a low note. There are no solutions to our problems, no real answers to our questions. One of the main tenets of CRT is that racism is endemic. It is the undercurrent of society, and for that reason, there are no quick fixes. That is why this CRT course is so frustrating and so complex. It illuminates the problems, without providing closure. It unmask societal racism in such a way that you can’t look away, but you are incapable of changing it.

We slowly pack up and leave the classroom where, at one point, we were a group working towards something. Once the door is shut, the lights are off, and we make our way back to our regular lives. We are left with only our experiences and our beliefs which only we then can examine, interrogate, and change.

## **A Note on the Portraits**

Though it is my goal to examine how I engaged in this class as a White researcher, it is not my intention for these portraits to be solely about me or my experience. I cannot deny that my experiences, my trepidations, and my silences are represented here. However, I do not want the reader to focus only on my contributions and reflections. Instead, I would prefer that the reader consume these dialogues, reflect on their meaning, and create new meaning for themselves in light of everything, spoken and unspoken, that is communicated within these portraits. They are a snapshot of this course, but the dialogues that began here do not have to end here.

I understand that reading unanswered questions and dialogues that have no real resolution may be frustrating for the reader. I intended this discomfort. It was the same discomfort that myself and all of the participants of this course felt and possibly still feel. I think frustration is to be expected for those who choose to delve into such a complex subject as race within a complex framework such as CRT. I think frustration is important, and it is often the first step in the process of understanding.

There are a few things I want the reader to take away from these portraits. First, I want the reader to appreciate these dialogues for what they are, and to see how important they can be, even if the reader feels a sense of discomfort or resistance. Dialogue about race is important, not only to the adult education classroom and higher education, but to ourselves, right now, in this society. I also want the reader to focus on the themes discussed here. Though they may seem superficial in light of the heaviness of these portraits, they are essential to understanding what was important to these participants in this class. Fourteen weeks is a short time to deal with a subject like race

in any great depth, and these themes represent what this class spent its time grappling with. These themes were significant to these participants; therefore, they are essential to understanding these portraits.

The modes of communication that the participants used when making meaning are essential to understanding how these dialogues took place. They represent the ways in which the participants were able to challenge their understandings, communicate ideas, and construct understandings from complex concepts. For example, when a participant used a personal experience to bring up or further examine a topic, that participant was sharing something significant about themselves. That participant was sharing not only a part of her life with her peers but also her way of thinking and making meaning for herself.

As I wrote these portraits, I had the goal of representing the significant themes and modes of communication in order to show the reader what it looks like when meaning is made in a class that deals with race and racism. These themes and modes of communication are important to understanding the dialogues here, and I hope they allow the reader to contemplate their own experiences with race, their own discomforts, and their own resistance.

### **Summary of Themes and Sub Themes**

The participants of this study were asked to contribute to dialogues about race and racism. Class contributions were directly related to the grade, comprising of 10% of the total grade. Discussions with the whole class as well as in small groups were utilized. I chose not to include small group discussions in the portraits because I did not feel as though doing so would accurately portray the class as a whole.



Though the discussions themselves were themed around readings and other media dictated in the syllabus, the salient themes and topics of discussion often did not correspond with what was planned for the class. For example, one class was labeled as, “Whiteness as property & critique of liberalism,” but that theme was revisited by the participants on several class meetings (Appendix 3).

The following themes guided me as I wrote the portraits for this study. I identified common themes in the discussions throughout all of the class meetings that I recorded, and I identified the class meetings in which the participants had particularly robust dialogues centering on these themes. The portraits themselves, which depict these dialogues, are a response to research question two, which asks in what ways adult learners make meaning in a CRT course. The following table shows which themes and sub-themes appear in which portraits. The top horizontal line indicates the themes and their corresponding sub themes. The second horizontal line indicates the portraits in which these themes are prevalent:

Table 1: Themes as They Appear in the Portraits

Portrait	Themes
“White Girl Names” “Woke” “Asleep”	<b>Main Theme:</b> Whiteness as Property and White Privilege
	<b>Sub Theme:</b> Blackness as property; Passing
“White, Black and Red All Over”	<b>Main Theme:</b> Historical misrepresentation
	<b>Sub Theme:</b> Social construction of race
“Asleep”	<b>Main Theme:</b> Endemic nature of race and racism
	<b>Sub Theme:</b> Challenging ideas of race and racism

In my summary of themes and sub themes below, I have included dialogue samples to provide context about the themes that guided these portraits. Although dialogue from each portrait is included, I have chosen to include dialogue that was not

featured in the portraits because it was integral to the development of these themes, and this analysis provides the reader with a holistic understanding of each particular theme and its significance for the participants in the class.

What follows is a summary of each theme as it was discussed in class as well as a discussion of each mode of communication that was used to express each of the following themes.

### **Social Formation of Race**

The theme of social formation of race is most prevalent in the “Black, White, and Red All Over” portrait, but it was a common theme throughout the course. There was even a class meeting dedicated to this theme. For the class period entitled, “Social Construction of Race and Racism,” students were assigned to read a section of Omi and Winant’s (1994) *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, and Lopez’s (1994) *Social Construction of Race: Some Observations on Illusion, Fabrication, and Choice*. These sources provide a blueprint for understanding that race is not genetic, but has been socially constructed over time by using both propaganda and the law to systematically strip people of color of rights. As Omi and Winant discuss, race is not a biological property and is, instead, a social construct (p. 55). Omi and Winant go on to state, “There is no biological basis for distinguishing among human groups along the lines of race...categories employed to differentiate among human groups along racial lines reveal themselves...to be at best imprecise and at worst completely arbitrary” (p. 55). Racial formation is, as Omi states, “a matter of both social structure and cultural representation” (p. 56).

The readings brought up several points that the participants were able to discuss. Bernard explores what Omi and Winant (1994) bring up about colonial slavery and how pseudoscience was the basis for the British as they justified enslaving Africans.

Well the stuff being about the contact phase was like, and this is going to sound stupid but I can picture, like, these old British dudes being like, look at their craniums, and like, you know what I mean?

This example, though Barnard proclaims it to be “stupid,” is actually a keen illustration of how race was created by Whites in order to oppress people of color. At this point in history, race was not seen as a socially created construct, but rather as a genetic or biological determination. However, this biological “evidence” was used to create the social stigmas surrounding people of color, and was the basis for creating race as a differentiating factor between humans.

Not only was pseudoscience a means through which to differentiate people by race, laws were created and enacted to hinder the progress of people of color; thus, law justified the social construction of race. Angel, who is from the Bahamas, read the Meredith (2016) text, *A Mission from God*, which was supplemental reading from the course, and was surprised at how race influenced laws.

It's interesting how the interpretation of the law is different from race to race. It's like, when in the Meredith book, when you think about how the law is interpreted by the Whites in terms of what they have to do and allowing people to honor the law that was given for people to have certain rights, it's the way that they are able to interpret the law, like, oh it, it says this but I can disregard that.

For the class, it was important not only to talk about the historical social formation of race and the evidence presented in the articles, but their own lived experiences with social aspects of racial formation, most particularly, how issues about race become silenced in order to perpetuate the historical misrepresentation that somehow race is not really an issue in the United States. Some participants shared personal examples of times that they realized race was something socially constructed to oppress people. Monique gives an example of history being whitewashed in order to show how institutions like education suppress parts of history, namely the Tuskegee project, in order to construct the notion that, historically, Blacks have not been treated poorly by Whites. This cover up represents the socially constructed notion that racial inequities do not exist.

We go about our lives and we think about how certain things run. And I remembered in my science class, we were reading about the Tuskegee project and I mean, I've read that, and ... but it hit me different this time. So I remember sitting there and I, this was at work, and this was last week, and I was just discussing to our social studies civics teacher. I was like, what do you guys talk about in history, you know, I was just like, what in the world do you guys talk about in history. I could robe that [Tuskegee experiment] in science because that's you know, experience, so I can do my part, but then I was asking the, uh, civics teacher and he was like well, you know, we talk about this and that. And I said, well you really should talk about these other sides like the bad parts of history that doesn't really get talked about other than slavery and civil rights. I mean, so we got freed

and then, it's like, what is that? So then what infuriated me was the fact that he, his response was, well if we talk, that's kind of, ... that's a really touchy thing if we talk about stuff like that, we'll have to get permission.

And I said, what do you mean?

Monique continues, drawing the connection between historical misrepresentation and the social construction of silence about race.

And I just blew up. I said, what do you mean you have to get permission to talk about history? This is ...what is but then I had to back up because this is how we have been socialized to feel like, to not even question, ... and so I wasn't angry at him as much as just the whole system, but I could identify with him because that would have been me last year, saying well you know that is kind of a touchy topic and you might want to get permission from the parents and, because it might make the kids upset.

So what?

Dr. Closson relates a similar example. She was working on a research project with Muslim prisoners. The men talked about their belief that AIDS started as an experiment with Black people. Afterward, when the chaplain and Dr. Closson spoke, he commented that the prisoner's ideas were ridiculous. Dr. Closson countered that she could understand the prisoners' reasoning, citing the Tuskegee project as the foundation of research standards and practices. To her surprise, the chaplain had not only not known about the Tuskegee project, he told her that it had never happened.

And so the, the chaplain was saying, well no, this is not right. This is silly.

This is ridiculous. So after the session was over, I said to him, I said, you

know, and I understand your point I said, but historically, it's not that out of bounds because there was the Tuskegee experiment where the, the United States government had this ... untreated syphilis that went on even when they knew there was a treatment for syphilis. They let this continue. And he looked at me and got red in the face and said, that never happened...He said that never happened. And I said, I was like, I've never had anybody be that uninformed. And I said, what? I said, I have a book. I have a book. [laughter] that talks about the whole thing.

After relating the story, Dr. Closson connects her example back to Monique's:

So I guess to your point, it is important for people to know those unpleasant factors of history because without it, then people grow up thinking that this is some perfect, perfect world where these kinds of uglinesses never happen.

So, to the participants, the social construction of race was not only how race became an issue in the early United States with propaganda and laws that favored Whites, the social construction of race is also a factor in how race is perceived in the United States.

The social construction of race is the central theme of the portrait "Black, White, and Red All Over." The class begins with Jamilia and Bernard's presentation, which includes the image of a propaganda poster advertising a \$200 reward for "dead Indians." Jamilia explains the poster:

And this was in the newspaper. This was not like something that they printed up, this was in a newspaper. This was taken from the Daily Republican Newspaper in Wynonna, Minnesota in 1863. So, this was

something they publicized. So that is the perspective of a Native American when they're having an issue with this term, redskin, being used so lightly, this is where they are coming from. This is their context.

This particular class meeting marks a departure from what has been almost exclusively a Black and White discussion. Before this class meeting, the discussion has focused primarily on how race was created as a social construct for the purpose of subjugating African Americans and people of mixed race. The student participants have agreed on multiple occasions that race has no biological basis and is wholly a product of social construction. Surprisingly, the student participants diverge from this opinion when confronted with an area outside of the Black and White spectrum.

The participants begin the dialogue by expressing their disgust with the idea of the Native American mascots. The student participants discuss the implications of historical misrepresentation with regard to how Native mascots are crafted to portray Native Americans in a negative way. Angel was the first to bring up an encounter with native mascots.

"Yesterday when I was... driving behind someone who was driving a car. Their license plate had FSU on it. And it was Seminole. And, it just came to my mind, even before I started to really read the article and I was like, why do these school have all these Native Indian, ... you know, logos and slogans or whatever? And why I thought it because [of] how the Native Americans were, you know, run off their properties and so forth and I'm like, so why all these universities and schools and sports use their logo?"

The students draw a connection between the propaganda Jamilia and Bernard presented and Angel's response. Later, the Seminole mascot comes up again as Jamilia continues to show visual examples of Native American mascots.

I wonder, one of the things this article made me think of is

FSU...something recently that happened like, what, two years ago, three years ago, the mascot turned White. Yes, like his picture. Like, his features, they changed the features on the mascot.

The idea of looking "White" conflicts with the notion that race is socially constructed. In an earlier class meeting, the participants had discussed coarse hair and how a feature could not be a determinant of race. In the portrait "Black, White, and Red All Over," the student participants seem to deviate from the idea that race is socially constructed. On two occasions, participants make statements about biological features that carry an assumption of race. This deviation, though seemingly contradictory, is a representation of how the participants created new meaning about race and racism in this course. The participants were presented with a new context, and this made navigating their understanding of the social construction of race challenging. I believe the student participants learned that race is rarely a Black and White issue, and that there are instances in which there is seemingly no correct answer.

### **White Privilege/ Whiteness as Property**

White privilege and Whiteness as property are central themes of "White Girl Names," "Woke," and "Asleep." The sub themes of Blackness as property and passing also find their way into these portraits to a lesser extent.



The portrait “Asleep,” begins as the class completes a White privilege checklist. As the only White student present, I reflect on my ability to check nearly every box. The other participants are unable to check many boxes, and they begin to discuss why that is. The checklist itself is a tool that is used to teach Whites what it means to have White privilege because Whites, particularly Whites who are economically disenfranchised, often do not understand how they could be privileged and still struggle.

I coded White privilege and Whiteness as property as the same theme because the class, myself included, could never quite differentiate the two, and they became intertwined in meaning. White privilege became a salient theme in the course because it seemed to hold a different significance than most of the students had anticipated. Through the dialogue, the participants in the course determined that White privilege was the ability to ignore race. Bernard makes the connection to White privilege and race, stating that not having to focus on race would be the ultimate privilege:

That’s, like, itself to be the greatest privilege is when you do not have to focus so much energy on something, you have a lot more energy to focus on other things and attention.

Nikki, as a woman of color, asserts that not having to think about race would be nice:

To not have to actively think about race. >> Um hm. >> Yeah. >> Or to even question, eh, you know, did he say that because I look like this? [laughter] Did he say it because I was a woman or, you know, but for that to not even be a consideration would be nice.

In “White Girl Names” I challenge the notion that Whites cannot be aware of their own Whiteness or that Whites are merely oblivious to anything that focuses on race. While writing “White Girl Names,” I also came to terms with being a White person who is researching race and racism when I am challenged by a participant to answer for my Whiteness as I begin researching about race and racism. As I am confronted with the notion of White girl names, I note my internal monologue:

I wasn’t given a typical “White girl” name because I am no typical White girl. I am not afraid to explore my privilege, as most White people are, and I am not afraid to talk about race, which so many White people ignore out of convenience.

I acknowledge that, while I may be able to unpack my Whiteness, I am still White, and I have the privilege to ignore race if I choose. In “Woke,” I reflect on this ability:

Partly, I feel like crawling into my invisible knapsack and forgetting that the word race even exists. I could do that. I could fall back into my White privilege and ignore the social injustices that surround race in this country. I could chalk it up to impossibilities and I could say, “Well, I tried.” But there’s part of me that wants to solve this problem, part of me that doesn’t agree with assumption that there can be no major progress with regard to race in the United States.

A result of the classroom dialogue was a new definition for White privilege: the valuable ability to ignore race. But the connections made about White privilege were not just about race. In the portrait, “Asleep,” Monique connects being an American living abroad to having White privilege:

When I was living abroad, and it was like, we were planning trips. And those that didn't have a U.S. passport, it became, like, an issue. And I was like why are y'all...you know, I didn't notice that I'm holding this passport and I don't have to get a Visa to go to Switzerland or to, you know, but you do. And then you're going to be checked.

By sharing this unexpected example, Monique extends the definition of privilege to include United States citizens abroad. This example adds complexity to the conversation on privilege because, even as a Black woman, Monique felt privilege while traveling abroad because she was afforded particular rights as a U.S. citizen. In this example, Monique also recognizes that a U.S. passport grants her ease of access to other countries that her friends and colleagues abroad do not possess, which is a more traditional view of privilege. This realization helped Monique and the rest of the participants to understand the nature of White privilege.

During the classroom dialogues, the participants continued to expand their understanding of White privilege as they investigated what it takes to gain White privilege. Passing became a sub theme of White privilege because it was determined that people who are not White are able to gain White privilege simply by passing as White, yet passing is a way of appropriating White property. In the portrait, "Asleep," Jessica discusses how Whites are afforded White privilege even though they did nothing to receive the benefits of this privilege.

Jessica: So that's one of the things that I always share with my students when we talk about privilege, especially White privilege is you did nothing to get it. You just, it, it's there based on who you appear to be. Because

even people who may not associate with being White but have fair skin, so talk about passing when we connect the readings. So what privilege, some people can gain White privilege and not be White. So that, that's a piece there as well.

White privilege as a theme took up most of the conversation in the class themed, "Whiteness as property & the Critique of liberalism" (Appendix 3). These two themes often become intertwined, even to me. Dr. Closson struggled to get the students to see the difference between Whiteness as property and White privilege:

White, White privilege is, like we said in the discussion before, it's not having to think about something. ... [I]t's not having to think about race. It's the ability to do certain things without having to be concerned about how you will be perceived. ... [H]ow is an understanding of Whiteness as property distinct from Whiteness as White privilege, Whiteness as property versus White privilege. So I mean, why didn't she [author] just say, why didn't she just go along with, well everybody gets White privilege, so we don't need to go into explaining Whiteness as property because people already have an understanding of White privilege...what do you think is the difference?

Nikki tries to answer this question, but doubts her response. She stops mid-thought as if she is either unsure of the line of thinking she was following or if her response is incorrect or offensive in some way.

I think it's how they, they, White people hold on to their Whiteness. Like if,

like if something is being taken away from them, they, I don't know how to explain it. Come back to me.

This idea of White people holding on to their Whiteness is central to the idea of Whiteness as property. The participants of the course ask the question, if Whiteness can be property protected by the law, can Blackness be property? This became a sub theme of the class meeting that inspired "Woke." For the participants, passing, a sub theme of White privilege, becomes a sub theme of Whiteness as property as well. A news story about Rachel Dolezal, a White woman who passed as Black and became a figurehead of the NAACP was discussed as evidence that both Whiteness and Blackness can be appropriated by "passing."

Nikki: But then in the case of the woman who was the president of the NAACP, when she had been passing as Black, you know, then that was frowned upon too.

The student participants drew a connection between passing and property. As the students discussed Rachel Dolezal, the notion of passing as Black brought up the idea that Blackness could, indeed, be property. In the class that inspired "Woke," Jessica furthers this dialogue, stating that she believes Blackness can be property, but that it is not the same as Whiteness as property in that it is not protected by the law.

So, those are the pieces that I'm trying to figure out from a systematic place that I don't know if Blackness can have property. Blackness can be owned, yes. But I don't think it's property of protection. Because when I think of property, I think of this is the ownership. This is mine. There is a

law. This is what legitimized me as a citizen of the United States of America is this Whiteness

White privilege and Whiteness as property, along with their sub theme of passing are never quite differentiated by the student participants in the class. These themes remain an enigma throughout the course, both themes seeming to define or at least lend examples to the other. Both themes are understood as different by definition, but the examples that the student participants give are often examples of both White privilege and Whiteness as property.

### **Endemic Nature of Race and Racism**

The endemic nature of race and racism is the central theme of the portrait, “Asleep,” but, like the social construction of race, the endemic nature of race and racism was a theme that came up in several class meetings. Like White privilege and the fact that race is socially constructed, the endemic nature of racism is a central tenet of critical race theory. As Delgado and Stefancic (2006) assert, a facet of everyday life for people of color and that race and racism have become indelibly ingrained into the very fabric of American society. This particular theme elicited a feeling of helplessness in the participants. This helplessness, at times, manifested into calls to action. The students often questioned how endemic racism could be challenged, and they began to challenge the literature and each other to come up with a solution.

One of the most painful yet most profound instances for the student participants in this Critical Race Theory course was the collective epiphany that nature is embedded into institutions like the education system. Some student participants, like Angel, focused their examples on encounters with racist faculty members:

There is some issues with some students in adult education where a particular professor and I've been hearing students saying that they don't think she's fair towards the Black students and I think she's been making statements saying, I'm not racist because I understand a student reported this person, this professor... I noticed some things too in class. I just avoid it and I just say well, interesting, interesting.

Angel's story hit close to home for the participants. Angel was talking about a professor that the other students may have taken a course with. However, this was a singular example of a larger issue. In the portrait "Asleep," Nikki, looks at the system as a whole, wondering why graduation rates for students of color were so much lower than White students:

When we look at graduation rates, not just from college but even high school, you have to think, what's going on that, you know, 52 percent of African-Americans or whatever that stat was--where African-American and Latinos' stats are so much lower, like, what's happening? It has to be something more than just by chance, right?

The implication here is that, yes, there is something going on that keeps students of color at a disadvantage, and, as a result, keeps the communities that these students live in at a disadvantage. The students bring up institutional racism as a facet that may keep students of color at a disadvantage.

With the discussion of the endemic nature of racism, questions about how to challenge racism were raised. Because of the endemic nature of racism, the possibility

of challenging racism and succeeding seems unfeasible, but Nikki did come up with a way in which to subvert institutional racism by addressing leadership.

So I think first, [inaudible] [laughter] I, I think first sitting down with leadership and providing these are where the cracks are. So there's, this is what it is and meeting it and having that, that conversation and making it in the forefront, so talking about social justice. What does that mean? What does [inaudible] What is our mission values and how do we come to see that and what's the accountability when you don't do that, and how do we back that up with policy. But again, starting with the leadership but also changing what the leadership looks like.

Angel, adding to Jessica's suggestion, brings up an opportunity she had to work for change in her native Bahamas. She mentions being on a committee at a university in which some of the dominant ideals of christianity were being used to oppress the LGBTQ community. She asserts that there has to be a place at the table for those who have been systematically oppressed by the organizations in order to effect change.

And so that's where like how Jessica is talking about these conversations you know, from the leadership, and so we were having this conversation. We were like, okay, we can't discriminate who all we want to come, that is, colleagues, are we going to be doing to a university who want persons from all over the world going to be coming, we can't tell them, you know, they can't have their group and all that and so forth. And so that would've made me think about, you know, it starts from, you know, challenging



these policies and their core values and, and all that and so forth so I think that's where the conversation could be had in those changes.

The participants came to terms with the fact that endemic racism affects institutions systemically, and therefore, that not only do the leaders have to change, the institutions and their goals have to change according to new expectations. Jessica expresses this idea of systemic transformation, using the example of Latinos and Latinas as social capital for schools and institutions of higher education:

Yeah but I mean, think about it, the way we have this set somebody is qualified to be an administrator goes right along with the dominant culture. So if we wanted to, you know, [say] I was a liberal school. You said I could do what I want as a private school, so maybe. Yeah, well, it makes it more flexible >> yeah, more, more flexible, so maybe I rethink even how we have decided education to be, because if we don't rethink what higher education is, these strategies are more or less me teaching, uh, Latinos and Latinas social capital. Social capital meaning how do you go back and navigate these spaces that A, wasn't deemed for you, but if we, I think there's a false sense if we say, hey, I'm just going to give you a club and let you just be you. That's a failure because at the end of the day, it's to give them access, not only do you want them to have access but you also want them to thrive. So ... our strategy still has to deal with social capital but on the flip side, I'm saying, re-imagine what education looks like, challenge the very structure on which we believe an administrator can be an administrator or a school could be a school.

The endemic nature of racism challenged the participants to think about the ways in which race and racism subverts institutions in order to promote a White agenda. Although the class wanted to think of ways to challenge institutional racism, the burden of racism being embedded into society left them with nothing more than seemingly unreachable goals.

### **Summary of Modes of Communication**

The modes of communication detailed below offer a response to the second research question, which asks in what ways adult learners make meaning of race and racism in a Critical Race Theory course. These modes of communication represent the ways in which students presented ideas, challenged themselves and each other, and furthered their positions in response to the themes in the course.

To effectively respond to the second research question, it is important to know not only what emergent themes occur during their discussions but also what means the participants use to communicate with one another. In this section, I will summarize the common modes of communication that occurred during the class meetings. Although this list is not exhaustive, it represents the common ways in which students synthesized meaning in this course.

*Personal Experience.* We know from Knowles's (1980) assumption of adult learners that adults have lived experiences that they want to share and connect content with in order to make meaning. During class, participants shared their own personal experiences with race, often relating emotional and unique perspectives to their peers. This not only enriched the dialogue, but made some of the more difficult concepts relatable.

*Course Materials.* The course was organized into weekly units which focused on a particular area of critical race theory. Each week in the syllabus, required and optional readings were listed, and the students were expected to read, digest, and analyze the required readings and some of the optional readings in order to be prepared for the class discussion. The participants used the course materials to frame the discussions in class, and would often refer to readings for definitions and examples. Supplemental readings suggested in the syllabus were also referenced frequently.

*Outside Materials.* Another assumption of Knowles' (1980), is that adult learners are self-directed. The participants in this class not only related their own lived experiences to their peers, but they frequently brought up additional resources, such as newspaper articles, blogs, and multimedia pieces that they had found by their own means and through their own self-directed research. By introducing these outside materials, the participants displayed their interest in the subject material and brought forward additional resources that other participants might find useful as they worked to understand race and racism.

*Examples from Others.* Though this was an infrequent mode of communication, once participants shared examples of lived experiences, or their own thoughts on course materials or outside materials, others would sometimes use these examples to further their own thoughts. When this occurred, it was rarely to contradict another student and more frequently use to buttress or lend credence to another line of thinking, even if the theme of the discussion had changed.

## **Summary of Findings**

An in-depth discussion of my findings can be found in Chapter 5, but in this section I want to summarize briefly what my findings are and how they relate to the research questions at hand.

The first research question asks in what ways a White researcher makes meaning of her role in a CRT course. I also depict my own meaning-making processes as a participant observer in the portraits, and I demonstrate how I understood the dialogue and my own interactions. As a White researcher, I often experienced conflicting emotions, and I often questioned myself and my ability to understand these themes of race and racism. Although I cannot expect that how I perceived the class was universal, I do believe that the details of my internal monologue included in the portrait offer a response to this research question. I often ask myself questions, sometimes without being able to fully answer them. I include my lines of thinking as they were derived from the dialogue. To do this I relied heavily on my field notes and my journal entries to ensure that my thoughts were captured accurately as they occurred.

The second research question asks what it looks like as teaching and learning proceeds among adult educators and learners engaged in discussions on race and racism. A response to this question is a description of the setting, participants, and dialogue of the course being studied. The response to this question is partially provided by the portraits themselves, which provide a rich description of the class meetings and participant interactions in this course. Portraiture as a qualitative method is not simply an outline of an experience; instead, portraiture combines the data from interviews, observations, field notes, and the researcher's own reflections as a means to collect

data for analysis, which is then transformed into an artistic rendering the goal of which is to bring the research situation to life for the reader and to illuminate the lived experiences of the participants. To address this goal of illuminating lived experiences in this course, I coded for common themes and sub themes in order to focus on particularly poignant class meetings that I believed would make dynamic and cohesive portraits of the classroom experience. Themes that I believed produced lively classroom dialogue were Whiteness as property and White privilege, the social formation of race, and the endemic nature of race and racism. The sub themes were Blackness as property, passing, historical misrepresentation, and challenging ideas of race and racism.

I chose the portraiture method to respond to this research question because there is a distinct connection between artistic portraiture and portraiture as a qualitative method. As Davis (2003) states, “like the artist, the research portraitist works to balance elements of context, thematic structure, relationship, and voice into an aesthetic whole that is so carefully constructed that every part seems an essential ingredient in the clarity of cohesive interpretation” (pp.123).

In order to respond to this research question, I vividly portray the classroom context, particularly the discussions because the discussions were at the heart of what the course was designed for, which is to examine themes of race and racism as a class of graduate students. Also to address context, in the portraits, I make note of the setting, describing the room and the layout of the seating in detail, and I include the participants’ mannerisms and distinct ways of speaking. I include times when there were pauses for reflection, and when there was laughter. I depicted the dialogue and its

progression; the portraits themselves depict what it looked like as the conversations proceeded among the participants, including myself. In the portraits, I make note of how students referenced each other's examples or built meaning on what each other were saying, and I also included references to the conversations at the beginning of the class to set the context, but to also establish that the students were building relationships with one another. To address my own participation and relationship to the other participants, I included my reflections as a participant in the course. The choice to include my own reflections was based on my role as participant observer. Perhaps if I had simply been an observer, I may have chosen to write in a different voice, possibly a third person limited omniscient voice, to indicate that I was outside of the research situation. But because I was included in the research situation as a participant, I felt that first person would be the best point of view to capture not only the interactions in the class as I perceived them, but also my own thoughts as I participated, or observed the classroom discussion.

As a qualitative method, portraiture allows for the ability to “embrace contradictions” and to “document the beautiful/ ugly experiences that are so much a part of the texture of human development and social relationships” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, pp. 9). In this way, portrait is an effective method for showing how participants make meaning within the research environment, and it was with this goal that I composed the four portraits for this research project. Often, participants, including myself, experienced what Lawrence-Lightfoot refers to as the “beautiful/ ugly” and contradictory aspects of race and racism as we explored these themes in the course.

For me, how the participants expressed their ideas and inspired new ideas from our classroom discussions demonstrate how meaning was made in this course.

There were several ways in which the participants actively made meaning during the course. The most common way was by relating lived experiences and connecting those stories to the concepts presented by their peers or in the readings for the week. This is not surprising because all of the participants in the course were adult learners, and adult learners often relate lived experiences in order to make sense of concepts presented to them in a classroom setting, and as Dr. Closson noted in her interview, a goal of this particular course is to allow a space for students to examine their experiences and come to a new understanding of race and racism (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016). CRT as a framework furthers this examination, and portraiture as a method brings to the forefront this meaning making process of experiential expression by offering an artistic, but accurate, rendering of this dialogue. (Chapman (2007) explains how CRT and portraiture are used together as an effective means to to express lived-experiences with race and racism by explaining that “ a researcher connects participants’ experiential knowledge as racialized subjects to the multiple ways in which people of color understand and navigate their communities, schools, and professional lives”(pp. 157). By examining how participants related their lived experiences to the other participants, I was able to depict this meaning-making process in the portrait.

Participants referenced materials from outside of the course in order to draw conclusions or to provide examples for other participants. Students often referenced

new stories, articles that were not assigned, and multimedia assets that either aligned with the class discussion or challenged it.

To a lesser extent, participants made meaning in the course by referencing the course materials and reiterating past comments of other participants. When participants referenced course materials, it was often to define terminology during discussions or to as a reference point in a class later in the semester. They also used the course materials to further discussion, and often course materials were criticized for not moving the argument further. Often when participants referenced earlier materials in a later discussion, they were doing so to contradict or expand upon those materials given new information that they had gathered from subsequent course materials. To me, this demonstrated that meaning-making evolved from the earlier class meetings all the way until the final class, and that ideas did not remain in one class period that focused on one theme, but instead translated to different concepts and themes in later class periods. The same can be said for how the students referenced other participants' examples. By referencing an example that another participant shared from a prior class meeting, this demonstrated that, not only did the examples have a lasting impact on the students, but that meaning was made initially about a particular concept, and that meaning was then used to inform opinions about new concepts.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the context of the course as well as the portraits that I wrote in response to the research questions. The context of the course should give the readers an idea of how Dr. Closson, who developed and facilitated the course, imagined the course to run. The context of the course includes Dr. Closson's philosophical



approaches as well as her goals for the students in this critical race theory course. The portraits begin with my self-portrait, "White Girl Names." In this portrait I explore my own anxiety while asking the participants in this course for their consent to do my research. I also reflect on my insecurities and coming to terms with this research project. In "Asleep," I offer the first of three portraits that includes dialogue directly from the class. In "Asleep," the participants grapple with the ideas of White privilege and Whiteness as property. In "Woke," the class discusses how Whiteness can be a barrier to being awakened to race, and I reflect on my own understanding of why White people often find the idea of race too challenging. The final portrait, "White, Black, and Red All Over," concludes the portraits with a glimpse into the class's conversation regarding native mascots and the representation of race in society. In the summary of findings section, I assert that the details of the portraits themselves are responses to research questions one which asks what it looks like when students gather together to make meaning of race and racism in the graduate-level classroom and how I, as a White researcher, make meaning of my experiences in this class. I composed the portraits with this research question in mind, adding specific details surrounding the classroom interactions in order to paint a picture of the class for the reader. By analyzing the dialogue and using a coding method, I identified the common themes that were discussed in the class as well as the modes of communication, which show how meaning was made by the participants of this study. My reflections respond to research question three, which asks how I, as a White researcher, made meaning of my experiences researching a class that deals heavily with race and racism.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **SUMMARY DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter, I summarize the study, including the basic methods that were used. I also discuss the findings of the portrait, including my reflection of how I, as a White researcher, experienced meaning-making in this course as well as how the themes and portraits themselves respond to the research questions. Next, I discuss the methodological limitations to portraiture as a method of qualitative research, and I discuss the implications for using portraiture as a research method as well as the implication of my findings on teaching and learning. I offer various ways to extend this research project, including suggestions for different methodologies, and I conclude the chapter with my final thoughts on this research.

The purpose of this study is to describe how new meaning is made about race and racism in a CRT course. I used portraiture to create a narrative depiction of the course. The purpose of creating these portraits is to illuminate for the reader what it looks like when dialogue about taboo subjects such as race and racism is encouraged.

For this study, I composed four narrative portraits, one depicting my proposal of this project to the participants, and three depicting the class meetings that I recorded. I chose these three classes after I coded all of the class meeting transcripts for themes. I found that the dialogue in these three class meetings was particularly lively, and I felt that they would best suit a narrative portrait. The portraits offer a synthesis of the data from the transcripts of the six class meetings I recorded and my reflections based on my field notes. I coded the transcripts by theme and sub theme in order to identify the concepts that were frequently brought up by the participants in the course. This

frequency, I believe, demonstrated what the students struggled with or what they found to be most significant. These themes and sub themes often, but not always, corresponded to the readings that were assigned for the week.

The portraits respond to the study's research questions, which were 1. in what ways does a White woman make meaning of her role as a researcher in a Critical Race Theory course and 2. in what ways to adult learners make meaning of race and racism in a Critical Race Theory course?

As I wrote the portraits, I included my own thoughts as a participant observer. I based my own thoughts and reflections on my field notes and my own deliverables in the course, which included journal entries and papers. The portraits, which tell the story of how I, as a White researcher, made meaning of her role as a researcher in a CRT class, also tell the story of adult learners grappling with concepts such as Whiteness as property and the social construction of race, depict the active meaning-making process that the participants underwent throughout their time in the course. This includes in-class discussion as well as student presentations. Student participants made meaning of race and racism by sharing their ideas about race and racism through personal stories of lived experience, examples from the reading assignments, examples from other students, and materials that resided outside of the course curriculum. Each conversation was different, but each time the participants would use one or more of these modes of communication to make new meaning regarding the themes of the course.

In this chapter, I will discuss the conclusions that I drew from this research study as they pertain to the research questions. I will discuss the methodological limitations of

this research, including my own trepidations as a White researcher depicting racially charged conversations in a graduate classroom. I will also provide recommendations for future research that I feel will benefit researchers who focus on themes of race and racism.

## **Discussion**

The portraits serve as the principal contribution of this study; however, this study yielded findings such as my own meaning making process as a White researcher engaged in this course, the modes of communications used by the participants to make new meaning, and the themes explored in the CRT literature. What follows is an analysis of the findings of this research as they apply to the research questions of this study.

### **Research Question One**

Research question one asks in what ways does a White researcher make meaning of her role as a researcher in a CRT course. To answer this question, I have to examine the ways in which I conducted this research and participated in this class as well as the ways in which I experienced fear, avoidance, and helplessness during this study.

As I proposed this research, I could not anticipate fully the trepidation I felt as a White researcher writing a portrait of this class. I had a background in African American literature after all, and I thought I was prepared to discuss how race impacts the academic environment. This background did not prevent me from entering into this research with trepidation. I believe my anxiety began as I proposed the research to the participants in the course, the experience that I depict in, "White Girl Names." I was

aware from that moment that my presence as a White researcher may not be welcome. Perhaps, if I had included interviews or another method that allowed the students to speak for themselves, they may not have been anxious about a White person doing research about the class. As I mention in the review of the literature, Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2008) discuss the moral responsibilities for researching race as part of the dominant group, and that society has set up an imbalanced hierarchical racial structure that keeps people of color in a racialized place. The portraits, because they depict a racially charged subject, keep the participants in a racialized space that I, then, as a White person, am speaking to. I felt at times that I was colonizing the space, and as Naison (2002) describes, the prospect of being a White researcher speaking about race in a predominantly Black environment, was daunting.

Preparing to do this research, I knew that I would have to examine the ways in which my Whiteness impacted this study. It was important to me to acknowledge, also, that these students were unaware that I would be studying their interactions when they signed up for this course. At times, my Whiteness coupled with my reticence to impact the learning environment changed the ways in which I prepared to conduct my study and the ways in which I participated in the course.

Early on, I decided that I wanted to ask the student participants to choose their own pseudonyms for the portraits. In my mind, this was a White researcher's olive branch. This was a way to let the students know that I valued them, and that I acknowledged their individuality. I was hesitant proposing a portrait because I thought it might appear as though I was attempting to fit everyone's individual stories into a singular narrative. Looking back on this decision, I think that this gesture was a means

for me to avoid the guilt of researching this subject with these particular participants. As a White person, asking a group of predominantly African American women to submit themselves to study felt, and continues to feel, like a mild form of subjugation. Sure, I was only asking them to allow me to participate and observe, but my ask, as I mention in "White Girl Names," was heavy. Knowing that they would be opening themselves up to talking about race put these participants in a precarious situation, and I think asking them to name themselves, though well-intentioned, seemed like a slight to them. When the students chose to select names that they deemed to be White, I wondered what that meant. Were they rejecting my study? Was this a way to assert the only power they had left? This was a difficult moment for me. I had assumed that they would choose names that were meaningful for them, but they chose, instead, to assert their individuality in a different way. This was a way to reclaim the power that I, as a researcher, had taken from them, and to reclaim the space that they had made for themselves that was now invaded by a White researcher. This marked the beginning of my feelings of reluctance. I began to analyze my unique position in this course, and as such, I found myself becoming increasingly silent during our discussion, the reasons for which, I will detail later in this section.

Also when I proposed my research to the class, Monique asked about a member check of the final transcripts. I admit that this was not something that I had thought to do initially, but I agreed that it was a good idea. Though I was surprised by the request, I understood it completely. The participants wanted to ensure that they were accurately portrayed, and that their words were not altered to conform to my understanding of the class discussions. I asked the participants if using a Google doc would suffice, and I let

them know that I would open it up to them so that, if they wanted to, they could edit their contributions. As of May, 2017, four students have logged into the Google doc, but no alterations have been made to the text. I wonder if the 350 page transcript was a bit daunting and prevented the students from participating in the member check. Although this does not really relate to my Whiteness, it does make me question, as a researcher, what I could have done to make this more accessible for the students so that they felt they could more easily contribute to checking the accuracy of the transcripts.

At times, while writing, I struggled with understanding where my voice belonged in the portraits. As a White participant and researcher in a class that was, for the most part, women of color, I had a unique experience and, although I portrayed the classroom dialogue of all of the participants, I felt that it was important to include my own reflections to acknowledge my voice as a participant in the course. I chose to exhibit my internal monologue throughout the portraits in a way to speak to how I felt about the dialogues and the examples shared by the other participants. These unanswered questions or expressions of frustration were notes from my field journal, written during the class discussions. During my time in class, I felt as though I vacillated between being an insider and an outsider, not only because of my role as a researcher, but because of my race (Merton 1972). My status as participant observer distanced me from my classmates, and my status as a White woman only furthered that distance. This, in and of itself, was a struggle and a learning process for me. Having already taken the course before, I was familiar with the topics that we discussed in the class. However, since each class is a discussion, new ideas and new ways of thinking about

the assigned articles and assignments brought new ideas to the table that I then had to process.

This class was unlike the previous iteration of the course I had taken with regard to both demographics and with regard to what the participants focused on in their discussions. The participants in the course at the center of this study focused their attention as a class primarily on the themes of Whiteness as property, White privilege, and the social formation of race. Since there was a shift in focus from what I experienced in the class I took during the beginning of my doctoral degree work, I had to realign what I thought was important about White privilege. Now, having conducted this research, I can fully examine the ways in which White privilege influenced how I conducted and reflected on this research. For the previous iteration of the class that I was enrolled in, there were two White students, an African American student, and a Latino student. In those class meetings, we focused less on issues of White privilege and more on issues pertaining to becoming White allies. We also spoke at length about White guilt, a topic not discussed in the class that was studied in this research. I wonder now if the previous iteration of the class moved away from White privilege as a topic of conversation subconsciously as a way to avoid talking about and delving into issues of Whiteness. I also wonder if the different proportion of White students impacted what we discussed and how we approached the tenets of CRT. I do not have answers to these questions, but I know that the class under study was an entirely different, and more uncomfortable experience for me as a researcher and as a participant. I feel that this discomfort shines through in this portrait, and my avoidance is clearly represented by my unspoken questions and my silence.



As I have mentioned, as a White researcher participating in this course, I struggled with knowing if and when I should verbally participate in the dialogue. I feel it necessary to examine this trepidation as it touches on my unique experiences as a White researcher. As I began to make meaning from the classroom dialogues, I would not always verbalize what I thought to the class; instead, as I mentioned earlier, I made notes in my journal that I would then read later to formulate my ideas. As I've mentioned, I had taken this course in the past. I can say with certainty that I had made meaning during the previous iteration of the course, and I did not want my actions to influence how this meaning was made for the other participants in this course. Again, they signed up for this course with no knowledge that I would be conducting this research until I presented my IRB consent form to them in week four. I did not want to impose my understandings on these participants because I felt that doing so may influence their own meaning making processes and further extend my invasion of this space. I felt that having participated in this course before also afforded me a new type of privilege in which allowed me to see connections to concepts that would be presented later in the semester. I wanted to see how all participants made meaning regarding the materials that they had. I knew that I could reflect on my ideas and that they would be present in the portraits, but I wanted for the classroom dialogue to form organically based on how the participants were making meaning about the assigned readings and the assignments.

In addition to not wanting to influence the other participants, I felt challenged by the course materials as a White researcher. Although I had read the materials before and engaged in the dialogues in the previous iteration of the class, I, as a White person,

had, and continue to have, a difficult time conceptualizing and explaining my own ideas pertaining to race and racism because I have no source material to draw from. I attribute this struggle, and my lack of what I call 'source material,' with my White privilege. As a White person, I have little experience with race and racism. As a White person, race and racism are concepts that I can willfully ignore, and, as a result, my ideas about race and racism were not always fully formed in the class meeting. While others could examine the course materials through the lens of lived experiences, as a White researcher, I found that impossible much of the time. Instead of having my own experiences to share that might connect a concept to a story that could then convey meaning, I found myself relating, mostly in my head, stories that I had heard from friends or family members of color. I did not want to become the person who capitalizes on the personal stories of people of color, so I avoided bringing up examples of lived experiences, and much of the time, remained silent because of this.

Perhaps all of my reasons for silence are really a manifestation of feeling as though I was colonizing the conversation. I am hyper-aware that my Whiteness in and of itself was possibly seen as confrontational to the participants. This course deals with race and racism, and, as such, it is a course that deals with the experiences of people of color. Because of this, I often felt unqualified or unable to contribute to the conversation, and instead, remained silent. There are several instances in the portraits in which I mention my silence. In "Black, White, and Red All Over," my voice appears in the dialogue for the first time since "White Girl Names." Attempting to bring in some of my previous research into the conversation, I bring up a point about the Cherokee Indians in North Carolina choosing the Braves as the mascot for their high school. I also

questioned another student's assertion that the Seminole Indian mascot appears White. After these comments, I retreat to silence. I admit that I was nervous talking in this class at all, and at those moments, I was afraid that any disagreement with what the other participants were saying might be misconstrued as resistance, similar to the resistance expressed by the White students discussing race in Perry et al. (2009). I also feared that by sharing my ideas, I may end up somehow upholding the status quo or that I might be colonizing the discussion as Ortiz (2015) discusses. I realize that this demonstrates my White privilege. At the time, however, it was important to me to avoid appearing confrontational and to avoid imposing my ideas on the class. I was afforded the ability to remain silent both because of my Whiteness and because of my role as researcher. I am, after all, able to ignore race on a daily basis and am influenced by my White privilege daily, and, as a participant observer in this course, I was able to sit back and simply observe conversations that became difficult. However, I have had, and continue to have, a genuine curiosity and concern about how race affects individuals. I did not want my presence, and the specter of my Whiteness, to prevent the student participants from speaking their minds or beginning to understand their own experiences with race and racism.

It was challenging, but one way in which I made meaning as a participant was to silently reflect on my own limited experiences with race. This, at times, was a struggle because of my Whiteness. While composing the racial autobiography for the course, I also reflected how little race has impacted my life as a White person. This exercise allowed me to think about how my own race continues to allow me to ignore race until I am confronted by it. While writing my racial autobiography, I was constantly worried as I

wrote that my experiences would not be as significant or important as my peers of color because of my Whiteness and the fact that I have not lived a consciously racialized life. I believe this same fear of inadequacy crossed over into the classroom dialogues and caused many of my silences.

Contrary to the Bradley et. al (2007) study of White students and their resistance to discussions that focused on race, I, as a White person, do not identify my experience as resistance. Bradley et. al define resistance as hesitation to acknowledge racial inequity and overt aversion to talking about race. What I felt during my time in this course is more akin to sadness or helplessness. At times, I realized that my Whiteness is indeed privilege, and that my peers of color, my friends of color, and my family members of color are not afforded that same privilege.

As they discuss the recommendations based on their study, Perry et al. (2009) suggest that, in order to legitimize the dialogue of race, faculty members, particularly faculty members of color, must depoliticize the course material. Faculty members of color, as Perry et al. state, often find themselves marginalized within “various social contexts defined by Whiteness, maleness, wealth, and other dominant social statuses” (pp.83). Because of their marginalization, faculty members of color often feel, Perry et al. assert, physically and psychically ostracized, and they often become members of a “marked group” (pp.84). Thus, when teaching diversity of multi-cultural courses, faculty members may find themselves in a position in which they have to defend themselves and their own credibility as instructors. This leads many faculty members of color to depoliticize their discourse. Closson, Bowman, and Merriweather (2014) offer a framework for Black faculty members who teach courses that deal with race and racism.

Closson et al. state that this depoliticization, indeed, makes the material more “easily digestible,” and “less personal” for White students (pp. 85). Although Black faculty practicing depoliticization may have the intention to create a safe space for White students, to me, this is a form of whitewashing. As a White researcher, I agree that it would be more comfortable to discuss race in a depoliticized space; however, my peers and colleagues of color are not able to live their lives in a depoliticized space, and for that reason, it is impossible for me to see the true value in such dialogue.

It has been brought to my attention by members of my committee that I appear to have victimized myself through my portrayal of these dialogues. That was not my intention. I did, however, at times feel helpless, unsure, and insecure about my contributions to the dialogue and about my very role in this class. I felt inadequate as a White researcher to portray these dialogues fairly. Perhaps I have fallen victim to that which I feared would happen. Have I portrayed these dialogues unfairly, villainizing the African American women in this course? Perhaps the characterization of these women can be attributed to my discomfort, including my feelings of being an outsider as both researcher and White woman. But, I do have to acknowledge the fact that the portrayal may have been subconscious racism rearing its ugly head.

As I participated in the class, I felt confronted, but I also felt the conflicting desire to remain non-confrontational. Being pulled between these two extremes not only caused me discomfort but may have made its way into these portraits, making me the “good White person” while simultaneously villainizing these African American women.

I have, since the beginning of this research, avoided making this dissertation about my experiences, but I feel that it is time to face the fact that my own experiences

have become a part of this study. Reflecting on my role as a White researcher, I admit that I had no real understanding of the weight of this research when I began. I never conceived that this project would feature my experiences as a White researcher. Instead, I felt, at the beginning, that my portraits would bring to light the significance of racial dialogue between these participants and their professor. In hindsight, my own trepidations and challenges as a White researcher are what shine through. However, I do believe that the dialogues themselves offer information about how these adult learners made meaning of the concepts presented in the course.

## **Research Question Two**

Research question two asks in what ways adult learners make meaning of race and racism in the graduate classroom.

In my interview with Dr. Closson, she asserts that this course is not about testing the content knowledge; therefore, the learning was not measured by traditional assessments. Instead, she says, the learning outcomes of this course are “much more personal” (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016). The goal of this course, as stated by Dr. Closson, is personal transformation. This aligns with Beder’s (1987) fourth goal of adult education, which is to enhance personal growth. This type of growth is a result of deep conversations that, according to Brookfield (2005), are generated by exploring abstract and often frustrating theories such as CRT. As such, it is important to examine the meaning-making processes not with course outcomes in mind, but instead by the way in which students communicated ideas to one another and made meaning for themselves.

As Lindeman (1925) states, the purpose of adult education is to “put meaning into the whole life” (pp. 5). This includes making meaning of experiences. In this class, the participants made meaning of their experiences whether personal, or the experiences of others, or their own reflections on the literature provided by the syllabus or that they had found for themselves outside of class. All of the participants in this class, myself included, made new meaning as they experienced the socially-constructed, racial landscape of our society.

The themes, the analysis of modes of communication, and my reflection as a participant observer provide a response to research question two.

### Themes

The themes that the students focused on tell the story of what impacted the students as they discussed the course materials and CRT as a body of criticism. Each week was themed and included corresponding readings and supplemental materials that allowed the students to focus on that particular theme and subthemes associated with that topic. Yet, some themes seemed persistent, and the discussions never quite came to a satisfactory ending with regard to these themes.

One theme in particular that came up constantly in the classroom dialogue was White privilege. In the portraits, I treat the themes of White privilege and Whiteness as property as a single theme because, although separate themes in the literature, they took on a singular meaning for the class. The idea that White privilege and Whiteness as property could be conflated is contradictory to the literature surrounding these themes, including the research outlined by Dr. Closson in the syllabus. Harris (1993) defines Whiteness as property historically as the ability for Whiteness to define a person

as free, whereas the absence of that property denoted slavery or subjugation. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) present a contemporary take on Whiteness as property with regard to property laws and as a tool through which we as a society can understand inequities, particularly in schools. White privilege, on the other hand, is the upholding of racial superiority and Whiteness as a standard and the ability to benefit from one's race (Giroux, 1997; McIntosh, 2001; Brown, 2003). For the students and myself, these two disparate concepts became one central concept, which we defined as the ability to ignore race. As participants in this study, we, in essence, created a new definition that encompassed both Whiteness as property and White privilege in a way that defined these terms as how Whites react to their Whiteness. Whiteness as property, being the ability to hold this intangible Whiteness to one's benefit, also allows for the ability to ignore race. So does the idea of White privilege, which allows Whites to tacitly experience society as post-racial. Though the participants mentioned this ability to ignore race with regard to both Whiteness as property and White privilege, they did not formally come to the conclusion that they had combined these two terms. I observed, that the student participants often spoke about these terms as though they were the same concept. Since I was a participant, I also found myself speaking about these terms as though they are interchangeable, which, again, is contradictory to the literature, but a valuable finding in this research nonetheless because it demonstrates the active meaning-making that occurred within this space.

Another theme that became prevalent in the course is the social formation of race. The readings in the course focused on how race was created socially and refuted the belief that race is biological (Omi & Winant, 1994; Lopez, 1994). The class agreed



with this supposition during the class meeting in which this argument was presented; however, when presented with the debate surrounding Native American mascots, the class seemingly reverted to race being biologically determined. Jamilia states in the portrait “Black, White, and Red All Over,” that the mascot she displayed on the projector for the class, “turned White.” Jamilia is referring to so-called White features, which have replaced what she assumed would be the Native American features of the mascot. By stating that the mascot turned White, she’s contradicting the literature surrounding the social, not biological, determination of race. This example demonstrates that, although the literature can seem to offer an answer to a problem, when new contexts are added, the seemingly correct answer can soon incite contradiction.

The class was faced with issues of Black and White early on in the semester, and the presence of this argument outside of the Black and White binary is an example of how complicated race as a subject of study truly is. This example also demonstrates a cognitive dissonance that the participants in the course had to work through to begin to make meaning of race and racism together.

Perhaps the most difficult theme that the participants, including myself, encountered was the endemic nature of race and racism. This concept was not difficult to understand, it was difficult emotionally to come to terms with. For me, as a White person, I had to come to terms with the fact that race and racism is embedded into the fabrics of society, and that institutions such as education, are built on inequity and favor Whiteness. For the participants of color, this was not news. However, the notion that there are no answers to this crisis nor is there a real way to eliminate the inequities in society frustrated the participants of color. In discussing the endemic nature of race and

racism, the participants were not merely discussing the ways in which racism affects society; rather, they were discussing how to challenge endemic racism and the dialogues that perpetuate White favoritism and inequality. This theme was unique from the others because it came with a call to action. Thus, the meaning-making surrounding this theme was manifested as a need to identify the areas in which challenges could be made.

### Modes of Communication

The modes of communication that the students and faculty member used in the course to express their thoughts on the course material came up organically in the classroom dialogue. It was through these modes of communication that the adult learners in this course made new meaning about race and racism. During the first few class meetings, I noticed that the participants would rely heavily on personal experience to make sense of the topics brought up during class. In my interview with Dr. Closson, she mentioned that she believes that, as an African American professor, her race allows the students to “feel more comfortable about sharing their personal experiences” and that the students relate these experiences to try to understand them and how they have been impacted by race (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016). It seems that Dr. Closson was correct because participants would often relate their own stories as a way to clarify a topic for themselves and also to clarify the topics for their peers. For example, in “Asleep,” Monique relates the idea of White privilege to her experiences traveling abroad with a United States passport. Monique explains that when she lived abroad, she met individuals who were not able to travel as easily as she was because she had an American passport. She equated this idea to

White privilege to explain how she was not aware of the privilege of having an American passport until she was around people who did not. By relating this poignant example to the class, Monique was able to demonstrate how privilege is engrained in the psyche and is not often recognized by those who benefit from it.

In the same portrait, Nikki responds to the White privilege checklist by relating a story for the other participants. While the other students were looking over their own checklists, Nikki provides an example as to why she could not check a particular box on the checklist. This particular box states, "I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented" (Appendix four). Nikki relates that she has items that represent her race such as postcards and images, but she reminds the class, and herself, that she had to find those images. She also mentions that, one time, she had to send a picture of a Black baby doll to her mother so she would go buy the doll for Nikki's children. The idea of a Black baby doll scavenger hunt made an impact on me as a White woman. I can go into any store and find a White doll with ease, so the idea that a Black doll is difficult to find was a poignant example for me, and it made me reexamine my White privilege. For the other Black participants, this was an example that they could relate to.

In "Woke," Jessica recalls a roundtable session on Whiteness at a conference she had recently attended. Jessica brings up this roundtable conversation to relate question whose responsibility it is to teach White people about race with the readings about White privilege for that week. By bringing up this experience, she gives a real-world example that presents a dilemma that is only briefly discussed in the readings. Both readings centered on White privilege and Whiteness as property, but the question

of who teaches White people about their privilege is never asked. By asking this question to the class, she forces the participants to think about this dilemma, which may not have a real answer. However, because Jessica uses a relevant real-life example, her peers are able to engage in this discussion that otherwise may have remained in the margins.

Also in “Woke,” Jamilia and Nikki have a brief topical dialogue on the meaning of cultural competency. Both Jamilia and Nikki are referencing their teaching professions as they discuss cultural competency in education and how the label of cultural competency creates a false sense of arrival. Neither Jamilia or Nikki bring up specific examples of how they were trained, but both bring up the concept of cultural competency, and how, once faculty members are trained for cultural competency, they feel as though they have the skills and knowledge to be effective educators for students of color. Jamilia and Nikki use this example to further the dialogue on how White people perceive their Whiteness. By using an education example, they are able to relate something common among educators, such as cultural competency, with the articles and concepts from that week of the course.

At times Dr. Closson used counterexamples, or personal examples that conflicted with what the students might expect. By adding examples that the students did not expect, Dr. Closson created a cognitive dissonance that the students then had to work through. For example, in “Asleep,” Dr. Closson does check one of the boxes on the White privilege checklist. By explaining why, and relating her personal experience, Dr. Closson gives the students, who did not check many if any boxes, something to think about.

Another way that students made meaning about the themes of race and racism in the course was by referencing course materials. In my interview with Dr. Closson, she mentions the course materials, including the racial autobiography and the summary papers, and the impact she sees on the students in the course that is, she says, “almost spiritual” (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016). Students read the articles each week, not only to prepare for the discussion, but to prepare for their summary reflection papers, which were a substantial part of their grades. With that in mind, students were encouraged to express their “confusion, disagreement or support of different points of view” inspired by the weekly readings (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016). For example, Jessica expresses frustration regarding a point made in an article by Bergerson (2003) in which the author debates the role of White scholars who choose to study race. She points out how there is a contradiction in the scholarship in which it seems that White scholars are permitted to examine race in their research, but Black scholars are not afforded the same privilege. By bringing up this contradiction, Jessica is able to further the discussion with the other participants. Although there is no solution, the discussion is, in and of itself, a process of meaning-making.

Because race and racism is a social subject, many of the students referenced outside materials that were not part of the course as examples to clarify topics or to add additional information that supported or challenged ideas presented in the classroom dialogue. Students often referred to the news or articles they had read online. One example that came up time and time again was Rachel Dolezal, former president of the NAACP, who is a White woman passing for African American. Nikki, Jessica, and

Jamila brought up Dolezal in three separate class meetings, citing videos that they had seen, interviews they had viewed, and articles they had read that discuss her ability to pass and that investigated the social construction of race. Each time, Dolezal was an example used to buttress the concept of White privilege because, as a White woman, she is afforded the ability to, not only ignore her race, but to willfully change it.

Often, participants would discuss videos and articles that they had seen during the week between classes. These conversations often occurred before class began or at the end of class. These conversations often occurred when the students referenced articles that they thought extended the topics brought up in the class.

Participants also harkened back to each other's examples in order to extend the conversation, bringing up new points to discuss, or to clarify an idea that was being discussed. One conversation that occurred the class meeting that "Woke" is based on but that did not make it into the final portrait surrounded the question of whether people of color can be racist. The participants' opinions were split regarding this idea. Jessica explained that she believed African Americans could be racist, while Nikki insisted that their lack of social status prevents them from being racist. As the debate proceeded, Dr. Closson referred to an earlier example by Nikki in which Nikki asserted that a Black family not allowing their child to date a White person was not a racist act. Dr. Closson strongly disagreed on the grounds that it was a racist act because the Black family was asserting dominance over the child in the same way that Whites assert dominance over people of color. By referring to this example, Dr. Closson drew a line of logic that allowed the students to investigate the topic of African American racism in more depth.

Research question one asks what it looks like as teaching and learning proceeds among adult educators and learners engaged in discussions of race and racism.

## Portraits

The portraits themselves demonstrate how the adult learners who participated in this study made meaning about race and racism in this CRT course. To respond to question two, I composed four portraits based on four class meetings that covered four common themes that I found throughout the course. These themes are Whiteness as property and White privilege, the social formation of race, and the endemic nature of race and racism. Since these themes were carried throughout the class, I wanted to choose class meetings that focused on these particular themes to be the subject of the four portraits. The portraits are artistic depictions of the dialogue combined with my own reflections, and they vividly portray the context and discussions, and experiences in the classroom setting.

Portraits are subjective because they are the artistic impressions of a time, a place, and its participants for the purposes of showing the reader what happened in the research scenario. As I mentioned earlier, portraiture as a method relies heavily on narrative, and its significance is derived from its ability to tell the story of the participants, and, as is the case with this study, the researcher as well. As such, I cannot conclude that my portraits contradict prior research portraits. Instead, I can discuss how they differ. Salazar (2016), professor of art at the Maryland Institute College of Art, wrote a longitudinal portrait of recent graduates from the College of Art in order to see what skills they took from the classroom and applied to their real lives. Salazar's goal was to write a portrait akin to James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a*

*Young Man* including, as she says, “all of the complexity” of human experience (pp. 147). Salazar surveyed and interviewed the graduates over an 18month time frame, and created a data display capturing common themes. Salazar then composed the portraits of each student, “using as many quotes as possible to fully communicate participants’ perceptions” (pp. 147). Salazar’s portraits are traditional in the sense that each individual participant is focused on, and their background and inner thoughts become externalized for the reader to analyze. Whereas Salazar’s portraits focus on the individual students and their experiences after college, my portraits were centered on a group of students and their external interactions about race and racism. This is more akin to Chapman’s (2007) portrait in which a class interacts about an assignment that has racial implications. For my portrait and Chapman’s, the portrait isn’t necessarily of the individual participants in the classroom. Instead, my portraits, like Chapman’s, focus on the class as a whole, particularly the interactions therein.

Since teaching was part of the meaning-making process, the portraits also address how teaching proceeded in this class. Pollock (2004), Thompson (2005), and Theodore (2008) all discuss race talk in the college classroom and assert that student expectations about what race is are fairly stringent and that explorations often lead students to feel uncomfortable and for them to question why race is being studied at all. This course differs in that discussing race is an expectation. However, that does not change the fact that speaking about race still seems, for most students, a taboo subject. With that in mind, Dr. Closson, as an African American woman, developed and facilitated a course that dealt heavily with themes of race and racism, but she did not depoliticize or neutralize the dialogue for the sake of the White students in the class.



Rather, Dr. Closson allowed the conversation to proceed and never kept the students from speaking openly about race and racism, even when the dialogue became uncomfortable or off-topic. Dr. Closson herself asserted in her interview that her own race may draw out more reflection from students of color, but she also discussed her goal for all of the students in her class to be contemplative about their own experiences with race, and for the experience to be transformative, which aligns with Beder's (1987) fourth purpose of adult education, which is to enhance personal growth (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016).

Dr. Closson appears rarely in the portraits themselves because she did not contribute to the class frequently, instead allowing the conversation to grow organically from guided questions that she posed. She interjects most often into the dialogue to ask for clarification, both for herself and for others that might be struggling with a concept or another participant's line of thought. The questions Dr. Closson posed served as a way to propel discussion into deeper places, and students often answered these questions for themselves before class started, and brought their responses into the classroom discussion. The ability for students to prepare answers beforehand allowed, in my opinion as a student in the course, for deeper reflection on sometimes very complex topics. I base my assertion of this on her interview, in which she mentions the peer-to-peer sharing as an integral part of the transformative properties of this particular course. That Dr. Closson does not enter into the dialogue frequently speaks to her teaching style, and, the lack of her own voice speaks to her desire for students to assert their own voices, and her desire to neutralize any power dynamics that could occur within a more traditional classroom structure.

When she did contribute to the classroom dialogue, Dr. Closson used the same modes of communication as the student participants, often expressing personal experience, referencing course materials, providing outside examples, and relating other participants' experiences in order to help the students synthesize their own understandings of race and racism. Offering her own personal experiences or relating her experiences to the experiences of the student participants seems to be a strategic part of Dr. Closson's teaching philosophy. Dr. Closson, in her interview, not only discussed at lengths the merits of educators reflecting on their own experiences with race and racism, but she also discussed being a woman of color and how her own race and personal experiences have, she believes, influenced her students of color to be more open and reflective about their own experiences (Dr. Rosemary Closson, personal communication, November 28, 2016). Although she would contribute to the conversations in order to propel the conversation forward at times or to make connections between ideas, Dr. Closson avoided lecturing, and spoke at length most often when introducing materials, addressing housekeeping items, or clarifying topics for the week. In the portrait, "Asleep," I make note of how the room was set up. Rather than having a faculty member at the head of the room behind a podium, as many professors prefer, Dr. Closson would on her own, or with the aid of students, push the desks together to create a center table. In this way, the student didn't perceive an imbalanced power dynamic between faculty member and students; instead, the message of creating this equitable space is that all voices should be heard and that all experiences are valid.

I included the detailed descriptions about how the dialogue took place during the course among all participants, and I included references to my own learning when I wrote internal monologue from my perspective in the portraits. The presence of my inner monologue deviates from how other portraits have been composed. Chapman, for example, does not include her own internal monologue as she studied the class of elementary students. Instead, Chapman includes her own assumptions and conclusions in her discussion, outside of the portrait itself, because she was not a subject of the portrait. I, on the other hand, appear in the portrait in the dialogue as well as in my own reflections because I was a participant in the course.

It was my goal to paint a picture of this class so that readers could find themselves immersed in the class meeting, and from there draw their own conclusions about the dialogue and about their own understandings about race and racism. In order to paint this picture, I took field notes describing the setting, overall mood, and both pre and post class participant interactions. I include Dr. Closson among the participants in the definition of adult learner because I believe she also benefitted from the dialogue as a learner even though she was facilitating the course.

I included many of the participant's gestures such as nods of disagreement and disbelief as well as nods of agreement or approval so the reader could perceive what occurred. For the same reason, I also included how students moved when responding, such as when they sat back or moved forward. Additionally, I offered physical descriptions of the participants that would add a rich description yet preserve their anonymity. In each of the portraits, I add descriptions of the dialogue, including pauses, laughter, insistence, and hesitation. I felt that, in order for the reader to feel as though

they are a part of the dialogue, these details were not only relevant but necessary to the richness of the portraits. For example, pauses typically meant that the participants were thinking about the question or about how they should respond. Often, I filled in the pauses with my own thoughts, which I had noted, during those same pauses, in my field notes. Other than minor edits of repeated words such as, 'uh' and 'um,' I kept the edits to the transcripts at minimum to preserve the integrity of the dialogue as well as my own reflections in order to ensure that the portrait was as true to life as possible. The focus on keeping the portrait authentic to the classroom experience demonstrates what it looked like when learning took place in this course.

### **Methodological Limitations**

The portraiture method yielded responses to the research questions at the heart of this study, yet I found limitations to using this method.

A portrait is a snapshot of a time and a place and, in these particular portraits, the dialogue, and, as Chapman (2007) asserts, portraiture is a way through which to understand one's racialized experiences. However, I was frustrated that the internal thoughts and reflections of the other participants were impossible for me to portray using this particular method. In this research, I included my own thoughts, reflections, and experiences as they related to the classroom dialogue, but, it was impossible to depict the other participants' internal thoughts or feelings unless they spoke about them in the class. Although I feel as though I portray the classroom context, dialogue, and my own thoughts accurately and well, I felt that portraiture limited the ways in which I could speak to the experiences of meaning-making in this class.

Another limitation of portraiture, particularly in a racially charged context such as this class was, is the question surrounding who is speaking for whom. In portraiture the author is creating a depiction of an entire group, in this case, a White author depicted the interactions of a group of mostly people of color talking about race and racism. As I wrote the portraits, I was keenly aware that I might be, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state, grouping the class, creating a “common experience” that would be “forced on them by the dominant ideology” (pp. 284). This dynamic of White researcher studying mostly people of color, and my awareness that I might be essentializing their experiences, led me to question the ways in which my research, particularly my portraits, would reveal my privilege or cast a shadow on the participants because of my own Whiteness.

## **Implications**

Research questions one asks how I, as a White researcher, making meaning of my role in a CRT course. When I proposed this research, I did not expect to have the difficulty writing about my Whiteness that I did. In the sections of the portraits in which I include my reflections, I ask myself, and perhaps the reader, many open-ended questions that I believe other White researchers would ask themselves if they had been conducting the same research. As I discuss in the review of the literature, Delgado (1984) wrote about the concerns that people of color could and should have about White researchers. As a White researcher, I had to be aware of these dynamics as I wrote the portraits. Surprisingly, I often had a difficult time depicting the classroom dynamics accurately because I did not want to portray the class in a negative way and potentially keep other White researchers from conducting similar research, nor did I

want to essentialize the participants of the study, which CRT, as a theory, has been accused of promoting (Delgado & Stefancic, 2006). I had to, quite frequently, examine my own Whiteness, and put my feelings aside in order to remain positive about this research; however, I felt it necessary to depict the classroom dynamic, however contentious at times, in order to accurately depict what it looked like when students and their professors gathered to make meaning of race and racism.

Research question two asks how adult learners make meaning about race and racism in a CRT course. Portraits themselves respond to this particular research question. Since there are limited studies that use portraiture as a method, this research study provides an example of how the portraiture method can be used to see what it looks like when a group of students and their faculty member gather to make meaning about race and racism. The portrait depicts this dialogue, and includes my own perspective as a White participant observer and how I experienced participating in this critical race theory course with other participants who are predominantly people of color.

This study yielded interesting results with regards to the modes of communication that students used during the classroom dialogue. The predominant mode of communication was in the form of expressing lived experiences to make sense of ideas and concepts presented in the course materials. To a lesser extent, students referenced the course materials. When I first analyzed the data, I found this to be surprising because I often rely on course materials to contribute to classroom dialogue; however, Dr. Closson noted in her interview that mastery of content was not a primary goal of the course and that she hoped that students would find the class to be a safe space to explore their understandings of race and to have a transformative experience.

This course, and CRT as a framework, emphasizes experience, and this allowed the students to rely less on course materials and to feel more comfortable sharing their experiences in order to make meaning in the course for themselves and to help their peers better understand each other as well as the topics that were being discussed. I believe that portraiture was the best way to portray the experience of participating in this class.

### **Implications for Teaching and Learning about Race and Racism**

Dr. Closson's interview gave me insight into her goals for the class. Having analyzed the portraits and the ways in which I believe the participants came together to make meaning, I believe that Dr. Closson's goal of transformation over content knowledge created an environment in which the students could share their experiences with one another in order to create new understandings and new challenges to the scholarship included in the course materials.

By creating an environment where students were expected to contribute, not only in class, but in reflective journals, papers, and racial autobiographies, the students came to the discussions with more to think about and more to share than if they had merely been asked to read articles and discuss them. By sitting with the class, she silently expressed that all ideas and experiences were valued, and that everyone had a seat at the table.

Teaching and learning about race can be intimidating. From a teaching perspective, faculty members who teach about race can find themselves in a precarious position because talking about race is often perceived as being confrontational, tense, negative, and sometimes even dangerous (DeSoto, 2008; Tucker, 2008; Closson,

Bowman, & Merriweather, 2014). For a teacher, it is important that they create a learning environment that lends itself to reflection, and that fosters conversation that may lead to discovery, and sometimes conflict. Creating a class in which reflection is a course component will allow for the learners to examine their own feelings toward race in a safe space. As a White participant and learner in this course, I can say that learning about race required me to reflect on my own Whiteness, my motivations and interest in race, and my relationships with people of color. Because I was able to reflect on these ideas in my field notes, journals, racial autobiography, and reflection papers, I was able to find meaning for myself. Educators who are developing courses that deal with themes of race and racism should have end goals in mind, just as Dr. Closson did when she created this course. When the class fosters this examination and provides the learners with time and space to reflect on new concepts or previous understandings, the learner is able to examine his or her ideas, and the ideas of his or her classmates without fear of judgement.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to describe how meaning is made when adult learners gather to discuss race and racism in a CRT course. I used the portrait method to illuminate the experience of a class as they engaged in discussions about race and racism. There are several recommendations I would make to researchers who are interested in studying how a group of students and faculty member talk about race and racism in a graduate level class.

First, it is my sincerest hope that no White researcher avoids taking on the task of researching about race due to my discomfort with this project. Acknowledging



Whiteness and how one benefits from Whiteness is a soul-searching task that changes the way you see the world. White privilege does exist, whether you acknowledge it or not. However, by acknowledging your own White privilege you are not saying that you have not worked hard in your life or overcome obstacles. White privilege simply means that you can expect things from society that people of color cannot. The benefit of understanding your privilege is the ability, then, to see how it informs your decisions and how your privilege affects the people of color around you.

With regard to the participants of a study like this, I would recommend performing in-depth interviews with the students in the course in order to gain their perspectives about the assignments, discussions, and overall themes of the course. This would serve not only to illuminate the perspectives of the students, but to create participant profiles that would add to the overall richness of the portrait. For example, I was one of two White students in the course. Our perspectives, transforming into minorities in the course, would be valuable as an additional study, answering the question, how do White students experience learning about race and racism in a class in which they are the minority race? I speak to my own experiences when I say that participating in a course as a minority was at times uncomfortable, but it provided me with experiences that I was able to reflect on. This reflection could serve as a foundation for an autoethnographic study, or, the shared reflection between the two White students in the class could manifest a duoethnographic study.

A longitudinal study of the participants over the course of the class would have yielded results such as the evolution, or lack thereof, of the participant's understandings about race and racism. A longitudinal study of this kind could utilize the student journals,

racial autobiographies, reflection papers, or other course deliverables to examine the ways in which students came to terms with race and racism throughout the course. A latitudinal study, focusing on multiple courses with an emphasis on race within the college of education, could yield a deeper understanding of how race is discussed in a higher education setting, and this study could be extended by focusing on graduate or undergraduate courses outside of the college of education, perhaps within the social sciences or liberal arts.

Not only were there only two White students, there were only two international students in the course. Often, these students found some of the terminology and the history difficult to understand or identify with because they had not grown up in the United States. Tenets of CRT like the endemic nature of racism apply solely to the United States, so their lived experiences could potentially provide a different perspective to race and racism in the United States and abroad.

For this research situation, I wanted to have as little impact on the student experience as possible, so I avoided conducting interviews with the students, and I felt uncomfortable sharing during some of the class periods because I wanted to avoid steering a conversation in a particular direction. I wanted the dialogue to emerge organically, so I allowed the conversations to flow without much of my own input. Although I did participate, it was minimal. I was also consciously aware of my Whiteness throughout the class meetings. Often, I was hesitant to participate because I felt as though to participate verbally would have been a colonization of the conversation. My thoughts are reflected in my field notes and in the portrait itself.

Another suggestion for future research would be to observe a focus group, rather than graduate students in a live course. I believe most of my challenges stem from the fact that these students were paying for a course, taking it to deepen their understanding of critical race theory, and I felt as though they expected to be able to take a course uninterrupted by a researcher. Although all of the students consented to be a part the research study, I felt it was my obligation to avoid affecting the outcome of the dialogues and classroom discussion as much as possible. I wanted, for both the research project and for the students, to have an honest and open discussion, just as I did when I took this course for the first time. A study with similar research questions could be conducted with a focus group, and potentially yield deeper conclusions. Research is needed to explore how other courses in the college of education present ideas of race and racism in the graduate-level classroom.

## **Conclusion**

When I was taking courses for my Master's degree in literature, I had an assignment to read both editions of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and to compare the changes she made. What interested me, while reading both books side by side on my desk, highlighting every change, was Shelley's introduction to the 1831 edition. In that edition, she mentions having made nothing but alterations of style and that the story itself remained untouched from her original 1816 edition. As I read both editions together, I noticed, few changes to style, but many changes to the motivations of the main characters. In the 1816 edition, Frankenstein's creation is the sympathetic character, made and abandoned by his creator. However, in the second edition, Frankenstein himself enlists the sympathy of the reader, stalked by an abomination that

he gave life to. What, I wondered, did this change mean for Shelley herself? Had her opinion of her own creation changed over time?

At the time that I read these editions together, I could not imagine why she would change her work and not remain true to her original vision. I was somewhat affronted that her age may have changed her sympathetic focus and rendered her novel more conservative.

At this point in my study, however, I begin to empathize with Shelley. I feel like I want to go back to these portrait and rewrite them, rendering myself less sympathetic, and asserting that the heroes of these stories were the participants in this course. I am tempted to do this even now. I mean, how can someone read words they've written and not feel as though they could have written them a different way, or that they should have focused on something else or developed a character more fully?

The portraits that I have created make me feel regretful. I regret that I did not speak more during the class, regret that the participants may have become the villains in my tale, and regrets that I may have become more sympathetic to the reader. I also regret not having focused my study more on the other participants in this class, telling their stories and making their lived experiences the central focus of these portraits. This regret pushes me to edit, to revise, to amend, but I will not. These portraits remain intact for the reader to analyze and interpret and to make their own. I still believe that these portraits convey very important dialogues, but I regret that there is something else there casting a shadow over this course: my Whiteness. This shadow was not something I expected or intended, but, as it stands, it is a problem to think about when engaging, as a White person, in research that deals with race.

I would invite the reader to draw his or her own conclusions about the portraits I created. I wrote them as artistic renderings of this course in order to immerse the reader into these class meetings. The reason for writing them as creative non-fiction allows for creative license for myself as a writer and for the reader as well. Do I seem sympathetic, reader? Perhaps I do. Perhaps my feelings of inadequacy and fear bled through onto these pages. Perhaps some might accuse me of consciously rendering myself likeable as a means to ally you with me, to get you on my side. This is for you, as the reader, to decide. What do these dialogues mean for you? What do you see written between the lines in these portraits? This, dear reader, is the power of storytelling. It empowers you, the reader, to interpret these texts and create your own understandings.

If I am, indeed, sympathetic to the reader because of my discomfort, please do not allow my discomfort to keep you from furthering discussions about race. Whether you are a person of color or a White researcher, embrace this discomfort as an essential part of making new meaning for yourself.

White researchers, I would like to speak to you directly. Entering into dialogues about race is daunting, but it is essential at this time, right now. You and I have the responsibility to understand race because it is an endemic part of our society, and most importantly, as White people, it is a part of society that we largely know nothing about. We ignore race because it is convenient. We ignore race because it is easier to do so than to confront it head on. Without these conversations, racial inequities will continue to be ignored and our colleagues, peers, friends, and family of color will continue to work toward creating an equitable society that will, in return, only perpetuate their own marginalization.

If researchers, both Black and White shy away from issues of race, individuals will have to continue to march, asserting that their lives, Black lives, do, in fact, matter. If we do not get to the bottom of what systems are infected with embedded racism, if we do not approach research with a racial lens, how can we expect to move forward as a country, as a society, as people?

Conversations like these matter. These participants matter. They took on something challenging, and they shared their experiences, examined their understandings, and created new meaning. They did what most are afraid to do, which is to bring up the taboo subject about race and confront it.

We all left that classroom having changed in some way. The door is closed; the lights are off, and all that I am left with is the story of this class, the story of these dialogues, and the story of the ways in which I struggled to understand myself and these participants as we gathered to discuss race and racism as adult learners, peers, and humans. I hope that these dialogues inspire someone, somewhere, to embrace discomfort and begin their own conversation.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter begins with a summary of the study, including a brief summary of the procedures. Next, I discuss each research question and how the portraits in Chapter four provide responses to each question. For research question one, the portraits provide a response because they detail what it looks like as learning proceeds in a class dealing with race and racism. For research question two, the modes of communication I discovered while coding the text provide a response to the ways in which meaning is made in a class that deals with race and racism. In this chapter, I also discuss the

methodological limitations, which I found while writing the portraits. These limitations included potentially essentializing or grouping the experiences of the participants and my hesitation as a White researcher conducting research about race and racism. I also discuss the implications of the research, which includes the results that I found surprising while conducting this research, and I discuss implications for teaching and learning about race and racism. Based on the limitations and implications of this research study, I provide recommendations for future research, which include how to extend this research project, suggestions for longitudinal and latitudinal studies along the same lines, and using a similar research situation with a different method. Finally, I write my conclusions of the research study.

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## APPENDICES

## **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

1. Why is this an important course for the college of education? Are there other courses like it in the college of education? What are your plans for the future of this course in light of your retirement?
2. Can you please share the history of this course? When did you develop it? Why did you develop it? How long have you been teaching it?
3. In what ways are students asked to reflect on their experiences with race in class? What does that reflection look like?
4. How do you think teaching this class as a woman of color impacts how your students engage with you or their peers?
5. What makes this an adult education course? What adult education theories, if any, inform your teaching of this class? Are some more important than others in informing your pedagogy?
6. In what ways have you changed your pedagogy in order to teach this course?
7. How are students taught to understand the meaning of racism? Anti-racism?
8. Which tenets of CRT seem the most challenging for students to understand? Does this vary by race?
9. Describe for me what is it like to teach this course?
10. Complete this sentence and elaborate: this course succeeds when...
11. Complete this sentence and elaborate: This course fails when...

## **Survey Questions**

1. How do you identify your racial background?
2. What was your motivation for taking this class?

3. What is your age?
4. Did you find the classroom discussion difficult or challenging to participate in at times? If so, describe a time when you felt the classroom discussion was difficult or challenging to participate in.

## Appendix B: Sample Data Display

	<b>Main Theme: White privilege/ Whiteness as property</b>  <b>Sub Themes: Blackness as property/ Passing</b>	<b>Main Theme: Social formation of race</b>  <b>Sub Theme: Historical misrepresentation</b>	<b>Endemic nature of race/ racism</b>  <b>Sub Theme: challenging ideas of race and racism</b>
<b>Personal Experience</b>	<p>Jessica: "As a person of color, it is hard work to, um, engage with White people and their Whiteness and their White privilege."</p> <p>Jessica: "So that's one of the things that I always share with my students when we talk about privilege, especially White privilege is you did nothing to get it. You just, it, it's there based on, um, who you appear to be."</p> <p>Monique: And when I was living in Africa, and it was like, we were planning trips. And those that didn't have a U.S. passport, it became, like, an issue. And I was like why are y'all ____, you know, I didn't notice that I'm holding this passport and I don't have to get a Visa to go to Switzerland or to, you know, but you do. And then you're going to be checked. And then it's all this."</p>	<p>Nikki: "And so how do I then also call to action help them start to think about some of these questions and not as traditional educators but as social workers who I also see that is an educator position. Our, our education just doesn't take place in a classroom."</p> <p>Monique: "We go about our lives and we think about, um, how certain things run. And I remembered in my science class, we were reading about the Tuskegee project and I mean, I've read that, and I've, but it hit me different this time."</p> <p>Dr. Closson: "And so the, the chaplain was saying, well no, this is, this is, this is not right. This is silly. This is ridiculous. So after the session was over, I said to him, I said, you know, and I understand your point I said, but historically, it's not that out of bounds because there was the Tuskegee experiment where the, the United States government had this injection of syphilis, or the un- untreated syphilis that went on even when they knew there was a treatment for syphilis. They let this continue. And he looked at me and got red in the face and said, that</p>	<p>Angel: "there is some issues with some students in adult education where a particular professor and I've been hearing students saying that, um, they don't think she's fair towards the Black students and, um, I think she's been making statements saying, I'm not racists because I, I understand a student reported this person, this professor... I noticed some things too in class. I just avoid it and I just say well, interesting, interesting."</p> <p>Jessica: "So I think first, [inaudible] [laughter] I, I think first sitting down with leadership and providing these are where the cracks are. So there's, this is what it is and meeting it and having that, that conversation and making it in the forefront, so talking about social justice. What does that mean? What does [inaudible] What is our mission values and how do we come to see that and what's the accountability when you don't do that, um, and how do we back that up with policy. But again, starting with the, um, the leadership but also changing what the leadership looks like."</p>

	<b>Main Theme: White privilege/ Whiteness as property</b>  <b>Sub Themes: Blackness as property/ Passing</b>	<b>Main Theme: Social formation of race</b>  <b>Sub Theme: Historical misrepresentation</b>	<b>Endemic nature of race/ racism</b>  <b>Sub Theme: challenging ideas of race and racism</b>
		<p>never happened...He said that never happened. And I said, I was like, I've never had anybody be that uninformed. And I said, what? I said, I have a book. I have a book. [laughter] That talks about the whole thing."</p>	

	<b>Main Theme: White privilege/ Whiteness as property</b>  <b>Sub Themes: Blackness as property/ Passing</b>	<b>Main Theme: Social formation of race</b>  <b>Sub Theme: Historical misrepresentation</b>	<b>Endemic nature of race/ racism</b>  <b>Sub Theme: challenging ideas of race and racism</b>
<b>Outside Materials</b>	<p>Jessica: "Like, technically, I didn't know who she was until she showed up on the news. So like, I, you know what I mean? So, those are the pieces that I'm trying to figure out from a systematic place that I don't know if Blackness can have property. Blackness can be owned, yes. But I don't think it's property of protection. Because when I think of property, I think of this is the ownership. This is mine. There is a law. This is what legitimized me as a citizen of the United States of America is this Whiteness."</p> <p>Nikki: "Um, but then in the case of the woman who was the president of the NAACP, when she had been passing as Black, you know, then that was frowned upon too."</p>	<p>Jamilia: "And this was in the newspaper. This was not like something that they printed up and put, this was in a newspaper. This was taken from the Daily Republican Newspaper in Wynnona, Minnesota in 1863. So, this was something they publicized. So that is the perspective of a Native American when they're having an issue with this term, redskin, being used so lightly, this is where they are coming from."</p> <p>Bernard: "Okay, because even in the news &gt;&gt; They never tried to come back and get it. &gt;&gt; Yeah, even in the newspaper, it said, you know, yes Blacks left but nobody lost their land or everybody was able to sell their land"</p> <p>Jessica: "Well [inaudible] law applied, the nature of what they do applies everywhere, the legal system, the law, and I think when I think of CRT, I think about, they were looking at problem law and how the legal system impacts the different areas of people's lives. That goes everywhere</p>	<p>Jessica: "Okay, because even in the news &gt;&gt; They never tried to come back and get it. &gt;&gt; Yeah, even in the newspaper, it said, you know, yes Blacks left but nobody lost their land or everybody was able to sell their land &gt;&gt; Yes, that's right."</p> <p>Closson: Well, it, it, uh, uh, not everybody, I, I don't think [inaudible] I can't remember whether everyone read that because we didn't discuss it in class. But in that, sociologists and in the chapter that I think I had posted online in canvas, they talk about that. And their feeling is that, um, that Blacks can be racists</p> <p>Nikki: when we look at graduation rates, not just from college but even high school, you have to think, what's going on that, you know, 52 percent of African-Americans or whatever that stat was-- where African-American and Latinos' stats are so much lower, like, what's happening? It has to be something more than just by chance, right?"</p>

	<b>Main Theme: White privilege/ Whiteness as property</b>  <b>Sub Themes: Blackness as property/ Passing</b>	<b>Main Theme: Social formation of race</b>  <b>Sub Theme: Historical misrepresentation</b>	<b>Endemic nature of race/ racism</b>  <b>Sub Theme: challenging ideas of race and racism</b>
<b>Course Materials</b>	<p>Nikki: “I was curious about Franken–, like why they used the only White women as well. And I actually got into a discussion um, with someone about this. And their comment was, and I, I haven’t done my own research in it, but I guess that there’s research out there that White women are the most resistant to the idea of White privilege.”</p> <p>Jessica: “I, I mean I think based on this article piece is for a non, for a White person to infringe on the coach or our spaces are Black, okay. So what? You chose to do that. But for a Black person to like invade on a White person’s space, all of a sudden, we have laws. All of a sudden, there, there’s no protection. There’s nothing there to protect you. So what I’m saying is that in Whiteness, there’s a protection. There’s a currency.”</p>	<p>Bernard: “Well the stuff being about the contact phase was like, um, and this is going to sound stupid but I can picture, like, these old British dudes being like, look at their craniums, and like, you know what I mean?”</p> <p>Angel: “it’s interesting how the interpretation of the law is different from race to race. It’s like, when in the Meredith book, when you think about how the law is interpreted by the Whites in terms of what they have to do and allowing people to honor the law that was given for people to have certain rights, it’s the way that they are able to interpret the law, like, oh it, it says this but I can disregard that.”</p>	<p>Nikki: “Now I’m not saying why did these authors. &gt;&gt; Oh. &gt;&gt; I’m saying, not, not McDowell and Jeris, I’m not asking about them. That was my first question and that’s when Nikki dodged the question. [laughter] But, but I’m asking for the, for some of the original authors of Critical Race Theory, some of those early legal scholars, why would they include interdisciplinary? Why would they, why would they talk about or promote this idea of well, if you’re going to be a CRT co– scholar, you also need to think about this, you need to understand the, the, that racism is endemic”.</p>



	<b>Main Theme: White privilege/ Whiteness as property</b>  <b>Sub Themes: Blackness as property/ Passing</b>	<b>Main Theme: Social formation of race</b>  <b>Sub Theme: Historical misrepresentation</b>	<b>Endemic nature of race/ racism</b>  <b>Sub Theme: challenging ideas of race and racism</b>
<b>Examples from others</b>		<p>Jessica: “No I don’t think it was, I don’t think it was. I think you have to infer it, right, from what they, what they said. And, um, one of the things that, uh, um, that I think in addition to kind of what you said, Sheila, is that, um, that, part of the majoritarian story I’m inferring is that unless the client brings it up, that the therapist doesn’t. That there’s no &gt;&gt; oh the race &gt;&gt; yeah, there’s, that there’s no kind of potential for the therapist to think well, now, this is, for example, interracial couple &gt;&gt; right &gt;&gt; maybe they’ve run into some issues, and so maybe I ought to probe that a little bit. Maybe I ought to ask some questions to see. And they might say no, every, everything’s fine. But, but maybe that’s part of what I need to ask, but the majoritarian view is well if they don’t, if the client doesn’t raise it, then you assume it’s not a problem. It’s not an issue.”</p> <p>Dr. Closson, “I think it’s, I think it’s some— I think the disturbing piece for me is what you said earlier is the, is the use of a representation of a people as a mascot. &gt;&gt; Right. &gt;&gt; I think that’s the disturbing piece.”</p> <p>Angel: “I know, back, back in the Bahamas, we have every Christmas</p>	<p>Closson: “Nikki’s example, if a Black family says, okay, so we are not marrying White guys. I’ve got daughters. They are not mar—, that’s to me, that’s a racist act. You are, you are educating them, bringing them up in an environment where you’re saying you can’t do this, and I’ve got the power to enforce it.”</p> <p>Bernard: “You know, I think that [inaudible] like, you talked about you, you, to associate with the institution? And we just like [inaudible] instances where, you know, Black people can exclude other people or other people can exclude anybody, right?</p>

	<b>Main Theme: White privilege/ Whiteness as property</b>  <b>Sub Themes: Blackness as property/ Passing</b>	<b>Main Theme: Social formation of race</b>  <b>Sub Theme: Historical misrepresentation</b>	<b>Endemic nature of race/ racism</b>  <b>Sub Theme: challenging ideas of race and racism</b>
		<p>and New Years, we have the [inaudible] um, called the Junkanoo parade, and we have different groups [inaudible] um, I mean, have a, portray a particular theme, and every other year, each group will come out with Native American, um, Indians, they always come up with Indians [inaudible] and, and they would be singing warriors the same, what you said, that you see them as warriors, and so that's how, our country, when we [inaudible] we think of them as warriors and how [inaudible] costume, but they have their face painted too, you know."</p>	

## Appendix C: IRB Consent Form



### Informed Consent to Participate in Research Involving Minimal Risk

Pro# 27965

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You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher or study staff to discuss this consent form with you, please ask him/her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

#### **A Portrait in Black and White: An Analysis of Race in the Adult Education Classroom**

The person who is in charge of this research study is Tealia DeBerry. This person is called the Principal Investigator. However, other research staff may be involved and can act on behalf of the person in charge. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Jennifer Wolgemuth.

The research will be conducted at the USF College of Education

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#### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to focus on the adult education classroom and the real-time interaction between an adult education practitioner and his or her students and to observe how together they make meaning in a course that deals with race and racism, how prior beliefs are explored, and how pre-existing understandings about race and racism are challenged.

#### **Why are you being asked to take part?**

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you are attending a Critical Race Theory course at the USF College of Education. For research purposes, I would like to audiotape the class dialogue of which your contributions would be a part.

#### **Study Procedures:**

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to:

Verson #1 10/13/2016

### **Costs**

It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

We will keep your study records private and confidential. Certain people may need to see your study records. Anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. These individuals include:

- The research team, including the Principal Investigator and transcriptionist.
- The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB) and related staff who have oversight responsibilities for this study, including staff in USF Research Integrity and Compliance.

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not include your name. We will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

### **You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints**

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, or experience an unanticipated problem, call Tealia DeBerry at 772-538-4963.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the USF IRB at (813) 974-5638 or contact by email at [RSCH-IRB@usf.edu](mailto:RSCH-IRB@usf.edu).

### **Consent to Take Part in this Research Study**

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Taking Part in Study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

### **Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent**

I have carefully explained to the person taking part in the study what he or she can expect from their participation. I confirm that this research subject speaks the language that was used to explain this research and is receiving an informed consent form in their primary language. This research subject has provided legally effective informed consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person obtaining Informed Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Verson #1 10/13/2016

- Have your contributions to class dialogue to be audio recorded. The PI and a professional transcriptionist will be the only people with access to the original recordings. Once the transcripts have been completed, they will be stored at the PI's home. After 5 years, the audio files will be erased. All transcripts will be edited, ensuring that they contain no personal or identifying information
- Participate in an optional member check of the final transcripts of the class meetings. The edited transcripts will be sent to participants via email, and they will be asked to check for accuracy. You will be provided with the PI's contact information so that you can send your revisions and concerns.
- Participate in two anonymous questionnaires.
- Participate in class as you normally would. Though you may be tempted to edit your comments because you are being recorded, please speak as you normally would, understanding that your anonymity will be protected.
- Attend class as you normally would. Our class will be held in EDU 253 from 5:00-7:50, as listed in the course calendar. Recordings will be made for 6 class meetings.

### **Total Number of Participants**

About 10 individuals will take part in this study at USF, Tampa campus.

### **Alternatives / Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal**

You do not have to participate in this research study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits you are entitled to receive if you stop taking part in this study. Decision to not participate will not affect your course grade. If you choose not to participate, you can request that I turn off the recorder when you make contributions to the class.

### **Benefits**

The potential benefits of participating in this research study include: the opportunity to reflect on your experience in this class by reading the final research study.

### **Risks or Discomfort**

This research is considered to be minimal risk. That means that the risks associated with this study are the same as what you face every day. There are no known additional risks to those who take part in this study.

The following risks may occur:

- One goal of this study is to understand how meaning is made about race and racism in a graduate class; as such, you may become uncomfortable with your personal evolution of thought as it pertains to sometimes controversial subjects that may be examined in the class.

### **Compensation**

You will receive no payment or other compensation for taking part in this study.

Verson #1 10/13/2016

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Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

Verson #1 10/13/2016

## Appendix D: CRT Course Syllabus

CRT Syllabus v.1\_2016

### COLLEGE OF EDUCATION GRADUATE DEPARTMENTAL COURSE SYLLABUS

*"The College of Education is dedicated to the ideals of Collaboration, Academic Excellence, Research, and Ethics/Diversity (CARE). These are key tenets in the Conceptual Framework of the College of Education. Competence in these ideals will provide candidates in educator preparation programs with skills, knowledge, and dispositions to be successful in the schools of today and tomorrow."*

Please note: The course content may be revised based on the needs of the students.

1. Course Prefix and Number: ADE 7677 Credit Hours: 3
2. Course Title: Emerging Trends & Issues: Critical Race Theory, ROOM 314
3. Regular Instructor(s): Rosemary B. Closson, Ph.D. Office 151 M
4. Course Prerequisites: None
5. Course Description:  
This course is a seminar for doctoral students (and master's students by permission of the professor) where we will critically examine and explore critical race theory regarding the degree of its theoretical relevance and contribution to educational practice.
6. Course Goals and Objectives:  
Students who successfully complete all course requirements should be able to meet the following objectives:
  - Describe the social movements and historical conditions in which CRT is rooted
  - Identify and discuss the essential tenets of CRT
  - Explain the benefits and pitfalls of CRT in the field of education or your field of practice
  - Critically appraise the relevance and analytical power of CRT in education or your field
  - Judge the nature of his or her own beliefs, biases, and desired future regarding issues raised by CRT
7. Content Outline:  
**Session 1: Introduction and Overview Aug. 22**  
Review of the syllabus, course expectations, and quality measures  
Introduction to the seminar format, sharing how we wish to talk about race and racism  
  
**Session 2: Critical Theory: The fundamentals Aug. 29**  
**Brookfield, S. (2005). *Power of Critical Theory*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Jossey-Bass.**

Preface, Ch. 1 Exploring the meaning of critical theory and Ch. 2 The learning tasks of critical theory, pp. vii-65

**Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin.** (2005). *Re-framing educational politics for social justice*, Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, pp. 69-98.

**Foster.** (1986). *Paradigms and Promises*, NY: Prometheus, Ch. 4 pp. 71-91.

**Session 3: U.S. Historical Dialogues on Race Sept. 12**

**Fredrickson, G.M.** (1988). *The arrogance of race: historical perspectives on slavery, racism, and social equality* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press. Ch. 13, pp. 189-206.

**DuBois, W.E.B.** (1903/1989). *Souls of Black Folk*, NY: Bantam, Ch. 1& 2.

**Alexander, M.** (2012) *The new Jim Crow*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). NY: New Press, Ch. 1. (jig-saw)

**Begin:** searching for portfolio items related to race and or racism i.e. web-sites, books, plays, music, news articles, movies, tv shows, magazine articles etc.

**DUE:** Racial Autobiography

**Session 4: Social Construction of Race and Racism Sept. 19**

**Omi & Winant** (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), NY: Routledge. Ch. 4.

**Lopez, H.** (1994). The social construction of race: some observations on illusion, fabrication, and choice, *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, 29(1), 1-53.

Or you can read a similar version of Lopez's article that was included in Delgado's book cited below. I personally prefer the 1994 version because Lopez provides provocative thoughts about our complicity in the construction of race but I leave it up to you.

**Lopez, H.** (2000). The social construction of race (pp.191-203). In R. Delgado (Ed), *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. PA: Temple Univ. Press.

**Jay, G.** (2007). Who invented white people? (pp. 96-102). In R. Yagelski (Ed.), *The Thomson Reader: Conversations in context*. Boston: Thomson/Henle. [optional]

**Media:** "What makes me white?"

**Session 5: CRT Origins and Evolution Sept. 26**

**Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J.** (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*, pp. 1-35. NY: New York University Press.

**Tate, L.** (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, 22, 195-247.



Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. Ch. 9 The space traders, 158-194.

Media: "Space Traders"

**Session 6: CRT Seminal Writings in Education Oct. 13**

Ladson-Billings, G. and Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teacher's College Record* 97(1), 41-62. [Scan]

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what is it doing in a nice field like education? *Qualitative Studies in Education* 11(1), 7-24.

**Read with an eye toward understanding what critical race theorists mean by "critiquing liberalism."**

Solórzano, D., Ceja, M. & Yosso, T. (2000). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions and campus racial climate: The experiences of African American college students. *Journal of Negro Education* 69(1/2), 60-73.

**Session 7: CRT Seminal Writings in Education (cont'd) Oct. 10**

Iverson, S. (2007). Camouflaging power and privilege: A critical race analysis of university diversity policies. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 43(5), 586-611.

Closson, R. (2010). Critical race theory and adult education. *Adult Education Quarterly* 60(3), 261-283.

**Begin:** Researching counter-stories in your respective fields.

**DUE:** Summary of historical development of structures of race.

**Session 8: Experiential Knowledge & Racism as endemic Oct. 17**

Bergerson, A. (2003). Critical race theory and white racism: Is there room for white scholars in fighting racism in education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(1), 51-64. [SD]

Johnson-Bailey, J. & Cervero, R. (2000). The invisible politics of race (pp. 147-160). In A. Wilson & E. Hayes (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Media: "Unnatural Causes": Episode 2, When the bough breaks.

**DUE:** Portfolios for interim review

**Session 9: Whiteness as property & Critique of Liberalism Oct. 24**

Harris, C. (1995). Whiteness as property. In Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N, Peller, G and Thomas, K. *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement* (pp. 276-291). NY: New Press.

Baumgartner, L. (2010). White whispers: Talking about race in adult education. In V. Sheared, J. Johnson-Bailey, S. Colin, E. Peterson, & S. Brookfield (Eds.) *The handbook of race and adult education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. [SD]

Solorzano, D., Villalpando, O., & Oseguera, L. (2005). Educational inequities and Latina/o undergraduate students in the U.S. *Journal of Hispanic Education*, 4(3), 272-294.

Meredith, J. (2012). *A mission from God*. NY: Atria. Ch. 1-3 completed

Be prepared to bring facets of the discussion from Ladson-Billings (1998), Session 6, experience into our examination of how critiques of liberalism are made. Also, think about the meaning of “whiteness as property” in regard to your understanding of Meredith’s integration of Ol’ Miss.

Media: “Brazil in Black & White: Skin color and higher education,” (58 min.)

#### Session 10: The Law Oct. 31

Solorzano, D., & Yosso, T. (2002). A critical race counter story of race, racism and affirmative action. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 155-68.

Donnor, J. (2005). Towards an interest convergence in the education of African-American student athletes in major college sports. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 45-67.

Dixon, A. & Rousseau, C. (2005). And we are still not saved: Critical race theory in education ten years later, *Race, ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 7-27.

Meredith, J. (2012). *A mission from God*. NY: Atria. Ch. 4 & 5 completed

Media: “Banished” The Stricklands in Forsythe Co., (84 min)

DUE: Summary, Race as a system of privilege

#### Session 11: Interest Convergence Nov. 7

Castagno, A. & Lee, S. (2007). Native mascots and ethnic fraud. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 40(3), 3-13. [SD]

Taylor, E. (1999). Critical race theory and interest convergence in the desegregation of higher education (181-204). In L. Parker, D. Deyle, S. Villenas (eds.) *Race is... Race isn't: Critical race theory and qualitative studies in education*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

#### Session 12: Inter-disciplinary Nov. 14

McDowell, T., & Jeris, L. (2004). Talking about race using critical race theory: Recent trends in the Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy. *Journal of Marriage and Family Therapy*, 30(1), 81-94.

We have read the following article as a way to understand how critical race theorists believe law should be incorporated into the analysis of education. In Session 12 we will refer back to Dixon,

A. & Rousseau, C. (2005), Session 10, because it also demonstrates an inter-disciplinary approach to examining how racism works.

**Sharing:** Be prepared to describe: a) the majoritarian story from your field and b) what makes your example a counter-story?

**DUE:** Summary, Application of CRT in your field

**Session 13: Social Justice Orientation Nov. 21**

Villalpando, O. (2004). Practical considerations for critical race theory and Latino Critical Theory for Latino Students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 105, 41-50. **SD**

Alexander, M. (2012). *The new Jim Crow*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). NY: New Press, Ch. 5 (jig-saw)

**Session 14: Critiques of CRT Nov. 28**

Brown, E. (1995). The tower of Babel: Bridging the divide between critical race theory and “mainstream” civil rights scholarship. *Yale Law Journal* 105(2), 513-547.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. Ch. VI Critiques and responses to criticism, 87-96.

Meredith, J. (2012). *A mission from God*. NY: Atria. Ch. 6-8 completed.

**DUE:** Completed portfolio share key learnings, insights, or challenges with the class.

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**Optional Reading:**

Brah, A. & Phoenix, A. (2009). Ain't I a woman? Revisiting Intersectionality. In E. Taylor, D. Gillborn, & G. Ladson-Billings (Eds.). *Foundations of critical race theory in education* (pp. 247-258). New York: Routledge

Merriweather Hunn, L., Guy, T., & Manglitz, E. (2006). Who can speak for whom. In *Adult Education Research Conference Proceedings* (pp. 244-250).

“One America” web-site has several documents of interest: What happened to the One America initiative? <http://clinton2.nara.gov/Initiatives/OneAmerica/america.html> [ link in Canvas]

Perdue, Theda. Interview with Theda Perdue. Retrieved from PBS The Power of an Illusion web-site Nov. 18, 2008.

“Returning to Learning” (2007) Lumina Foundation. [Is race a factor in this evolving phenomenon? Why or why not?] [link in Canvas]

8. Evaluation of Student Outcomes:

CRT Syllabus v.1\_2016

Objective	Learning Outcome Evaluated
Describe the social movements and historical conditions in which CRT is rooted	Learners will complete graded summaries based on course readings about the issues and elements in U.S. history that seem to have given rise to CRT
Identify and discuss the essential tenets of CRT	Learners will complete graded summary of how, or whether, CRT could be applied to their academic discipline.
Explain the benefits and pitfalls of CRT in the field of education	Learners will complete graded summary of their evaluation of CRT
Critically appraise the relevance and analytical power of CRT in education	Learners will complete graded summary of their evaluation of CRT
Judge the nature of his or her own beliefs, biases, and desired future regarding issues raised by CRT	<p>Learners will be asked to complete at least 5 reflective journal entries spread throughout the term. These entries provide an opportunity for learners to examine their beliefs about CRT, race, and racism. A summary reflection where the learner reviews and considers all of their journal entries is to be included in the learner's portfolio.</p> <p>Learners will complete a Racial Autobiography that lays out their personal experiences with race.</p> <p>Learners will complete an electronic Course Portfolio where they will have the opportunity to creatively express their beliefs about CRT and their desired future regarding issues raised by CRT.</p>

9. Grading Criteria:

Due Dates are in Canvas. Please take note.

Assignments	Points
1.Racial autobiography	15
2. Journaling (at least 5 entries in Canvas the first of which must be after the 1 <sup>st</sup> class, the final entry must be made early enough so that you can reflect over all your entries and include that reflection in your portfolio)	15
2.Course portfolio [electronic]	25
3.Student directed discussion (SD)	12
4.Summary reflections (3 @ 8 pts)	24
5.Contribution to class discussion	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>

**Grading Procedures and Criteria:** No grade below C will be accepted toward a graduate degree. This includes C- grades.

*A= 90-100*

*B= 80-89*

*C= 70-79*

*D=69-60*

10. Textbook(s) and Readings:

Meredith, J. (2012). *A mission from God*. NY: Atria

11. Course Participation

In this course there are at least three principal ways you can contribute to our collective learning. In each session you can 1) bring your thinking supported by critical reading of the assigned material; 2) bring your questions even if you feel they are very basic we will all benefit; 3) bring relevant reading that you have identified related to our topic-- articles, newspaper or magazine clippings, and other material of interest to our conversation.

12. Description of Assignments

Assignment #1: *The Racial Autobiography* No page length requirement; however, it should be clear that this type of autobiography is not something that can be accomplished in just a few pages.

What can you recall about your first encounter with or understanding about race? In what ways, if any, do you recall race playing out in your elementary, middle grades, high school, college and post-college years? Do you remember any events, activities or conversations taking place in your adult life in which race played a role in the discovery, resolution or subsequent course of events? What is a most recent occasion in which race, race relations and/or racism impacted your personal thinking, actions or being? In what ways have your feelings about and engagement with race evolved over the span of your life?

Some additional questions follow:

When and how did you become aware of your racial identity?

What role has your race played in your life? In what ways do you benefit? In what ways do you suffer or miss out?

How does it affect you in terms of your social activities?

How does it affect you at school?

Have you ever personally experienced or witnessed racism? How often? Give an example

Have you ever done or said something racist or that may have been perceived as racist?

Have you ever done something to stop racism?

Assignment #2: *Journal entries*

Five journal entries in Canvas the first of which must be within the week after the 1<sup>st</sup> class, the fifth entry must be made early enough so that you can reflect over all your entries and include that reflection in your portfolio. I would like your journal entries to be reflective writing. Race and racism are topics that tend

to be sensitive and personal. So I encourage you to use your journal entries (which are private and only visible to you and me) to reflect. This means to first do one of the following: make an observation, a comment on personal behavior, a comment on your reaction/feelings or a comment on context. In the second and later entries feed in: further observations, relevant other knowledge, suggestions from others, new information, formal theory, other factors such as ethical, moral, socio-political context. Reflect on the relationship of these initial observations and your second entries. Experiment and explore, reinterpret, how you relate your first, second and later observations. Question yourself. (adapted from Moon, J. (2004). *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning*. London: Routledge Falmer.)

Assignment #3: Student directed discussion

Each student will lead a discussion on a course reading of their choice (available choices are marked with [SD]. You will be expected to prepare a summary and evaluation of the reading and two or three questions to spark discussion. You can use relevant activities, locate video clips—whatever you feel will best help the class delve into the reading and its related topic. You will have approximately 45 to 55 minutes to present your perspective on the reading and to facilitate a discussion with the class.

Your summary and evaluation of the reading (1-2 single-spaced page/s) will be submitted through the Submit Assignments link in Canvas at least three days prior to class. Guidelines for this assignment are included in the Student Directed Discussion Rubric which will be posted in our course Canvas shell.

Assignment #4: Summary Reflections

This assignment serves two purposes. First it helps you digest the readings in the first several modules of the course. Second, since these summaries will be included in your portfolio (see section on “effective portfolios”) it moves you forward in completing your portfolio. Your summaries should be between 6-10 double spaced pages. You should title your summary and format it using APA formatting. Summaries should demonstrate your understanding of the topic based upon the readings we have completed in each module. You can feel free to express your confusion—providing examples that contribute to your confusion; your disagreement—pointing to specific ideas or concepts; or, of course, your support of points of view. The areas to summarize are: (1) Historical development of structures of race in America: (Race, what is it? What are its origins?); (2) Race as a system of privilege and oppression; (Race, how does it shape social relations in America today?); (3) Applying CRT to your academic discipline. (How useful is CRT in research, and/or practice?).

Assignment #5: The e-Portfolio

**Your portfolio must include the following areas:**

The portfolio should clearly indicate your **summary** of the following areas (note that these are areas for which you are asked to complete Summary Reflections during the semester):

1. Historical development of structures of race in America, (What is race? What are its origins?)
2. Race as a system of privilege and oppression, (How does race shape social relations in America today?)
3. Consideration of how CRT could be applied to your academic discipline, (How useful is CRT in research, and/or practice?)

4. A section explaining what CRT means to you.

The portfolio should include your racial autobiography and any indication of revisions that you might decide to make after you have submitted it for grading. In other words, as you go through the semester if you decide to revise your autobiography make the revisions and include both the original and revised versions in your e-portfolio.

The portfolio can include copies of your personal reflections as you go through the course. These can be in the form of dated journal entries, essays, or poems you might write about the topics and issues discussed or viewed.

Learning is a creative endeavor as well as a cognitive one. I encourage you to spread your creative wings when creating your portfolio. When you're looking at things to document or that prod your thinking, use a variety of evidentiary sources: readings, TV shows, cartoons, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, cinema, poetry, music (songs) to represent your ideas.

Your portfolio is an ongoing assignment throughout the semester. You will be expected to regularly review and revise your portfolio. There is one interim review by me. This is so that I can give you feedback before your final assignment is due. I would like to have you provide a class partner an opportunity to review your portfolio once to receive feedback but want to know how you feel about this. We can discuss in our first class meeting.

*Helpful Hints:*

In thinking about developing your portfolio, it may be useful to review some characteristics of effective portfolio development.

- It is continuous and ongoing, providing both formative (i.e., ongoing) and summative (i.e., culminating) judgments about CRT. Some questions you might ask and answer:
  - What are some key ideas of CRT?
  - How is CRT similar to or different than other theories of racial inequality?
  - What questions or uncertainties do I have about CRT?
  - How have scholars used CRT to evaluate social/educational policies and practices? What examples do I find particularly helpful? Irrelevant?
  - What judgment do I make about the way that CRT is used in educational research?
  - Do I find CRT useful in my own thinking about race?
- It is multidimensional, i.e., reflecting a wide variety of artifacts and processes (evidence) reflecting various aspects of your learning process(es).
  - Readings
  - Media
  - On-line dialogues
  - Conversations with co-workers/family/friends/peers

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- Independent sources of information
- Unanticipated insights
- It provides for collaborative reflection, including ways to reflect about your own thinking processes and metacognitive introspection as you monitor your own comprehension, reflect upon the various approaches to problem-solving and decision-making, and observe your emerging understanding of CRT.
  - Thinking about your own assumptions, at the outset of the course.
  - Feelings, attitudes along the way.
  - Changes in understanding.
  - Disorienting dilemmas.
  - Insights, “ah ha’s”.

### Important University Policies

#### Attendance Policy

I do not assign points for attendance; I do assign points for contributions to class discussion. It is not possible to receive full contribution points for classroom discussion when you are not present. I want you to be successful in this course but I realize that as adult learners you have multiple responsibilities and participating in this course is only one. Please notify me in advance of your absence; however, there are no *excused* absences. **If you find that your life schedule prevents you from attending all or most of 3 sessions (that's 20%) you may want to enroll in this class in another semester. If there is an emergency (these do occur in all our lives) requiring you to miss all or most of three sessions we may be able to drop your grade one letter grade.**

Course Attendance at First Class Meeting – Policy for Graduate Students: For structured courses, 6000 and above, the College/Campus Dean will set the first-day class attendance requirement. Check with the College for specific information. This policy is not applicable to courses in the following categories: Educational Outreach, Open University (TV), FEEDS Program, Community Experiential Learning (CEL), Cooperative Education Training, and courses that do not have regularly scheduled meeting days/times (such as, directed reading/research or study, individual research, thesis, dissertation, internship, practica, etc.). Students are responsible for dropping undesired courses in these categories by the 5th day of classes to avoid fee liability and academic penalty. (See USF Regulation – Registration - 4.0101, <http://usfweb2.usf.edu/usfgc/ogc%20web/currentreg.htm>)

Attendance Policy for the Observance of Religious Days by Students: In accordance with Sections 1006.53 and 1001.74(10)(g) Florida Statutes and Board of Governors Regulation 6C-6.0115, the University of South Florida (University/USF) has established the following policy regarding religious observances: ([http://usfweb2.usf.edu/usfgc/gc\\_pp/acadaf/gc10-045.htm](http://usfweb2.usf.edu/usfgc/gc_pp/acadaf/gc10-045.htm))

In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USF to suspend normal operations. During this time, USF may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not



limited to: Blackboard [now Canvas], Elluminate, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It's the responsibility of the student to monitor ...Canvas site for each class for course specific communication, and the main USF, College, and department websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information.

Academic Dishonesty:

Hopefully, during your undergraduate degree you learned what plagiarism is. This is certainly the assumption by the time you reach graduate school where plagiarism is taken very seriously. All my assignments are submitted through the Canvas course shell. The University of South Florida has an account with an automated plagiarism detection service called *SafeAssignment* which allows instructors to submit student assignments to be checked for plagiarism. Assignments are compared automatically with a database of journal articles, web articles, and previously submitted papers. As the instructor, I will receive a report showing exactly how a student's paper was plagiarized.

"Plagiarism is defined as "literary theft" and consists of the unattributed quotation of the exact words of a published text or the unattributed borrowing of original ideas by paraphrase from a published text. On written papers for which the student employs information gathered from books, articles, or oral sources, each direct quotation, as well as ideas and facts that are not generally known to the public-at-large, must be attributed to its author by means of the appropriate citation procedure. Citations may be made in footnotes or within the body of the text. Plagiarism also consists of passing off as one's own, segments or the total of another person's work."

"Punishment for academic dishonesty will depend on the seriousness of the offense and may include receipt of an "F" with a numerical value of zero on the item submitted, and the "F" shall be used to determine the final course grade. It is the option of the instructor to assign the student a grade of "F" or "FF" (the latter indicating dishonesty) in the course."

Detection of Plagiarism:

The University of South Florida has an account with an automated plagiarism detection service which allows instructors to submit student assignments to be checked for plagiarism. I reserve the right to 1) request that assignments be submitted to me as electronic files and 2) electronically submit to SafeAssignment.com, or 3) ask students to submit their assignments to SafeAssignment.com through myUSF. Assignments are compared automatically with a database of journal articles, web articles, and previously submitted papers. The instructor receives a report showing exactly how a student's paper was plagiarized.

Web Portal Information:

Every newly enrolled USF student receives an official USF e-mail account that ends with "mail.acomp.usf.edu." Every official USF correspondence to students will be sent to that account. Go to the Academic Computing website and select the link "Activating a Student E-mail Account" for detailed information. Information about the USF Web Portal can be found at: <http://www.acomp.usf.edu/portal.htm>.

ADA Statement:

Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may consult with the office of Services for Students with Disabilities to arrange appropriate accommodations. Students are required to give reasonable notice (typically 5 working days) prior to requesting an accommodation

USF Policy on Religious Observances:

“Students who anticipate the necessity of being absent from class due to the observation of a major religious observance must provide notice of the date(s) to the instructor, in writing, by the second class meeting.”

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August 22	Fall, first day of classes
September 5	Labor Day
November 11	Veteran's Day
November 24 & 25	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 2	Fall, last day of classes
November 30 - December 1	Designated reading days
December 3 - 8	Final Exam Week
December 4	Final Exams (Distance Ed)
December 10	Fall, Tampa Commencement
December 11	Fall, St. Petersburg Commencement
December 11	Fall, Sarasota-Manatee Commencement
December 25 - 26	Christmas Holiday

## **Appendix E- White Privilege Checklist**

1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about "civilization," I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
8. If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on White privilege.
9. I can go into a music shop and count on finding the music of my race represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods which fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can cut my hair.

10. Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability.
11. I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
12. I can swear, or dress in second hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
13. I can speak in public to a powerful male group without putting my race on trial.
13. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
14. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
15. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my race.
16. I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.
17. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my race.
18. If a traffic cop pulls me over, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
19. I can remain oblivious of the language and customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion.
20. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a

- distance, or feared. 22. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having coworkers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
21. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my race cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
22. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my race will not work against me. 25. If my day, week, or year is going badly, I need not ask of each negative episode or situation whether it has racial overtones.
23. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in flesh color and have them more or less match my skin.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Tealia DeBerry is an instructional design professional who specializes in faculty training and support. Her research interests are qualitative research methods, critical theory, critical race theory, and course design for higher education.