AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Jean Moule

Many White social scientists and educators are unaware of and/or
detached from the realities of racism and conduct social research that 1.)
perpetuates stereotypes, falsely setting People of Color as inferior and
White people as superior and/or 2.) explains the differences of White
people and People of Color in terms of cultural deficits. White people, too,
have been harmed, carrying in their minds and bodies a legacy of racism
that, if left unacknowledged, contributes to the maintenance and/or
perpetuation of white racism. This research examines the impacts of
whiteness on the author, a White woman situated as an educator and
researcher in higher education. Through autoethnographic methods, the
author describes her lived experience of studying racism and whiteness—a
system of dominance embedded in U.S. institutions; interprets how her
experience fits within the context of whiteness theories; and discusses
observations and insights associated with writing an autoethnography of

whiteness and implications for practice. Two affective themes emerged regarding the authors lived experience of whiteness—despair and white shame. Awareness of the suffering of People of Color and the loss of relationship with self and others led to the author's sense of despair. Experiences of witnessing racism, consciously or unconsciously colluding with racism, and acknowledging internalized racism caused the author to experience white shame. The author also describes her process of transforming despair to hope and shame to compassion. The author confronted whiteness in the process of writing this autoethnography, including self-consciousness about internalized racism, fear of abandonment by other White people when confronting whiteness, and inadvertent reinforcement of white normativity in construction of the text. The process of writing an autoethnography of whiteness, while psychically challenging, was healing and empowering for the author. Implications for the author's educational practice include ongoing examination of whiteness; developing collective efforts to address structural inequality through research and teaching; creating learning environments that allow for reflection and action; and vulnerability in teacher-student and research relationships to decentralize power and build trust.

An Autoethnography of Whiteness

by

Deborah Burke

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Dean of the College of Education

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Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Deborah Burke, Author

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

An Autoethnography of Whiteness

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> It can seem to us that being aware and opening our hearts to
> sorrow makes us suffer more. It is true that awareness brings
> with it an increased sensitivity to our inner and outer worlds.
> Awareness opens our hearts and minds to a world of pain and
> distress that previously only glanced off the surface of
> consciousness, like a stone skipping across water. But
> awareness also teaches us to read between the lines and to see
> beneath the world of appearances. We begin to sense the
> loneliness, need, and fear in others that was previously
> invisible. Beneath words of anger, blame, and agitation we hear
> the fragility of another person's heart. Awareness deepens
> because we hear more acutely the cries of the world. Each of
> those cries has written within it the plea to be received.
> (Feldman, 2006, p. 69)

When I read the above quote in an article "She Who Hears the Cries of the
World" I felt that someone had named how I have struggled with my
growing awareness about racism. I am attuned to my inner and outer worlds
and have had my heart and mind opened to a "world of pain and distress"
caused by racism. I feel grief about how racism has caused deep suffering in
People of Color and has psychically harmed me and other White people.

TOPIC OF INQUIRY

For this dissertation *An Autoethnography of Whiteness*, three questions guide
my inquiry:

1. what has been my lived experience of whiteness as I have studied

      racism and whiteness as an educator and researcher in higher

      education?

2. how does my lived experience as a White woman fit in the literature

      on whiteness, a system of dominance, that has systematically

      oppressed (and still oppresses) People of Color?

3. what observations, insights, questions, and implications for practice as

      an educator and researcher emerged through my process of writing an

      autoethnography about whiteness?

In the sections to follow of this chapter, I will define whiteness and the theoretical assumptions associated with studying whiteness; discuss white racial identity development theory as it relates to my professional and academic experiences; review whiteness studies that underlie the importance of conducting autoethnographic research on whiteness; discuss the psychology of whiteness, which if not addressed creates significant challenges in ending racism; and describe my epistemological standpoint.

Chapter 2 Research Methods explains autoethnography and describes the research process. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of autoethnography and suggested criteria for evaluating autoethnography.

Chapter: 3 Lived Experience describes my intellectual and emotional process of learning about racism and whiteness. This chapter has three main sections: Despair, White Shame, and Healing. In this chapter, I also analyze and contextualize how I fit in the literature on whiteness.

Chapter 4: Closing Reflections explores my process of writing an autoethnography about whiteness—reflections on how I fit in the literature on whiteness, the process of text construction and the intellectual and emotional process of writing. Additionally, I discuss how the writing process and experience of writing an autoethnography informed my practice as an educator and researcher and future directions for research on whiteness.

WHAT IS WHITENESS?

Whiteness, a system of advantage embedded in political, economic, and educational institutions, has privileged (and still privileges) White people as a group and oppressed (and still oppresses) People of Color as a group since (and prior to) the origins of the United States. It has devastating impacts on People of Color structurally and psychically and distorts how White people view themselves, others, and current racial arrangements in US society. Finally, the hegemony of whiteness, "a set of cultural practices that are unmarked and unnamed," accompanies how White people view themselves, others, and present day race relations (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1). According to Frankenburg (1993, p. 21) whiteness assumes that:

1. In U.S. society there is an unexamined "white experience" of privilege that is intimately connected to the oppression of People of Color, historically and presently, and has its historical roots in the origins of the economic, political, educational, and legal institutions of the U.S.
2. The "white experience" with its associated ideology and discourses perpetuates and maintains racial inequity.
3. The ideology and discourse of the "white experience" is embedded in a global history of colonization and slavery.

4. Racial inequality in the U.S. results from economic, political, educational, and legal systems that privilege White people as a group and block and alienate People of Color from participating in the same systems.

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF MY PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES UTILIZING WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Overview of Racial Identity Development

Helms (1990) defines racial identity development as "a sense of group or collective identity based on one's *perception* that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group" (p. 3) and states that "racial identity development theory concerns the psychological implications of racial-group membership," that is belief systems, attitudes, and behaviors that are shaped by the different historical experiences of different racial groups in the U.S. Racial identity development assumes that in a racialized society, such as the U.S., all members of society will inevitably develop a racial identity, which is affected by the historical and cultural experiences associated with racial group membership (Tatum, 1992).

Cross (1971 and 1978 as cited in Helms, 1990) originally conceptualized the following stages of Black Racial Identity Development, which includes five stages: Preencounter, Encounter, Immersion/Emersion, Internalization, and Internalization-commitment. In the Preencounter stage, a person has unconsciously internalized negative stereotypes and a sense of inferiority as a result of inundation with the "dominant White worldview" about his or her

race/ethnicity and distances him or herself from others who are members of his or her racial/ethnic group (Helms, 1990, p. 20; Tatum, 1992). Experiences of racial discrimination "that touches the person's inner core and makes salient the contradiction that no matter how well he or she personally or other Black individuals conform to White standards, most Whites will always perceive him or her as Black and therefore inferior" will catalyze an individual's movement into the Encounter stage (Helms, 1990, p. 25). A person in the Encounter stage has realized that his or her experiences are not the same as White peoples' experiences and is aware of the existence of racism and its impacts on his or her life. As an individual learns more about how he or she has been affected by racism, which is accompanied by "a mixture of feelings including confusion, hopelessness, anxiety, and depression, and eventually anger and euphoria," (p. 25) he or she may begin to direct energy and time to learning about his or her background, history, and culture, which is characteristic of person in the Immersion/Emersion stage.

In Immersion/Emersion, a person may be dealing with anger due to racism and be more likely to "denigrate White people, simultaneously glorifying Black people" (Tatum, 1992, p. 11). Helms (1990, p. 27) writes that in Immersion/Emersion a person will "typically idealize Blackness and African heritage, but denigrate everything thought to be White and of White Western heritage." Emersion, according to Helms, represents a period which allows catharsis of the painful emotions of Immersion through respite in Black community and a supportive environment.

In the Internalization stage, an individual has done in-depth exploration of his or her Black identity and has integrated this exploration with his or her personal identity. The individual feels empowered to "face the world from a position of personal strength" and it "becomes possible to renegotiate one's positions with respect to Whites and White society" (p. 29). A person in the Internalization stage will remain strongly connected to his or her racial group, build coalitions with people from other oppressed racial/ethnic groups to end racism, and establish relationships with White people who are aware of the impacts of racism and are respectful of Black culture and the right to self-definition.

White Racial Identity Development parallels the stages of change discussed for Black Racial Identity, however, these stages of change focus on the beliefs and attitudes that White people associate with People of Color and racism (Helms, 1990). White people's psychic experiences of dominance, and consequently their beliefs and attitudes, will be qualitatively different than the psychic experiences of People of Color who have experienced subordination. White racial identity, according to Helms, describes the process a White person undergoes to develop an anti-racist White identity and includes six stages: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Pseudo-independent, Immersion/Emersion, and Autonomy. When a White person first encounters the idea that Black people exist, he or she has entered into Contact. Because a White individual in Contact has had few experiences with People of Color, she or he has not developed an awareness of how systemic forms of racial oppression and white privilege operate in the U.S. and is often fearful or are naïve about People of Color.

In the Disintegration, the individual has had some type of experience that has disrupted her or his perception about the existence of institutionalized racism and begins to acknowledge the existence of whiteness. Often in Disintegration, White people will feel anger, guilt, depression, and powerlessness as they begin to learn how People of Color have been affected by discrimination and become aware of the white privileges they have received. People in this stage may try to change the stereotypical perceptions of friends and family in order to deal with their dissonance and/or avoid interaction with People of Color. In Disintegration, the individual will also begin to notice the prevalence of racist comments and jokes among their family and friends, who tend not to be supportive of the person's new awareness of racism, dismissing the awareness as "a 'phase' or, at worst, greeted with open hostility" (Tatum, 1992, p.14). Also, the person may be quite aware of the "societal pressure to accept the status quo" (p. 15). Succumbing to the pressure to not disrupt the status quo marks entry into the Reintegration stage.

"Fear and anger directed toward people of color" (Tatum, 1992, p. 15) characterizes Reintegration. In Reintegration, rather than sitting with the discomfort that comes with the awareness of racism, a White person may displace his or her feelings of fear, guilt, or shame onto People of Color and continue to view White people as superior and People of Color as inferior. If the individual struggles with dissonance and releases false notions of white superiority, recognizes the fallacy of white superiority, and seeks education and information, then the person has entered the Pseudo Independent stage.

In Pseudo Independence a person is still in the process of understanding his or her own racism and may feel alienated from other White people and uncomfortable with his or her racial identity. In the Pseudo Independent stage of change, the White person "is abandoning the belief in White superiority/Black inferiority" yet "he or she may still behave in ways that unwittingly perpetuate this belief system" (Helms, 1990, p. 61). For example, he or she may still judge thoughts and behaviors of People of Color based on white norms, not recognizing this as oppressive. In Pseudo Independence, the White individual may no longer identify with a racist white identity, nor may he or she identify with a positive white identity, thus leading the individual to begin seeking positive white role models and cultural and historical information that provides insight about whiteness, which characterizes entry into the Immersion/Emersion stage of change.

In Immersion/Emersion, the White individual may seek "White consciousness raising groups whose purpose is to help the person discover her or his individual self-interest in abandoning racism and acknowledging white racial identity." Also, the White individual shifts his or her orientation in working against racism—"changing Black people is no longer the focus of her or his activities, but rather the goal of changing White people becomes salient" (Helms, 1990, p. 62).

As the person begins to develop a positive, antiracist white identity he or she begins to move into the Autonomy stage of white racial identity, which requires ongoing intellectual and emotional work. In this stage a person has an awareness of institutional racism and his or her own racism; has explored history and culture related to whiteness; is familiar with historic figures; has

relationships with White people who represent a positive white, antiracist identity; feels comfortable developing alliances with People of Color; recognizes other forms oppression (e.g., heterosexism/homophobia, classism, ageism); and is energized to act in congruence with his or her sense of social justice.

Helm's (1990) white racial identity development theory has enabled me to understand what whiteness means for me at the very personal level. I have used white racial identity development theory to make sense of the emotions that surface for me as I learn about racism and understand and identify how I may be perpetuating more subtle (and yet equally detrimental) forms of racism. Also, I have increased my awareness of how my racial identity has affected my interactions and relationships with People of Color through my work as an educator and in other realms of my life.

In the section that follows I will overview my professional and academic experiences that were significant in the evolution of my white identity. And I will utilize white racial identity development theory (Helms, 1990) to contextualize this overview.

How Do My Professional and Academic Experiences Fit into White Racial Identity Development Theory?

Through a number of professional and academic experiences I have gained awareness about the suffering caused by racism in educational systems, which influenced my racial identity development. I first became aware of racism in educational institutions when I worked at a school for "severely

emotionally disturbed children" in San Francisco as part of an internship for my psychology degree. I immediately noticed that the students were predominantly African American and that most of the children were from families that were socioeconomically struggling. Many of the children I worked with were dealing with very difficult life situations that grew from structural inequalities that had been imposed on their families' lives. What the fields of education and psychology characterized as "severe emotional disturbance" in the children struck me as children dealing with the inhumanities imposed upon them by racism, classism, and poverty on a daily basis. Through my relationships with the children, I learned how deeply racism and classism affected their emotional well being and, consequently, their ability to focus on their classroom learning.

As I write, I am thinking about how white privilege has operated in my life. As a White child who grew up in a predominantly white, middle class suburb of New Jersey, I did not feel the pain of racism, classism, or poverty and was able to go into a classroom without carrying the psychic costs of racism. I could and have always been able to focus on my academic experience without the burden and psychic weight of racism. While working at the school for "severely emotionally disturbed" children in San Francisco, I remember feeling profound sadness and anger about how racism had affected the lives of the African American children I worked with; however, I was not aware of how my white privilege connected with their suffering. None of my psychology coursework addressed the structures of inequality that created a situation in which a school for severely emotionally disturbed children was filled with primarily African American children, nor did my coursework cover the psychic impacts of racism and classism. The silence and

invisibility of the histories and experiences of groups that have experienced marginalization in my undergraduate degree program exemplifies how educational institutions maintain and perpetuate oppression.

When I began work at the school for "severely emotionally disturbed" children in San Francisco, I was in the Contact stage of white racial identity development. I had a limited and naïve understanding of the lives and experiences of African Americans and a "superficial and inconsistent awareness of being White" and no conception of the privileges of whiteness. Also, I had had very "limited interracial social and occupational interaction with Blacks" (Helms, 1990, p. 57).

Through my experiences at working at the school for severely emotionally disturbed children I transitioned into the Disintegration stage of white racial identity development. I had developed a "conscious, though conflicted, acknowledgment of one's Whiteness" and felt disillusionment about the "racial realities" I had learned. Disintegration is a significant stage of white racial identity development, because the individual encounters a great deal of dissonance. Helms (1990) suggests that the White individual has the following options for resolving her or his dissonance: 1.) avoid contact with Black people; 2.) share with other White people his or her growing awareness about the existence of racism; and 3.) attempt to find new information that could support the belief that racism does not exist and that White people are not responsible for the existence of racism. I chose to resolve the dissonance I felt by seeking out more interactions and relationships with People of Color and shared with my friends and family what I had learned through my relationships with the African American children I had worked with.

My next recognition of the suffering caused by racism came through my experiences living and teaching elementary school on a remote outer island in the Republic of the Marshall Islands as a Peace Corps volunteer and then several years later as a technical assistant with the Micronesia South Pacific Program when I lived in Majuro, the capitol, and taught expository writing at the College of the Marshall Islands. I observed how the imposition of western (meaning White, European American and middle- to upper- class) value systems on Marshallese people by United States governmental policy, development organizations and workers, and expatriate teachers and administrators led to a loss of individual and cultural worth and esteem in Marshallese people. I had numerous experiences in which students would hold their brown arms next to my white arm and say, "*Elukuun moj. Moj emman jen kilmej*" [It's really white. White is better than brown.] Students also told me on a fairly regular basis that they were "*bwebwe*" [stupid] and inferior to White people. The internalized oppression that Marshallese people experienced is intimately connected to the long history of colonization in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the current colonizing attitudes and policies of the administration of the College of the Marshall Islands, and the internalized racism (false sense of superiority) that colonizers and White expatriates (including myself) carried and still carry. (Takaki (1993), an excellent source, elaborates on how whiteness has been reinforced throughout the history of the United States). Members of the faculty and the administration, who at the time were mostly white, frequently told me how lazy they thought Marshallese students were and how Marshallese people just didn't care about education. Additionally, the administration banned the speaking of Marshallese on campus. I came to view White administrators as neocolonizers, operating from a mindset rooted in racist and classist

ideologies, a false sense of superiority, and arrogance, and distanced myself from them. When I returned to the U.S., I began to see the same colonial dynamics that I observed in the Marshall Islands operating in the United States in relationship to People of Color.

My experience in the Republic of the Marshall Islands catalyzed a shift in my white racial identity development to Pseudo Independence. I had begun to "acknowledge the responsibility of Whites for racism" and to understand how I unintentionally had perpetuated racism while a Peace Corps Volunteer. In my desire to help, I harbored a false sense of superiority, which I will discuss in Chapter 3: Lived Experience (see section on white shame), and which I began to release while in the Peace Corps. Because I resisted the racist practices of White expatriate administrators at the College of the Marshall Islands, I felt alienated from the White community at the college. I had begun to develop a deep disappointment, distrust, and anger at White people and focused my attention on attempting to help Marshallese people rather than changing the racist attitudes of my White colleagues.

When I began my Master of Arts Anthropology, I still resided in Pseudo Independence, which influenced my research pursuits. For my thesis research, I spent nine weeks in Kenya exploring the social relationships among White expatriate researchers and Kenyan civil servants at an international research site and observed that neocolonial dynamics (dynamics of race and class oppression) operated at the research site. I participated in these dynamics as well, though at the time I wanted to imagine myself as outside these dynamics, which according to Helms (1990) characterizes a person who is in Pseudo Independence. She asserts that an individual in

Pseudo Independence "may not feel entirely comfortable with her or his White identity" (p. 62) and may overly identify with People of Color, hence my imagining that I was outside the neocolonial dynamics at the research site and viewing myself as *the voice* of the Kenyan civil servants and casual laborers at the research site.

While still in Kenya, I shared my research findings with Kenyans, who were not at all surprised that they were living oppressive neocolonial dynamics. When I shared my research with White researchers associated with the site and challenged "White racial norms" (pp. 61-62) by suggesting that White expatriates were perpetuating neocolonial dynamics at the research site, I experienced resistance and my research findings were dismissed by most of the White researchers and administrators affiliated with the site, with the exception of one White woman who directed the international research program.

Shortly after I had finished my thesis, and received my Master's degree, I received a letter from a Kenyan individual who participated in the research and who became a friend. In his letter, regarding the research, he wrote:

> Another thing Debbie is your report which you sent us. Wow, it really has generated heat hotter than hell here…I don't want to be in the limelight over this issue again…Already I can sense accusing fingers pointing at me, them thinking that I was the one who volunteered all the negative points about 'em. God knows what will follow next. Already someone in the higher ranks has started asking "who the hell is this [person] that Deborah should send her report to. Is he the head of the station?" (1999)

When I read his letter I felt ashamed because I realized that I had entered another culture and caused disruption in Kenyan people's lives with how I handled *my* research results. I didn't ask any of the people I interviewed what would be the best way for me to share my findings; I mailed my thesis to several individuals (including my friend quoted above) who participated in the research and to the Kenyan Director of the site. I had handled *my* research in an individualized, non-collaborative manner, reflecting White Western attitudes and behaviors, another indication that I still resided in Pseudo Independence.

Through my Masters program in Anthropology I developed a very strong interest in theories of power and resistance and aligned myself with feminist anthropologic theory and methods. Feminist anthropologic theory and methods seek to:

- decentralize the power of the researcher through shared, collaborative research;
- recognize and acknowledge the different aspects of identity that affect lived experience;
- view reality as composed of multiple truths and discordant points of view;
- explore human needs, desires, thoughts, and feelings;
- address and explore moral and ethical issues; and
- conduct research that is relevant and meaningful to communities and action-oriented.

I believe that there was value in the research I conducted for my Master's thesis and in sharing my findings about the power dynamics that operated at

this international research site. If I were to hold my Master's thesis to a feminist anthropologic critique; however, I do not think that the research was collaborative nor did it lead to action that changed the situation of the Kenyan people at the research site, though I have changed. Through the mistakes I made during my Master's thesis research I gained a deeper understanding about the power dynamics of research and in particular how White Western individualized modes of research can cause harm in Communities of Color. This understanding marks the beginnings of my entry into the Immersion/Emersion stage of white racial identity development and fueled my intense desire to actually conduct humanizing, decentralized, and transformative research rather than solely theorizing about it.

When I began working on the Diversity @ OSU website[1] I resided on the cusp of Pseudo Independent and Immersion/Emersion stages of white racial identity development. According to Helms (1990), an individual in Immersion/Emersion has begun the process of learning "accurate information about what it means and has meant to be White in the United States as well as in the world in general" and explores questions such as "'Who am I racially?' and 'Who do I want to be?' and 'Who are you really?'" (p. 62). While interviewing students, faculty, and staff from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds for the Diversity @ OSU website I had the opportunity to

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[1] The Diversity @ OSU website (http://diversity.oregonstate.edu) content explored the histories, experiences, and value systems of students, faculty, and staff from dominant and subordinated groups at Oregon State University. Through interviews, focus groups, poetry, and art, OSU community members shared their thoughts and feelings pertaining to issues of diversity, power, privilege, and oppression.

explore these questions in depth. I learned about some of the ways that Students and Faculty of Color experience oppression and confront prejudice and discrimination in their lives and at Oregon State University. They described dealing with stereotypes about their communities on a regular basis; being put in positions to speak for their entire race; feeling intense pressure to educate around issues of diversity on campus because they were concerned no one else would; and spending a great deal of time volunteering their time and energy to diversity education rather than focusing on their own educational or professional paths. I also spoke with Students of Color who felt that the content of their coursework was not inclusive or reflective of their cultural experiences. For example, one Native American student spoke of how painful it was to sit in history classes because the history that was presented was a lie.

As a result of my work on the Diversity @ OSU website I also had the opportunity to participate in professional development opportunities that allowed me to learn about racism and explore more deeply how I had internalized white racism. Through these experiences, I developed a stronger desire to confront and challenge racism among White people and sought professional development trainings that would provide me with the facilitation and communication skills to do so. This desire marked my entry into the Immersion/Emersion stage of white racial identity development.

Helms (1990) suggests that the individual in Immersion/Emersion has shifted his or her effort from being focused on helping People of Color to addressing racism in White people. Also, an "emotional as well as cognitive restructuring" (p. 62) occurs during Immersion/Emersion, which my work on

the Diversity @ OSU website and content of my Ph.D. program facilitated and supported. Hence, this autoethnography, which explores my lived experience of learning about racism and whiteness from December 2000 when I began work on the Diversity @ OSU website to December 2006, provides a window into the emotional and cognitive restructuring I underwent.

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

According to Carter & Goodwin (1994), many White social scientists and educators have been unaware and/or detached from the realities of racism in the United States and as a result have conducted social research that has 1) perpetuated stereotypes and misinformation, setting People of Color up as intellectually inferior and Whites as superior (inferiority paradigm) and/or 2) explained the differences in experiences of White people and People of Color in terms of cultural deficits. Consequently, research has contributed to the production of stigmatizing labels, such as "at risk," "culturally deprived," and "disadvantaged," which characterize People of Color as somehow impoverished and to blame for the oppression they experience.

White people, as well, have been harmed differently by racism. White people carry in their minds and bodies a legacy of racism that may cause a deep sense of shame, guilt, and grief associated with the unnecessary suffering that was (and still is) imposed on People of Color; the absence or loss of relationships with People of Color and other White people due to tension over racism; and/or a false sense of superiority that comes from "benefiting" from a system that oppresses People of Color and simultaneously privileges White people (Kivel, 2002).

Much of the social science research in peer-reviewed literature has reinforced whiteness, solidifying institutional forms of racism. The presence of whiteness in educational research has produced research that falls within three paradigms associated with race and ethnicity—cultural deficit, cultural difference, and multiculturalism, a paradigm which advocates culturally responsive pedagogy (Carter & Goodwin, 1994). Prior to the 1970s most educational research was grounded in the cultural deficit paradigm, which categorized People of Color as inferior to White people. In the mid-seventies social science research began to move away from this characterization and began to describe the experiences of People of Color in terms of difference (i.e., difference that "is not synonymous with deviance or deprivation" or the *cultural difference paradigm*) (Carter & Goodwin, p. 302). Researchers grounded in the cultural difference paradigm assert that "racial/cultural and class- and language-bound differences can have profound impact on the schooling experiences of children of color and on cross-racial interaction" (p. 302). Research that grew from the cultural difference paradigm led to the development of multicultural or culturally responsive pedagogies— pedagogies that incorporate "students' cultural knowledge, history, personal style, language and dialect, cognition and learning styles, as well as their parents and community" into education (p. 302). Unfortunately, the residue of the deficit and inferiority approaches still exists in the cultural difference paradigm. Difference is often perceived as a problem to be overcome through acculturation. The focus is on "the other," allowing members of the dominant culture to ignore their role in the perpetuation of racism and social stratification (p. 303).

To interrupt social science research that reinforces whiteness and addresses institutional racism in education, research must begin to focus on the role of whiteness in the perpetuation of racial inequality in education. In her essay "Witnessing Whiteness," Fine (1997) discusses how qualitative inquiry has focused extensively on the discrimination that People of Color have endured and neglected to examine whiteness and the privileges associated with whiteness that perpetuates racial oppression. As a result social research has "camouflaged the intricate institutional webbing that connects 'whiteness' and 'other colors'" (p. 58).

WHITE PRIVILEGE AND RESEARCH

In the article "What's Going On? Black Feminist Thought and the Politics of Postmodernism" Patricia Hill Collins (2000) discusses "colonizers who refuse," White people who struggle with the privilege and status conferred to them and their attempts to cope with conferred dominance. Hill Collins describes "colonizers who refuse" as "power brokers" representing the needs and desires of those who experience oppression to those of the dominant group who maintain and or perpetuate oppression. When I read the following quote describing the power brokering dynamic that "colonizers who refuse" often assume, I felt shame, because Hill Collins had described a power dynamic I had lived through the process of my Master's research, and that I believe I and other White researchers must address. Hill Collins wrote:

> …Whether they like it or not, all colonizers benefit from colonialism. But although privilege is built into social structures, not all colonizers are comfortable with the power and privilege that their status in the colonial system confers

upon them. Some refuse either by withdrawing physically from the conditions that privilege them or by remaining to fight and change those conditions. As the outsiders within the dominant group of colonizers, colonizers who refuse typically act as power brokers who represent the interests of the colonized natives to the colonized who accept. By representing the interest of the colonized and claiming to understand their standpoint, members of this go-between group simultaneously challenge the colonial status quo and reproduce it. Although they understand how definitions of the colonized as "different" or as "Other" remain central to the way colonialism functions, they oppose colonialism in the abstract while continuing to enjoy its material benefits. (pp. 46-47)

I am not able to untangle myself from the society in which I live that privileges whiteness and have chosen to work to change the conditions that privilege whiteness while oppressing People of Color. I have struggled with how to position myself as a White woman in research focused on racism, given a history of social science research that has reinforced whiteness and the privileged act of going to the margins as a researcher, returning to the center to share results and advocate for those on the margins, and then benefiting from this act in terms of my academic and professional career.

Given Hill Collins' (2000) discussion of "colonizers who refuse," a history of social science research that reinforces whiteness, and my personal and professional journey to this point, I decided to conduct autoethnographic research that "look[s] more deeply at self-other interactions" as they relate to whiteness (Holt, 2003, p. 2). I hope that educators and researchers will find this self study—an exploration of my lived experience of learning about racism and whiteness—emotionally and intellectually evocative and view this research as an invitation to examine the impacts of whiteness on their own

experience. The intention of this autoethnography is to generate awareness that leads to actions that end the oppression of racism.

WHITENESS THEORY

Fine (1997) outlines how educational institutions have advantaged whiteness and suggests that educators and researchers must be aware of the following assumptions about whiteness if they are to dismantle racism:

- whiteness like other racial categorizations is reinforced and perpetuated through institutions; educational institutions "create and enforce racial meanings";
- whiteness is "coproduced with other colors, usually alongside blackness, in symbiotic relation";
- whiteness is viewed as a "seemingly natural proxy for quality, merit, and advantage, whereas 'deficit' is attributed to color";
- "whiteness and color…are fundamentally relational and need to be studied as a system"; and
- "the institutional design of whiteness, like the production of all colors, creates an organizational discourse of race and a personal embodiment of race, affecting perceptions of Self and Others" (p. 58).

In her essay "The Achievement (K)not," (Powell, 1997) discusses the extensive research pertaining to "black underachievement" and suggests that solely focusing on the Black community explains only a portion of why minority students struggle in the U.S. education system. Powell suggests that understanding the role of whiteness on minority student success must be examined and hypothesizes that:

"black underachievement" is not a simple knot tied within and among the Black community, but is actually composed of many strands of differently weighted rope, some of them black and some white. The white strands are woven into the black in a convoluted way that can passively prevent the knot from loosening. Thinking of the entire knot as a whole—using group as a whole theory—may provide an additional lens in the consideration of this phenomenon; if we can begin to identify a dynamic relationship between whiteness and the phenomenon that is then labeled "black underachievement" we might find additional levers for change in Black children's lives. (p. 3)

To work against institutional forms of racism requires an awareness of the complex ways that whiteness entwines with "other colors," influencing patterns of communication, relationships, and identity formation of one's self and others. To deconstruct whiteness and unravel distortions associated with whiteness (e.g., whiteness is associated with merit and advantage and "other colors" are associated with deficit and disadvantage), Fine (1997) outlined the following responsibilities for university scholars, practitioners, and activists regarding the address of whiteness in educational institutions:

- identify and bring to the forefront the discourses of power and resistance;

- examine institutional policies to determine which are organized around hierarchical race/gender politics and highlight how they perpetuate white dominance;

- identify those who've been silenced and/or excluded, listen, and document the psychic costs of this exclusion;

- pay attention to moments in public conversation when comments that reinforce whiteness are made (e.g., playing the 'race card') and determine strategies for interrupting these moments; and

- create spaces where people are free to critique, be creative, and express and transform outrage "into professionalism, scholarship, activism, and leadership" (p. 91).

The dominance of whiteness in educational institutions will not be loosened and undone unless educators and researchers, in addition to examining the systemic issues associated with whiteness, also consider the complex ways that whiteness has embedded itself in the thoughts and feelings of White individuals, who reside in positions of power and, either consciously or unconsciously, reinforce whiteness within institutions.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WHITENESS

This section summarizes theories that describe how whiteness manifests in the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and actions of White people. McIntyre (1997) in her research with White teachers identified "white talk," a strategy that distances White people from being emotionally and intellectually open and present to the realities of racism and assuming responsibility to end racism.

Tatum (1992) who studied the experiences of White students and Students of Color studying racism in a predominantly white university setting attributed resistance among students to learning about racism, and in particular White students, to the taboo nature of conversations about race and adherence to the belief that the U.S. is a just society.

White Talk

In the book *Making Meaning of Whiteness*, McIntyre (1997) describes her research with White teachers that explores their "feelings, beliefs and attitudes" pertaining to race and racism. From these dialogues, McIntyre discerned a phenomenon, which she terms "white talk." "White talk," a strategy that research participants unconsciously employed to distance themselves from responsibility for working to end racism, emerged when they began to explore "their racial identities and critique the system of whiteness" (pp. 45-46). "White talk" seems to occur "naturally" for White people in conversation among themselves and with People of Color. According to McIntyre,

> [White talk] serves to insulate white people from examining
> their/our individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of
> racism. It is a result of whites talking uncritically with/to other
> whites, all the while resisting critique and massaging each
> other's racist attitudes, beliefs, and actions. (pp. 45-46)

McIntyre (1997) also described communication strategies associated with "white talk," which limit the depth of exploration possible in dialogues about racism. These strategies include, "derailing the conversation, evading questions, dismissing counterarguments, withdrawing from the discussion, remaining silent, interrupting speakers and topics, and colluding with each other in creating a 'culture of niceness' that makes it very difficult to 'read the white world'" (p. 46).

Three themes constitute the essence of "white talk": 1) the construction of difference from "the Other"; 2) the reconstruction of myths about White people and People of Color; and 3) the tendency for White people to "privilege their own feelings and affect over the lived experiences of people of color" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 47). Within these themes the research participants struggled with understanding the concept of institutionalized racism; fell into zero sum thinking, which creates an oppositional relationship between White people and People of Color; tokenized People of Color; and focused intensely on their feelings of powerlessness (privileged affect) rather than developing strategies to address racism.

Limited Understanding of Institutionalized Racism

At the onset of the research dialogue, McIntyre (1997) found that research participants all had differing and "myopic" views of racism—they viewed racism as individual acts of prejudice and discrimination and were unfamiliar with and resistant to the concept of institutionalized racism. McIntyre felt the White pre-service teachers' resistance to conceiving racism as a system of advantage based on power and privilege reinforced their constructions of themselves as affected by racism, but not participants in the perpetuation of racism.

Zero Sum Thinking

McIntyre (1997) also described an "if they gain, we lose [us/them]" mindset among the participants, which grows from an "ideology of fear and distortion" (p. 57). The us/them mindset, or "zero sum thinking," in

discussions of racism serves to distance White people from People of Color and undermines critically thoughtful conversations.

Tokenization

The research participants adhered to the myth of meritocracy (Tatum, 1992), which reinforces "white talk" (McIntyre, 1997). According to McIntyre (1997), research participants "vacillated between acknowledging their advantaged positions as White females and suggesting that People of Color have similar advantages if only 'they' would both work hard and develop more inclusive strategies for assimilating themselves into American culture" (p. 61). Participants, through "exception to the rule stories," affirmed their belief that if People of Color work hard and make an extra effort to be a part of mainstream culture that they can succeed just as the participants had" (p. 61). These stories tokenize People of Color, lessen the severity of white racism for White people, and reinforce the idea that "racism [is] rooted in the psychological dispositions and actions of both Whites and Blacks" rather than bring to awareness systemic forms of racism (p. 61). The stories that White people construct about the one person of color they know who made it saturate White culture and serve as a way for White people to disregard the many barriers People of Color face when participating in American life, thereby dismissing the harmful and layered effects of institutional forms of racism.

Privileged Affect

Participants throughout the research process encountered feelings of "powerlessness, defensiveness, and fear," which McIntyre (1997) discusses as "privileged affect" (p. 69). "Privileged affect" centers the pain that White people experience as they learn about the depth of racism while minimizing the painful experiences of racism that People of Color have endured and will continue to endure. "Privileged affect," according to McIntrye, allowed the participants to avoid exploring action for change and to continue with "white talk" (p. 69). If participants did discuss actions for change, the actions were not grounded in the present; rather they were actions that would be implemented sometime in the future. Participants also were able to exercise their privilege to choose whether they wanted to remain engaged in working against racism; several discussed how racism may not be the place that they try to focus their energy, because there were other issues that they felt more drawn toward.

Resistance to Learning about Racism

In her study "Talking about Race, Learning about Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom," Tatum (1992) identified "three major sources" of student resistance among White students in "predominantly white college classrooms":

> 1. Race is considered a taboo topic for discussion, especially in racially mixed settings. 2. Many students, regardless of racial-group membership, have been socialized to think of the United States as a just society. 3. Many students, particularly White

> students, initially deny any personal prejudice, recognizing the impact of racism on other people's lives, but failing to acknowledge its impact on their own. (p. 5)

According to Tatum (1992), a number of different emotions contributed to resistance among White students: self consciousness in conversations about race often due to earlier experiences with race that entailed "confusion, anxiety, and/or fear"; denial in an attempt to ease the discomfort of the "painful reality of racism"; withdrawal or absenteeism if denial is not possible; feelings of guilt and shame in White students who begin to understand the advantages associated with whiteness; and a sense of betrayal and/or a sense of embarrassment when White students learn about the "gaps in their own education about racism" (pp. 5-8).

Tatum (1992) discusses the "powerful emotional responses of students that range from guilt and shame to anger and despair" that if left unaddressed "can result in student resistance to oppression-related content areas" and "ultimately interfere with the cognitive understanding and mastery of the material" (pp. 2-3). Based on her research, Tatum stresses the value of utilizing racial identity models as a framework for understanding Students of Color and White students' emotional responses to race-related course content and suggested that an instructor's awareness of students' racial identity development process could facilitate an "opportunity to explore race-related material in a classroom where both their affective and intellectual responses are acknowledged and addressed" (p. 2).

The Politics of Empathy

In her essay "Underground Discourses: Exploring Whiteness in Teacher Education," Rosenberg (1997) explores the role of disclosure and vulnerability of students and teachers and the politics of empathy in a college level psychology course, composed of predominantly White students, that deals with racism. In terms of disclosure, Rosenberg observed that many White students were disoriented in conversations about race and were challenged by questions that explored what it means to be white. When White students did respond to questions about what it means to be white, they tended to reply through private means of communication. Additionally, White students often defined their racial identities in relation to the racial identities of Students of Color; relied on personality characteristics to describe their identities; and felt envy during discussions of groups with strong histories (e.g., Irish-, Italian-, and African- Americans).

Many of the White students, Rosenberg (1997) noted, viewed "empathy for others as the ultimate act of generosity," (p. 83) which is problematic. While empathy is an important first step in understanding racism, it is not enough. Educators, according to Rosenberg must acknowledge the significance of empathy; challenge students to continually examine the meaning of whiteness; and move toward action. To not challenge students to move beyond empathy into action would "create a false sense of involvement" in the minds of White students (Rosenberg, 1997, p. 83).

Another challenge pertaining to empathy that Rosenberg (1997) discussed entails a tendency among some White students to identify with "diverse

others" as they reflect on their personal lives. This kind of identification obfuscates how whiteness is intimately connected with the systematic exclusion of People of Color. Rosenberg feels that it is crucial that White people not intermingle their stories with the stories of People of Color, because in doing so empathy becomes an act of consumption rather than understanding. Rosenberg (1997) elaborates on consumption with an excerpt from Ron Scaap's essay "Rorty: Voice and the Politics of Empathy" (cited in hooks, 1992, p. 13) regarding the act of redescription:

> Liberals may pride themselves in their ability to tolerate others, but it is only after the other has been redescribed as oneself that the liberal is able to be "sensitive" to the question of cruelty and humiliation. This act of redescription is still an attempt to appropriate others, only here it is made to sound as if it were a generous act. It is an attempt to make an act of consumption appear to be an act of acknowledgement.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL DISCLOSURE

According to Rasmussen et al. (2001), scholarship on whiteness has branched in several different directions, including:

- documentation and explanation of "historical and emergent forms of racial stratification" (p. 3);
- exploration of what it means to be White in a society in which "everyday experiences and conditions are lived through race" (p. 3);
- analysis of the "symbolic meanings of whiteness" and how "those meanings shape relations of power" (nationally and globally) (p. 3); and
- advocacy to eliminate whiteness entirely (neo-abolitionism).

I decided to conduct this autoethnographic study of whiteness, which explores what it means to be white when "everyday experiences and conditions are lived through race" (Rasmussen et al., 2001, p. 3), given the history of White social scientists producing research that has perpetuated and maintained false notions of White superiority and Black inferiority, the literature on whiteness as a system of dominance that affects the psychic and behavioral dispositions of White people, and the fact that I am White and am pursuing a life path as an educator and researcher in the social sciences. Through examination of how my lived experience of whiteness fits within the literature on whiteness, I hoped to gain insights about myself and others that would inform my practice as an educator and researcher, so that I engage in research and teaching that contributes to ending racism rather than maintaining or perpetuating racism, consciously or unconsciously.

I am drawn to the paradigm of critical postmodernism, because it analyzes how larger systems (political, economic, educational, ideological) produce and reproduce inequality and affect the lives and experiences of individuals and asserts that social science, if restructured, could facilitate "a more egalitarian and democratic social order" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998, p. 262).

The work of bell hooks (1995) in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* strongly resonated with me. She describes domination (patriarchal, White supremacist, and capitalist) as a sickness of our culture that resides in our institutions, affecting many of our leaders and diminishing our ability to imagine building community and challenging and resisting systems of domination and writes:

> Today, we live in the midst of that floundering. We live in
> chaos, uncertain about the possibility of building and
> sustaining community. The public figures who speak the most
> to us about a return to old fashioned values[2] embody the evils
> King describes. They are most committed to maintaining
> systems of domination—racism, class exploitation, and
> imperialism. They promote a perverse vision of freedom that
> makes it synonymous with materialism. They teach us to
> believe that domination is "natural," that it is right for the
> strong to rule over the weak, the powerful over the powerless.
> What amazes me is that so many people claim not to embrace
> these values and yet our collective rejection of them cannot be
> complete since they prevail in our daily lives. (pp. 27-28)

At times, I feel isolated and psychically exhausted by what I have learned
about the impacts of domination in the United States, which I know I
participate in (part of the psychic exhaustion). The following excerpt from
Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World begins to describe the impacts
of domination—the splitting of humans' selves, the severing of relationships
between humans and of humans from the natural world:

> Emptiness and estrangement are deep wounds strongly felt in
> the present time. We have been split from what we could
> nurture, what could fill us. And we have been wounded by a
> dominating culture that has feared and hated the natural

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[2]hooks (1995) cited Dr. Martin Luther King's discussion of a "revolution of values" in *Where Do We Go From Here? Chaos or Community*. Dr. King (1986) wrote: "The stability of the large world house which is ours will involve a revolution of values to accompany the scientific and freedom revolutions engulfing the earth. We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing'-oriented society to a 'person'-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered. A civilization can flounder as readily in the face of moral and spiritual bankruptcy as it can through financial bankruptcy" (p. 629).

world, has not listened to the voice of the land, has not believed
in the inner worlds of human dreaming and intuition, all things
that have guided indigenous people since time stood up in the
east and walked this world into existence, split from the
connection between self and the land (Hogan, 1995, p. 83).

In the chapter "Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research,"
Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) define the postmodern condition through use
of the term hyperreality, which they assert affects "the cultural narratives that
shape our identities" (p. 269). Living in a hyperreality refers to living in an
"information society socially saturated with ever-increasing forms of
representation: filmic, photographic, electronic, and so on." I have found it
quite challenging at times to function well in the hyperreality of the U.S.,
especially after returning to the U.S. after living in the Republic of the
Marshall Islands for a year, and have experienced disconnection from others
and "low affect, with a sense of postmodern ennui and irremissable anxiety"
(p. 269).

Postmodernism rejects the notion of a single or absolute truth and a state of
absolute knowledge; asserts that reality is subjective, socially constructed and
composed of multiple and discordant points of view; focuses on the
"deconstruction of Western metanarratives of truth and the ethnocentrism
implicit in the European view of history as the unilinear progress of universal
reason" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998, pp. 270-271).

According to Kincheloe and McLaren (1998), post critical theory, which is
rooted in postmodernism, assumes that:

- facts are up for questioning and contestation and that "facts represent

hidden assumptions" that affect how researchers interpret data;

- "experience is vulnerable to ideological inscription" (pp. 273-274);

- theorizing beyond the particulars of everyday experience leads to deterministic theories; and that

- the human experience is "a chaotic knot of intertwined articulations" that cannot ever be completely disentangled (p. 276).

In terms of knowledge construction, I view research as a "historically situated structure" that has the potential to be confining, if not oppressive, for participants and the communities to which they belong. Also, I think, that, even when the researcher's aims are aligned with postmodernism's goals of decentralizing the power of the researcher, research still privileges the researcher's voice.

At the same time I think research holds tremendous libratory potential. Tierney (1994) discusses the value of writing lived experience while bringing to light the oppressive structures that affect experience, and he asserts that researchers must in addition to deconstructing oppressive discourses, engage in "ways to create change and, ultimately hope, in the postmodern world" (p. 100). To accomplish this, Tierney suggests that the researcher be self reflexive, illuminate structural inequalities, and through the research process, cultivate care and catalyze change.

I view my experience of reality and what I know about whiteness as intimately connected to the people (White people and People of Color) I have been in relationship with, our histories and experiences, and different aspects of our identities. Their stories and my stories are intertwined and

interconnected. In this self-study of my lived experience of whiteness, I seek to be reflexive and analytical about how systems that privilege whiteness affect what I feel, think, and do by shifting between my personal experience and the larger system of whiteness. Through the awareness I gain, I also seek themes associated with hope—a sense of empowerment to address racism in all spheres of my life and the articulation of research and teaching practices that support the transformation of suffering of individuals and communities.

For this autoethnographic research, I wrote about my experiences of whiteness, knowing there are multiple interpretations, experiences, realities, and truths that exist, depending on the different aspects of my and other's identities, histories, experiences, and values. For this research, I assumed that there is an apprehendable, socially constructed reality—whiteness—that is historically situated, and which manifests in the present moment as confining, limiting, and oppressive to People of Color while simultaneously benefiting White people.

In this autoethnography I tell "my" story or lived experience of whiteness, knowing that the story is relational and incomplete. I explore the manner in which my lived experience may be distorted by the "false consciousness and ideology" of whiteness (Schwandt, 1990, p. 268). As well, I analyze how my story fits in the literature about whiteness and discuss how my growing awareness of whiteness informs my practice.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter, I offer explanation of the methodology utilized for this self study—autoethnography. I define and describe autoethnography and provide an overview of my research process, including data sources for this self study. Also, I discuss the limitations of autoethnography and overview evaluative criteria for autoethnography.

WHAT IS AUTOETHNOGRAPHY?

For this research, I used autoethnography to examine my lived experience as a White woman, connecting my personal experience with the larger social context of whiteness in higher education. According to Ellis (2004), autoethnography is a "method that connect[s] the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political. Through autoethnography, researchers seek to understand some aspect of their lived experience within a particular cultural context" (p. xix).

Autoethnographic texts are "highly personalized, revealing texts," and are characterized as Creative Analytic Practice, an evocative form of writing that "touches us where we live, in our bodies" (Richardson, 1994, p. 931). Autoethnographic writing follows the conventions of literary writing— utilizing dialogue, interior monologue, scenes, poetry, and art—to tell stories that illuminate the multiple layers of consciousness that are present in the particulars of everyday life and invite readers to draw connections with the complexities of culture (Richardson, 1994; Ellis, 2004).

Richardson (1994) provides an excellent description of the intention of evocative ethnography and writes that it is a form that allows the author to:

> shape the experience without losing the experience. It can blend realist, fictional, and poetic techniques; it can reconstruct the "sense" of an event from multiple "as-lived" perspectives; it can allow the conflicting "voices" to be heard, relieving the researcher of having to be judge and arbiter; and it can give voice to what is unspoken but present…When the material to be displayed is intractable, unruly, multisided, and emotionally laden, drama is more likely to recapture the experience than is standard writing (p. 934).

In addition to utilizing literary conventions, autoethnographers also blend the language of their discipline into their texts and cite research from the discipline in which they are located (Ellis, 2004). In the case of this research, I blended my stories with theories and research pertaining to whiteness as a system of dominance and the psychology of whiteness.

According to Ellis (2004) autoethnography includes the following features:

- the researcher studies her lived experience, writes the emotion of that experience in the first person, and includes private aspects of her life in the text;
- the text "focuses on generalization within a single case extended over time" and is written as "story replete with a narrator, characterization, and plot line, akin to forms of writing associated with the novel or biography" (p. 30);
- the nuance and complexity of relationships are dramatized in episodic form;
- the connection between the lives and experiences of the researcher and

those she is in relationship with is explored; and

- the audience is in relationship with the researcher throughout the text.

Autoethnographic writing is a method of inquiry that requires the researcher to write reflexively, being explicit about the particular social position and location in time and space that she writes from (Richardson, 1994). Reflexivity, an important feature of autoethnographic research and writing, allows readers to connect the writer's epistemology and social position with the process and outcome of writing. Writing reflexively requires that the researcher's whole being (intellectual, emotional, and spiritual) be present in the research process. According to Ellis (2004), "Reflexive ethnographers ideally use all their senses, their bodies, feelings, and their whole being—they use the 'self' to learn about the other, and they use their experiences in other worlds to reflect critically on their own" (p. 48).

With autoethnographic methodology, the process of writing and the finished text are bound rather than disconnected. Autoethnographers strive to represent multiple voices and layers of consciousness in the text, which according to Richardson (1994, p. 929) "releases the censorious hold of 'science writing' on our consciousness, as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche: Writing is validated as a method of knowing." As well, autoethnographic texts are never complete, thus releasing the researcher from "trying to write a single text in which we say everything at once to everyone" (p. 929).

RESEARCH FOCUS

I have chosen a narrative autoethnographic approach for this research, using my lived experience as a White woman to analyze how whiteness affects me and my relationships with others within the context of my experience in higher education learning about issues of oppression, specifically racism (Ellis, 2004). This approach allowed me to examine how I have changed through my lived experiences of learning about racism and whiteness; analyze my lived experience utilizing the literature on whiteness; and gain insights that inform my practice.

According to Ellis (2004), narrative ethnographies "exist along a continuum ranging from starting research from one's own biography, to ethnographies where the researcher's life is actually studied along with other participants' lives, to confessional tales where the researcher's endeavors in doing the study become the focus of the investigation" (p. 47). This autoethnographic study is a "confessional tale" or autoethnographic memoir that examines my personal, professional, and educational life experiences pertaining to whiteness, beginning in 2000 when I began work on the Diversity @ OSU website with the Division of Student Affairs at Oregon State University through January 2007 when I completed the first draft of this autoethnography. I selected 2000 as a beginning point for this research, because my work on the Diversity @ OSU website catalyzed my desire to study more deeply the impacts of oppression in higher education and the transformative potential of qualitative forms of research (e.g., narrative research) for researchers themselves, research participants, and readers.

DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS

Three questions frame this research:

- what has been my lived experience of learning about racism and whiteness?

- how does my lived experience fit in the literature about whiteness?

- how did the process of conducting an autoethnographic study affect me? how did I change? what awareness or insight did I gain? and how did this awareness influence my practice?

Table 1 summarizes the data I gathered to address each of the above research questions. To address the first question pertaining to my lived experience, I collected autoethnographic data, including retrospective field notes; papers that I've written throughout the course of my Ph.D. work; dialogues and conversations with family, friends, colleagues, and students; and journal entries (research and personal) to examine my personal, professional, and educational lived experience of whiteness.

Retrospective field notes are a chronological overview of lived experience. The process of writing retrospective field notes required that I write and reread a chronology of my lived experience of whiteness on a daily basis (Ellis, 2004). This process, recalling memories with as much detail as possible, brought focus to my experience of whiteness. While my memories were written chronologically, I was continually reminded that memory is not linear.

Table 1. Summary of data sources pertinent to questions that framed and guided this research.

Research Question	Data sources
What has been my lived experience of whiteness?	Retrospective field notes Diversity @ OSU website Papers (Ph.D. coursework) Journals (research and personal) Dialogues/conversations
How does my lived experience "fit" into the literature on systems of oppression (e.g., whiteness)?	Review literature on the theories about whiteness and psychology of whiteness and thematically and structurally analyze how I "fit" into this body of work
How did the process of writing an autoethnography about whiteness affect me?	Writing stories

Memories of events that occurred during the period of time in which this research was situated had tendrils that extended 30 years into my past. Ellis writes that "thoughts and feelings circle around us, flash back, then forward" (p. 118). She also asserts that retrospective field notes do not always have to be written at the time an event occurs, citing an autoethnographic piece that illuminated the dynamics of race relations. To write this piece, Ellis relied on a twenty-five year old memory about race, which served as the focal point of the piece. Writing retrospective field notes allows the researcher to "get inside" (p. 118) memories physically and emotionally.

In addition to getting inside memories I will also need to "get outside" (p. 118) my memories and analyze them from different points of views and perspectives.

In analyzing my lived experience I searched for the meaning or themes embedded in the "structures of experience" (Van Manen, 1990). Rather than focusing on frequency counts and coding, I directed attention to the themes that had an emotional charge or elicited a "desire" or a "certain attentiveness and deep interest in an aspect of life" (p. 79). Van Manen describes the process of identifying themes as "insightful invention, discovery or disclosure—grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process but a free act of 'seeing' meaning" (p. 79).

Van Manen (1990) suggests three approaches for discovering themes embedded in lived experience: "wholistic or sententious"; "selective or highlighting"; and "detailed or line by line" (pp. 92-93). The sententious approach focuses on the text as a whole with the intention of identifying the primary meaning of the text and capturing that meaning through formulation of a phrase. The selective approach requires reading the text several times to determine the "statement(s) or phrase(s) [that] seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described" (p. 93). The line by line approach involves a detailed reading of each sentence in the text to determine what individual sentences might reveal about the lived experience being described.

Van Manen (1990) also suggests "four existentials," which I utilized as reflective guides in the research process and analysis: "lived space

(spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality)" (p. 101). Lived space refers to "felt space." How did the physical arrangement of my environment affect how I feel? Lived body refers to the fact that we are "always bodily in the world" both revealing and concealing something about ourselves at any given moment (p. 105). How did my bodily presence change given the context of the moment? Lived time focuses on subjective time. How did the dimensions of my past, present, and future affect the "temporal landscape" of my lived experiences? Lived relationality refers to the interpersonal spaces that humans occupy. How have I approached relationships and interactions with others? According to Van Manen these four existentials "can be differentiated but not separated. They all form an intricate unity which we call the lifeworld—our lived world" (p. 105).

To address the second question—How does my lived experience fit in the cultural context of whiteness?—I reviewed the literature on the psychology of whiteness and whiteness as a system of dominance and then thematically and structurally analyzed my lived experience within the context of this literature. Ellis (2004) discusses three different types of analyses: narrative, thematic, and structural. Narrative analysis "assumes that a good story itself is theoretical" (p. 195); an individual's process of interpreting events and then telling a story inherently involves analysis. Thematic and structural analyses involve the author "stepping back from the text and theorizing about the story from a sociological, communicational, or other disciplinary perspective" (p. 195). Thematic analysis operates at the abstract level, seeking themes that surface within and across stories.

Structural analysis focuses on the process of telling the story—the language chosen, storytelling strategies, and the storyteller's demeanor and tone.

To address the third question—How did the process of conducting an autoethnographic study affect or change me?—I examined my research process through my writing stories. Writing stories, which require the researcher to be critically reflexive and are considered a form of data, allowed me to track and analyze my research process (Richardson, 1994). Regarding writing stories, Richardson writes

> Writing stories are critically reflexive narratives about the process of research and provide readers with contextual information about where, when, and how a text was produced. While challenging to write, writing stories offer the researcher the opportunity to release emotion and evoke deeper parts of the Self, heal wounds, enhance the sense of self—or even alter one's sense of identity. (p. 932)

REPRESENTATION

In writing the final text I utilized layered accounts and mixed genres (personal essays, writing stories, poems, and art) to convey my lived experiences as a White woman participating in social justice education at a predominantly white university and explore how my experiences fit in the larger cultural framework of whiteness. I wrote emotionally reflective stories that shift in time and space and reflect on the connections and disconnections among my different roles personally (friend, partner, daughter, sister) and professionally (educator, colleague, researcher, and supervisor) and theories

from literature on the psychology of whiteness and whiteness as system of dominance.

LIMITATIONS OF AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

One of the most important critiques I encountered pertaining to autoethnography warned that autoethnography could be used as "a strategy that permits intellectual elites to control the stories that get told…and silences all voices not in the position of power to tell theirs—members of other ethnic groups, poor and uneducated people, for example" (Ellis, 1997, p. 133). In response to this concern, Ellis asserted that educators and researchers must "figure out how to open up spaces for others to tell about their lives, but at least this method—storytelling about life epiphanies—is a strategy that most people employ in their everyday lives. It's a familiar form. Perhaps telling our stories might encourage others to speak their silences as well" (p. 134).

Autoethnography, the use of self as the only source of data, also has been critiqued as "too self-indulgent and narcissistic" (Holt, 2003, p. 3). In addition to narcissism, Ellis (2004) raises the concern that autoethnography can lack self-awareness or self criticality and writes that autoethnography "can be self-adoring or self-hating without being sufficiently self-aware or self critical, and without taking into account cultural constraints and possibilities. When that happens, what gets written is not that useful to anybody, not even yourself" (2004, p. 34).

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Holt (2003) discussed the skepticism that reviewers have expressed concerning autoethnography; some reviewers have expressed concern about the rigor of autoethnography while others have questioned whether autoethnography constitutes scientific research. In addition to these concerns, reviewers have also struggled with what evaluative criteria to use with autoethnography (Holt, 2003).

Rather than seeking validity and generalizability as it has been conceptualized in positivist frameworks, autoethnographic research strives for verisimilitude and trustworthiness. According to Ellis (2004, p. 124), autoethnography must "evokes [sic] in readers a feeling that the experience is lifelike, believable, and possible," assist readers with understanding themselves and others more deeply, and introduce new ways of being and possibilities for living for the researcher, participants, and readers. With autoethnographic texts, the reader determines the generalizability of an autoethnographic text. Regarding the generalizability of autoethnographic texts Ellis (2004) argues that:

> A story's generalizability is always being tested—not in the traditional way through random samples of respondents, but by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them about their experience of the lives of others they know. Readers provide theoretical validation by comparing their lives to ours, by thinking about how our lives our similar and different and why. (p. 195)

In her discussion of naturalistic generalizability, Ellis (2004) shifts the emphasis from the research participants to the readers. According to Ellis, or a text to be naturalistically generalizable, it must "bring 'felt' news from one world to another and provides [sic] opportunities for the reader to have vicarious experience of the things told" (p. 195).

In addition to trustworthiness and naturalistic generalizability, autoethnographic texts must address a number of different criteria for validity: catalytic (social or political action on the part of researcher, participant, or reader), ironic (issues surrounding representation), paralogical (honors differences and uncertainties), rhizomatic (multiplicity), and voluptuous (ethics and engagement) (Ellis, 2004; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1998; Lather, 1993).

Richardson (1994) judges the validity of a text based on how well the author provides the reader with multiple perspectives and different interpretive lenses pertaining to the topic. Using the metaphor of a crystal for determining validity with autoethnography, she proposes that:

> …the central imaginary for "validity" for postmodernist texts is not the triangle—a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays, casting of in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose. (p. 934)

Richardson (1994) suggests the following five criteria for judging the quality of autoethnographic studies—"substantive contribution," "aesthetic merit," "reflexivity," "impact," and "expression of reality" (p. 937), which guided me in the writing of this autoethnography:

- "substantive contribution"—does this research deepen understanding of the lived experience of white racial identity as it connects with whiteness as a system?
- "aesthetic merit"—does the text create interpretive space for the readers? does the text utilize different forms of written expression? does the text evoke thought and feeling in the readers?
- "reflexivity"—is the text critically self conscious?
- "impact"—does the text invite readers to reflect on their experiences and question their points of view? does the text inspire the reader to do something
- "expression of reality"—does the text seem like a reasonable and trustworthy representation of individual and social life?

CHAPTER 3: LIVED EXPERIENCE

This chapter describes my lived experience of learning about racism and whiteness over a six-year period, from beginning my work on the Diversity @ OSU website in December 2000 to December 2006 when I completed a first draft of this dissertation. I represent my lived experience through stories, journal entries (research, professional, and personal), and papers that I've written for my Ph.D. coursework.

I analyzed and contextualized my experiences, using whiteness literature, which is woven into the chapter. Two affective themes are discussed in this chapter—despair and white shame. The chapter also discusses how I processed and healed despair and white shame associated with learning about whiteness and racism.

Despair

In this section I will discuss my cognitive and affective experiences of learning about racism and whiteness. I share how my grief about the suffering caused by racism, a loss of intimacy with my self and others due to racism, and feelings of disillusionment contributed to my sense of despair.

> Why do I do what I do? I believe there are many moments in my history that drive me, but for tonight, the moment I'm with involves Aijako and Mars. In September 1996 I sat on the cement floor next to Mars, who lay quietly on his sleeping mat. Every few minutes, Mars gasped three or four times in an attempt to take in more air. He'd also reach over and touch my hand to let me know that he knew I was there….Honestly, I don't know many facts about Mars. I spent eight

weeks of my life with him in the Marshall Islands. And then I spent, what I suspect was the last week of his life with him. I do know that I felt his kindness, his gentle spirit…Aijako, Mars' wife, stood across the room from me next to the ten foot freezer they had purchased with the money they'd received from the U.S. government. She excitedly explained that it was great to have a freezer because now everyone could have cold cokes. Mars gasped again and Aijako's eyes darkened as she turned to observe Mars laying on the floor very close to death. Aijako's cancer treatment had brought her into remission; however, Mars' treatment had not been able to "kill the cancer." Her face awash with grief now, she returned her gaze to me and asked, "*Ta unin ri belle ro relukuun bwebwe?*" (Why are White people so insane?). I did not know how to respond to her question as I sat feeling rage at White colonizers of the past and present and sorrow about the suffering of Aijako and Mars at the hands of the U.S. government. I cried a lot the week I spent with Aijako and Mars. Though I spent only three months of my life with them I am grateful for the time to be with them. They are the people who have taught me the most about living and dying; acceptance and generosity. I rarely think that there's intent in the universe, but I believe the universe intended my knowing Aijako and Mars. (Research journal, October 2003)

The Vice Provost of Student Affairs and I sat at one of the round, tall tables in the library coffee shop at the university in November, 2000, discussing the possibility of my working on a website focused on diversity. I had just finished my master's in anthropology and had nine weeks of ethnographic research experience in Kenya observing and participating in neocolonial systems. I had researched the social relationships that had developed between White expatriate researchers from the United States and Kenyan civil servants and casual laborers at an international aquacultural research and development site in Sagana, Kenya. Prior to and while working on my master's degree I had been involved with the Peace Corps and the Micronesia South Pacific Program and had witnessed the havoc that White Americans can impose on a nation of people—strip people of their dignity and cultural

worth, poison them with radioactivity, and destroy their landscapes (Deines et al., 1990). So when I spoke with the Vice Provost of Student Affairs I was feeling despair about the suffering in the world. "Deb, what do you want to do with your professional life? Why are you interested in working on a website focused on diversity?" The Vice Provost, with chin resting on his hand, listened intently when I responded, "The world is not what I want it to be. I will spend a large portion of my life working. My work has to have meaning and it must focus on creating a world that's more in line with what I want it to be. I want to live in a world that is not so violent."

Three months later I was working on the Diversity @ OSU website project. Early into my work on the website, I reflected in my professional journal on where I was emotionally and intellectually prior to beginning work on the website and wrote:

> Through the process of getting my master's I changed a great deal…I started out with a focus on people's relationships to their landscapes, the effects of development, the social and cultural shifts that take place in relationship to changes in the environment. Through my degree, I began to explore social change in more depth. I studied relationships of power between communities and development workers. The colonial legacy seemed to be alive and well (or unwell). Neocolonialism lives. Slow disillusionment. I realized that the U.S. was plenty fucked up and that the possibility for change was much more likely closer to home. "If you want to change someone, change yourself" as the old AA line goes. "If you want to change someone else's culture, then change your own" seems like a likely parallel. At the same time I was reading feminist theory in anthropology, which focuses on incorporating marginalized voices into research processes, shared research, consideration of the position from which you speak, reflexivity, decentralized

power, subjectivity, experience, get real. Make research and
education accessible. There are other forms of knowledge
beyond the knowledge system of the dominant culture. Make
those knowledge systems equally relevant and meaningful.
And so my emphasis changed. Maybe my interest became a bit
more focused on social change and power relations.
(Professional journal, March 2000)

Disillusionment with Diversity

When I began working on the website in December 2000, I decided to write

all the words that came to my mind when I thought about the term diversity

and brainstormed the following list of words:

Diversity	Reclaim	Raucous	Seek
Difference	Rejoice	Develop	Solace
Variety	Rekindle	Evolve	Safety
Variation	Reach	Share	Solitude
Together	Emotions	Speak	Sanctuary
Separate	Thoughts	Sing	Race
Tours	Variation	Involve	Ethnicity
Yearning	Vibrante	Educate	Yowl
Invent	Vigor	Story	
Imagine	Delight	Truth	
Explore	Dream	Try	
Express	Interview	Soothe	
Examine		Sunlight	

In April 2000, four months following the initiation of my work on the

Diversity @ OSU website, I presented the following regarding diversity at the

Building Bridges with Students of Color Conference, a one-day conference on the

OSU campus:

Diversity is a loaded term. The following is a sampling of words from students' responses to the question: "How do you define diversity?"

- different
- variety
- acceptance
- cultures
- races
- points of view
- awareness
- politics
- pain
- oppression
- sensitivity
- insincerity
- pacification tool

While it is true that students associate diversity with different cultures, races, and people accepting and celebrating one another, diversity also has negative connotations for some students; there is ambivalence around this word as is evident in the following quotes from two undergraduate Students of Color that I interviewed. One student who is Asian American said the following about diversity:

> "When I think of diversity I think of differences. Different people, different thoughts, different ideas, different beliefs, different cultures. It's a whole variety of different things, but then again when I think about diversity I think of it as like a certain group of people are trying to use a label to describe something that they feel they should achieve, but I don't know if they really want to achieve it. I think it's used for White people to…Alright I feel like I'm bashing on people now…I'd say, you know, I think people like to get along, but they also like to draw boundaries, but then they'll say there aren't any boundaries. They say it [diversity] just to say it…to sound good, but they don't really mean it. It's like when someone gets a haircut and someone will say, 'It looks good.' They say it just to say it, but they don't really mean it. They just do it to spare people's feelings."

Another student who is biracial (Native American and White) connected diversity with pain. She shared the following with me:

> "I think about a lot of pain. That's the first thing that I think about [with the term diversity], because usually for me when I go into a group they say, 'We want a diverse range of members in our community.' Usually I'm like the one Person of Color in a group of a hundred, or the one of two People of Color in a group of a hundred…When I think about diversity, I think about how hard it is to be part of an oppressed group and to be thrown into a 'diverse" situation'…Honestly, it's just painful sometimes to hear White people talk about diversity, hearing them use all of their defense mechanisms and justifications instead of just saying, 'I look at you and all the diverse people in the room and understand that you've been through a lot of pain because of who you are.' That's pretty much all I'd like to hear in a diverse situation…In a lot of diverse situations I feel like I'm doing a lot of forgiving…You know, 'Oh it's okay that I go though this and you don't.' Sometimes I just get angry. It's like, 'I don't give a shit how you feel. I don't care whether you feel guilty or not…If you're going to continue to sit there and say, It's not my fault, and I didn't do anything, and I've got Black friends, and I'm not a racist, then I'm going to walk out.' Diversity to me is sometimes like sitting around and bullshitting and kissing each other's asses. That's what it really comes down to in a way.

I was powerfully affected listening to the stories and experiences of Students of Color through interviews for the Diversity @ OSU website. I was struck by the depth of suffering due to racism in their stories. I also had ample opportunities through my work on the Diversity @ OSU website to attend lectures and workshops focused on issues of diversity that taught me more about the history of different racial/ethnic groups that contained ongoing trauma and suffering at the hands of White people individually and as a group. The more I learned the more I began to view the term diversity as

something that obfuscated what really needed to be discussed and felt—the effects of white privilege and power and its relationships to the oppression and pain of People of Color. After ten month of working on the Diversity @ OSU website my conception of diversity had shifted; I was disillusioned with the notion of diversity and wrote the following in my professional journal regarding my conception of diversity:

> I decided as part of my work I would take some time to write about diversity. I could probably start there—diversity. When I hear the word it sounds absolutely flat. It's a word that obfuscates what's really going on. What is really going on? Racism, sexism, classism. Those three things stand out immediately. Homophobia/ hetero-sexism. Unequal representation. Injustice. Those are the issues underneath diversity. Diversity is an ideal that [white] people seem to strive for, but I'm not sure how many people are willing to undergo the deep change that diversity requires. (Professional journal, November, 2001)

Which people and what kind of change was I referring to? I was referring to White people and the necessity of not only learning intellectually about diversity, but also emotionally learning about diversity. The Diversity @ OSU website had catalyzed deeper learning for me, which was an intensely emotional process.

During the first term of my doctoral program in 2001, I wrote the following about diversity in a paper titled *Reflections on Diversity and Leadership in Higher Education*:

> When I think about how diversity is conceived in the dominant discourse of higher education, it has been diluted. Discussions of

diversity tend to obfuscate, through a focus on difference without any historical and political context, issues of oppression, discrimination, and structural inequality. Diversity has become a rhetorical tool for institutions. It is hollow. It is a white word to me, a word that has been co-opted by the dominant culture. People of color, however, have been handed the responsibility or burden of addressing diversity… The dominant conception of diversity, which tends to focus on the celebration and acceptance of difference, is psychically easier for human beings to take on than racism, homophobia, classism, sexism, or other forms of oppression. Living in a world in which difference is accepted and celebrated is a wonderful ideal, the place we aspire to be; however, we are not there. If we continue to deny and skirt around the oppressive dynamics that prevent us from attaining accepted and celebrated difference, then we will remain stuck… Working in diversity has required that I be emotionally honest with myself and constantly engage in exploring the many histories of those who make up this country, including my own. Embracing diversity means acknowledging history and recognizing the legacy of inequality that binds our relationships currently. Diversity includes recognition that interactions and relationships do not occur in a vacuum and that our past, present, and future are all melded and present in our interactions. Diversity means dismantling power structures at all levels of relationship—from the personal to the institutional.

Love and all of its manifestations underlies work in diversity. Work in diversity involves border crossing and moving deeper into relationship with me and others. I've felt discomfort, pain, and excitement in this process and have had to summon tremendous amounts of trust, generosity, and compassion for myself and others.

In the chapter, "Counseling White Allies about Racism," Rose (1996) validates my experience of discomfort and pain in her discussion of the emotional process of learning about racism for White people. Rose wrote:

White people tell me, as they shift frames of reference and come to an awareness about oppression, that the process is emotional, and for the first time they understand emotionally as well as cognitively the loss to

them because of racism. They see that they were misinformed by people they loved and trusted, and so they feel betrayed; they belong to a group that has had dominance for generations, and so they feel guilt. If white people only confront these issues on a cognitive basis, they will wind up hostages to political correctness. They will be careful about what they say, but their actions will be rigid and self conscious. When the process is emotional as well as cognitive, the state of being an ally becomes a matter of reclaiming one's own humanity. Then there is no fear, because there is no image to tear down, no posture to correct. The movement to a global, ethnic point of view requires tremendous grieving. I encourage white people to not shrink from the emotional content of this process. (pp. 41-42)

As Rose (1996) encouraged, I did not "shrink from the emotional content" of coming to awareness about oppression. At a diversity training in 2001, ten months into the process of working on the Diversity @ OSU website, I became acutely aware of the sorrow I felt about racism when I recalled an early childhood memory about my friendship with two African American boys— David and Darryl. I met David and Darryl at the bus stop when I was ten and instantly liked them both. After school we played "Kill the Man with the Ball" and wrestled almost daily in our front yards. We were like three puppies. David was grounded quite often, so Darryl and I tended to mostly play together. When we weren't wrestling, we played Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots in my garage. I had a crush on David and Darryl, but since I saw Darryl most often, my affection was directed toward him.

One day, less than a year after I'd first become friends with David and Darryl, Darryl and I were outside in my front yard wrestling on the grass when my mom came home from work. She got out of her car, said hello to us and then went in the house. Later that night after Darryl had gone home, my mom and dad invited me to sit down with them at the kitchen table, the place where we

tended to have serious talks and they asked me not to wrestle with Darryl anymore. I didn't question or challenge my parents' request. After that evening at the kitchen table, David and Darryl and I stopped playing together. When I recalled this memory in 2001 at the diversity training, I felt a great deal of sorrow, because I had absolutely no memory of any interaction with David and Darryl following the conversation with my parents at the kitchen table. My loss of friendship with David and Darryl marked the beginning of the creation of social distance and a loss of intimacy with myself and People of Color. I felt grief.

The evening following my recollection of my loss of friendship with David and Darryl at the diversity training, I decided to call my mom and ask her about her memory of what had happened to my friendship with David and Darryl. I called her at 11:00pm, shared with her my memory and the grief I felt in association with the memory, and then asked, "Mom, why did you ask Darryl and me not to wrestle anymore?" My mom responded, "I knew you'd ask me about that at some point and I've been afraid that you'd think it was because of race." She then said, "I was scared that you and Darryl would cross the line of play and innocence and that you would be in situation where you were unsafe." We sat quietly for a few minutes and then my mom continued, "When I was in eighth grade I played with some [White] boys the way you and Darryl played together. One day, we crossed that line of play and I wasn't safe anymore. I didn't want that to happen to you." I then asked, "Do you remember what happened to my friendship with Darryl or do you remember what happened to their family?" My mom gently replied, "I don't remember, Deb."

After I finished talking with my mom, I felt a mixture of feelings. I was sad because I had just learned that she had experienced a violation of her body and a loss of safety and trust in her friendship with some White boys at a young age. I also felt dissonance and some guilt because I did think that, in addition to gender, race was a part of the reason that my parents requested that I not wrestle with David and Darryl anymore. I did not want to impose my point of view on my mom—insist that race had something to do with why she asked me not to wrestle with David and Darryl anymore—if she felt that her reason was for the maintenance of my physical safety as a girl verging on adolescence with two boys. Though, given a history of stereotypes of African American men, including stereotypes of African American men as dangerous, rapists, and out to get White women, I question whether that history of racial stereotyping, which still haunts the psyches of White people today (including my own), would not penetrate the psyches of my parents who were born in the mid- to late 1940s. Regarding these stereotypes Kivel (2002) writes:

> Our national discussions about gender roles and male-female relationships, especially their more troubling aspects, often use the projected fear of African-American men as framework. For example, in the late 19th century, debates about women's independence often referred to the need for white men to protect white women and for white women to depend upon and be loyal and deserving of such white male protection from sexual predators, who were assumed to be black. In other words, the sexual protection that white men demanded white women accept was framed in the context of fear about African-American men (pp. 133-134).

In November 2004, three years after I had first recalled the loss I felt about my friendship with David and Darryl, my family (my biological mother and father, their spouses, and my partner's mother) got into a conversation about

race in our kitchen while my partner and I prepared dinner. They were sharing stories of racism that they had witnessed. At some point in their conversation, I took a break and went and stood next to my father, who was quietly listening to the stories, and placed my hand on his shoulder. He then turned to me in the midst of the conversation and said, "Deb, remember when you used to wrestle with Darryl in the front yard? I remember pulling into the driveway after work and seeing you two wrestling. I felt uncomfortable because Darryl was Black." I felt an upwelling of gratitude for my father's honesty and vulnerability in sharing how he struggled with his racism. I also felt validation for my belief that in addition to gender, race mattered and was a part of the story of my lost friendship with David and Darryl.

Segrest (2001) asserts that there are a number of costs associated with racism, "which implicates systems of oppression based on gender and class, on patriarchy, capitalism, and heterosexism" and writes:

> Racism costs us intimacy.
> Racism costs us our affective lives.
> Racism costs us authenticity.
> Racism costs us our sense of connection to other humans and
> the natural world.
> Racism costs us our spiritual selves: "a feeling of an
> indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a
> whole," as Freud's poet friend tried to explain" (p. 65).

My experience of loss of friendship with David and Darryl marks the beginning of the costs of racism to me, a loss of intimacy and sense of

connection with People of Color and the "feeling of an indissoluble bond, of being one with the external world as a whole."

In addition to feeling grief, I was struggling with anger at White people, many of whom I thought seemed reticent and unwilling to acknowledge the existence of racial oppression. I sought to understand why so many White people were reticent to acknowledge racism to diffuse my anger. After reading an essay by Noble Peace Laureate, who discussed a backlash against peacemaking, I speculated in my research journal about the reticence of White people to acknowledge the existence of racial oppression. I surmised that White people already felt too full with despair in their personal lives and that this was the origins of the backlash against peacemaking:

> Why is there a backlash against peacemaking, loving? Sometimes I think the pain of this world is too great to bear, so with racism most white people completely try to shut it out. I don't think people want to risk visiting just a little bit of it for fear that it will open up huge amounts of despair, which I think is already sitting there for many. (Research journal, November 2002)

While speculating about the despair of other White people and how their despair may be tied to reticence and an unwillingness to acknowledge racism, I was struggling with my own despair as I increased my awareness about racism. In a research journal I wrote:

> I just read a story about a white guy tutoring African American kids in Roxbury in *The Call of Service*. He had entered into a "far reaching kind of self arraignment." Coles (1993) "scrutinized how this moral preoccupation can be a prelude to depression and despair." This is familiar to me—self arraignment. I've

been in despair, depression. I just passed through a large wave
of despair brought on, I think, by the content of the Native
philosophies class. I found grief surfacing about what I learned
and saw in the Marshall Islands. Lorraine Brundige said
something like, "I saw the effects of colonization firsthand and
it broke my heart." I saw it too and it broke my heart. I try to
tell myself that I have no right to feel the way I do because I'm
not Marshallese. I'm white. I grieve what happened to
Marshallese people and what some white people have become
or what white people have inherited. (Research journal,
November 2002)

Why did I not grieve about what happened to my white psyche in addition to

the grief about the suffering of People of Color and what some White people

had done? Segrest (2001) in her chapter "The Souls of White Folks" provides

a deeper analysis that, in addition to my speculation about White people

feeling too much despair in their personal lives to consider opening

themselves to the pain of racism, asserts that because white people have

intellectually and emotionally distanced themselves from racism, they have

evaded accountability for their participation as a group in a system of racial

dominance. Segrest discusses the "mythology of racism" and writes,

> Part of the mythology of racism is that it only affects people of color.
> Because racism normalizes whiteness and problematizes "color," we
> whites as "generic humans" escape scrutiny for our accountability as a
> group for creating racism and as individuals for challenging it. One
> response is to begin to problematize whiteness and calculate its wages.
> (p. 41)

Prior to my work on the Diversity @ OSU website I had not considered how

white people as a group and or I had been implicit in maintaining and

perpetuating racism; I had focused all of my energy and attention on the

suffering of People of Color and feeling outrage, which I still feel, about their suffering, but had not intentionally connected whiteness and my lived experience of whiteness with the oppression of People of Color. Through my work on the Diversity @ OSU Website and through the coursework on my Ph.D., I began a very deep and intentional process to "problematize whiteness." As I wrote in the above journal entry, my participation in a Native Philosophies class had opened up a space for unacknowledged grief to surface, which I had accumulated and carried from my experiences of working at a school for severely emotionally disturbed children; living and teaching in the Republic of the Marshall Islands; doing ethnographic research in Kenya; and listening to the stories of students, faculty, and staff who had participated in the Diversity @ OSU website project. I had been calculating the "wages of whiteness"[3] subconsciously for years and had allowed the psychic impact of the wages—grief and despair—to surface in my consciousness. I often questioned the authenticity of what I felt, because so few White people in my life seemed to understand the depth of my feelings. Segrest's discussion in her essay "The Soul of White Folks" about how white people when they begin to acknowledge their participation in a system of dominance—"an inhuman set of practices and beliefs over five centuries of European hegemony"—feel emotional and spiritual devastation allowed me to trust more that my emotions were authentic. As cited earlier in this chapter, "racism costs us [white people] authenticity" (2001, p. 44)

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[3]This term originates with W. E. B. DuBois. "Wages of whiteness" refers to the legal, economic, educational, and political privileges given to White European immigrants, which allowed them to socially and structurally ascend in U.S. society.

I had begun to experience the grief I felt about the inhumanity of racism; however, I still had not connected myself as a member of a group and examined, how through this membership, I had participated in maintaining or perpetuating racism. In the section on White Shame in this chapter, I will describe psychically accounting for my participation in racism.

Segrest (2001) makes a very important distinction about the psychic experience of racism between People of Color and White people that I think must be stated. People of Color have experienced deep systemic violence and victimization—a "five-hundred-year history of colonialism and imperialism," by White Europeans and White Americans. This history also harms White people, but it is a harm that is experientially different than the harm felt by People of Color. White people have suffered what Segrest describes as a "wounding psychic perversion." Segrest distinguishes the wounding that accompanies dominance from the pain associated with subordination and writes that "…there is pain, a psychic wound, to inhabiting and maintaining domination and suggests that for White people, the significance in acknowledging "that emotional cost helps keep our white/ethical/political solidarity from slipping over into a new form of paternalism" (p. 45).

In the midst of struggling to make sense of the despair I felt, I found an essay written by a Palestinian Quaker woman titled "Suffering and Hope—A Testimony from the Margins" (Zaru, 2002). While reading the paper I found soothing her insights about grief, which were based on her experiences of living in Palestine and struggling with "issues of theology and liberation," and recorded the following ideas in my research journal:

- "The act of crying out and groaning is at once an act of subversion and

> an act of hope…grief is a radical form of criticism and de-
> legitimizing…"

- Palestinian people's cry of grief is "a cry of hope that this grief might penetrate the numbness of history and open a way towards newness."

- Grief is a form of critique that allows human beings "a means to find alternatives for newness of life and to make a commitment to work for justice and peace."

I wrote Zaru's insights about grief in my journal because I was overwhelmed with despair and seeking a way through it. I was drawn to the idea that grief could be an expression of hope and a form of a critique that opens "alternatives for newness of life." After writing Zaru's insights about the meaning of grief, I attempted to sort out why I continued to be involved in social justice education:

> I do this or pursue this because I am so exhausted by what is fucked in the world. I need to know there is something else…I just read an incredible quote that paraphrased the writing of Henry Nouwen (1972) from *The Wounded Healer*: "No one can help anyone without being involved, without entering with (one's) whole person into the painful situation without taking the risk of becoming hurt, wounded or destroyed in the process…without a willingness to make one's own painful and joyful experiences available as a sources of clarification and understanding…the great illusion of leadership is to think that (humankind) can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there." (Research journal, January 2003)

Buried under my despair, hope for social change existed in me, and I found comfort in the idea that I was capable of being emotionally present to the lives of others rather than falling into an illusion that I could be an

educational leader without spending time struggling in my own despair.

One year later, however, I was still struggling with despair and wrote:

> I'm feeling so exhausted by all of the reading and thinking and
> feeling I've been doing about racism. I wrote in my journal last
> night about what I was feeling—I can't stay ahead of the
> despair of it. Sometimes I just have to stop and sit in it. There's
> nothing I can do that will ever be enough. I hate the
> powerlessness that comes with that acknowledgment.
> (Research journal, January 2004)

I spent three years moving in and out of despair. Why could I not find my

way through despair toward a more hopeful worldview? I believe that

unacknowledged shame and guilt kept me caught in a loop of despair. While

I did mention shame and guilt in journal entries, personal and professional, I

did not stay with shame and guilt for long. I held a very negative view of

shame and guilt and in particular white guilt. Kaufman (1992) discusses how

attending to shame is taboo in U.S. society and the potential loss of self

understanding associated with not acknowledging shame in the following

excerpt:

> If we are to understand the self, the sources of splitting and self-hatred,
> and the evolving process of identity, then we must begin with shame.
> Shame, however, remains under taboo in contemporary society, where
> achievement and success are dominant values.
>
> Shame itself is an entrance to the self. It is the affect of indignity, of
> defeat, of transgression, of inferiority, and of alienation. No other affect
> is closer to the experienced self. None is more central for the sense of
> identity. Shame is felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul…It is
> the most poignant experience of the self by the self, whether felt in the
> humiliation of cowardice, or in the sense of failure to cope successfully

with a challenge. Shame is a wound from the inside, dividing us both from ourselves and from one another. (pp. xix-xx)

When I wrote in my journal "I hate the powerlessness that comes with that acknowledgement [of despair]", I believe that I was expressing my "sense of failure to cope successfully with a challenge"—ending racism so that I would not have to feel its "wounding psychic perversion" in me.

Additionally, Kaufman (1992, p. ix) discussed how the language we use to describe our "inner experience" can serve as a "filtering mechanism," which "sharpens perception of events [inner experience] or else masks them," resulting in the events being "lost to conscious awareness, no longer freely available for expression." By describing my affective experience of learning about oppression, and in particular racism, as grief and despair, the shame I felt remained primarily below the surface of my consciousness. By only naming my affective experience as grief and despair, I maintained a severing in my self due to shame, which inhibited me from developing a healthy white racial identity (Autonomy) (Helms, 1990).

WHITE SHAME

In order to understand shame one must have experienced deep shame and confronted it sufficiently to have assimilated it personally, and pursued it cognitively wherever it led, and finally, to have had the courage to risk further shame by exposing oneself in writing.
(Kaufman, 1992, p. xxvii)

In this section, I will define white shame and discuss how it develops. I will share personal stories that were sources of white shame for me, discussing

these stories within the context of theory about white shame. Also, I will elaborate on the costs of white shame to White people and its consequences in relationships.

I don't think I was completely conscious about the role of white shame in my experience until 2005 when I attended a training focused on racial justice. For four years I had been very involved in social justice education through working on the Diversity @ OSU Website and teaching a course focused on social justice education and was intellectually aware of white shame and guilt, but had mostly convinced myself that I had it figured out. I had visited the surface of shame and guilt through trainings and workshops for short durations, but had not spent focused periods of time exploring how I had been affected by white racism and white shame.

While reading back through my journals I did find entries indicating that I was struggling with shame; however, I hadn't yet named that I felt white shame, which prevented me from healing it. I did not understand how shame was quietly affecting my actions and behavior. In retrospect, I realize I had not spent much time considering why I was more self-conscious and quiet in groups that are composed predominantly of People of Color. I was aware that racism had caused suffering and had struggled with despair, but shame or guilt was not something that I recognized in myself. For example, in August 2002 I wrote in my professional journal:

> I don't know how to describe what I'm feeling. It broke open
> the day I went to the McNair Scholars presentations. I felt
> awkward being there. I felt like an outsider. Nobody did
> anything that would cause me to feel that way. I just did. I

> think the awkwardness came from my awareness of how
> fucked racism is, knowing that there are times when White
> people just aren't needed or wanted, realizing that I don't the
> share the experiences of everyone in the room. I think I'm more
> aware about what whiteness represents. I'm very conscious of
> it when I go into a room of People of Color.

At the racial justice training I attended in 2005, I went under the surface and I began to understand the origins of my self consciousness in groups of People of Color. I believe I felt unacknowledged and unexamined shame about my white identity.

Kaufman (1992) conceives of shame as an inherently affective state of self exposure, vulnerability, and a lowered sense of self rather than a cognitive experience. Shame may trigger "self evaluative thoughts or become expressed interpersonally" (p. xi). and intensify awareness. From an affect theory perspective, Kaufman delineates shame as:

- an "innate" emotional experience that has positive attributes and is necessary for the "development of identity, conscience, and to a sense of dignity…self esteem and intimacy";

- a "partial, temporary experience";

- a feeling state that is generated internally and/or externally throughout the life cycle;

- not solely connected with the "mother-child relationship…the family exclusively…disturbed interpersonal relations";

- present prior to cognition and language rather than the result of negative thoughts about one's self; and

- significant with regard to it's effect on the development of "personality, psychopathology, and interpersonal relations, as well as

in its role in minority group relations, minority identity development,

national identity development, and international relations" (pp. xii-

xiii).?

What is the difference between guilt and shame? Holzman (1995) defines

guilt as an uncomfortable feeling that arises in a person when she or he

"violates a moral prohibition" (p. 326) whereas shame occurs when a person

has failed to live up to her or his ideal self. With guilt the focus is on how an

action has harmed another whereas shame is an inherent sense of being

flawed of defective. According to Holzman, guilt is often misconstrued for

shame in anti-racism work and suggests that guilt and shame may occur

sequentially.

Kaufman (1992) suggest, however, that efforts to define shame and guilt as

two distinct emotional states misdirects discussions about guilt and shame

and results in the predominant perspective that shame is a more debilitating

emotional experience than guilt. Kaufman argues that guilt is one of a

number of descriptors of an internal experience that reflects an underlying

affective experience of shame. In addition to guilt, Kaufman writes that

experiences of embarrassment, shyness, self consciousness, and feelings of

inadequacy reflect the affective experience of shame, which ultimately entails

feeling exposed, vulnerable, and somehow less than. Rather than focusing on

the differences between guilt and shame, Kaufman argues that rather than

focusing on the differences between guilt and shame, discussions should

focus on two different kinds of shame—"shame as an innate affect that

functions simply to amplify awareness and shame that has become

internalized and magnified to the point that it now progressively captures and dominates the self" (p. xii).

Kaufman (1992) acknowledges that shame is significant in "minority group relations, minority identity development, national identity development, and international relations"; however, he overlooks the role of shame in dominant group relations and identity the development as it pertains to privilege and oppression. In *Learning To Be White*, Thandeka (1999) defines and describes in detail how shame manifests for members of dominant groups in her discussion of white shame.

What Is White Shame?

According to Baldwin (1985), white shame is an embodied manifestation of history, that may not be recognized or realized due to the oblivion associated with privilege. Regarding white shame he writes:

> White man, hear me! History, as nearly no one seems to know,
> is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer
> merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the
> great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it
> within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways,
> and history is literally present in all that we do. It could
> scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our
> frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations. And it
> is with great pain and terror that one begins to realize this. In
> great pain and terror one begins to assess the history which has
> placed one where one is and formed one's point of view. In
> great pain and terror because, therefore, one enters into battle
> with that historical creation, Oneself, and attempts to recreate
> oneself according to a principle more humane and more
> liberating; one begins the attempt to achieve a level of personal

maturity and freedom which robs history of its tyrannical power, and also changes history.

But, obviously, I am speaking as an historical creation which has had to bitterly contest its history, to wrestle with it, and finally accept it in order to bring myself out of it. My point of view certainly is formed by my history, and it is probable that only a creature despised by history finds history a questionable matter. On the other hand, people who imagine that history flatters them (as it does, indeed, since they wrote it) are impaled on their history like a butterfly on a pin and become incapable of seeing or changing themselves, or the world. (p. 410)

Shame, according to Thandeka (1999), is a "misalignment" in one's self, incongruence between mind (thoughts) and body (emotions and desires). When an individual discovers this incongruence or split, she or he may feel "unlovable," flawed, or a loss of a sense of self worth (p. 12). In the case of white shame, a White person may have an experience in which she or he realizes that her racialized thoughts are incongruent with her emotions and/or desire to be affirming of the humanity of all people. Though at the time I didn't realize that I was struggling with white shame, the following excerpt from a personal journal highlights the misalignment I felt:

[My partner] and I were driving through Richmond. We were stopped at a traffic light and I saw an African American man running across the street. I thought to myself, "I wonder if he just stole something?" Immediately after the thought surfaced, I thought "How can I coordinate the Diversity @ OSU website and think this shit?" I don't want these thoughts. These thought aren't mine. I felt sick when it passed into my mind. I did not ask for this shit. I don't want this shit in my head. I hope I am living my life in a way that doesn't allow this shit to happen anymore. (November, 2002)

White racialization refers to the messages—ranging from subtle to blatant that an individual internalizes about her or his race—about false superiority of white in relation to other colors, which are falsely cast as inferior. These messages are embedded in our culture and are delivered through the individuals that collectively form our communities and systems (educational, legal, political, and economic). The journal entry above illustrates the impact of white racialization processes on me psychically and my growing awareness of the effects of white racialization as an internal source of shame.

Sources of shame are both internal and external, according to Thandeka (1999). When an individual becomes conscious of how she or he has had to sever parts of his or her thinking and feeling self ("lack of self-coherency or integration") in order to not experience withdrawal of affection from those around him or her, then the individual experiences feelings of shame via an external source. An individual's awareness of not living up to an "ideal self" can also be a source of shame (Holzman, 1995; Thandeka, 1999). The stereotypical thought—African Americans are thieves—that I struggled with revealed to me how I've been affected by white racialization, which was incongruent with my desire to respect the dignity of others, my "ideal self." In that moment I was acutely aware of how I was not living up to my "ideal self" as a social justice educator. My sense of shame had been "internally induced." Regarding "internally induced" shame, Thandeka writes,

> Shame also gives an account of the failure of the self to live up to its own ideals. These feelings of failure are internally induced; no external "shamer" is necessary. The self has not been humiliated, exposed, neglected, or abused by another. Rather, the feelings of shame-filled

dejection, apathy, and depression have been brought on by the self's failed attempt to live up to its own notion of an *ideal self*. (p. 108)

"Experiences of shame," explains Thandeka (1999), "are self-exposures that lower one's own sense of personal esteem and respect. They are private snapshots of embarrassing features of the self. Looking at these uncomplimentary mug shots, one feels shame as in the feeling that 'I am unlovable'" (p. 15). While driving that day through Richmond, California, with my partner, I had a "private snapshot" of how white racialization (racism) had affected me, which consequently caused distress and shame in me about who I am.

Thandeka (1999) describes the psychic costs of white racialization on White people and asserts that "the Euro-American child…is a racial victim of its own white community of parents, caretakers, and peers, who attack it because it does not yet have a white racial identity" (p. 13). According to Thandeka, White children, who are still unfamiliar with the codes of whiteness and who have sought love, relationship, and connection with People of Color, frequently have experiences with the significant White people in their lives that alert them that that they are doing something wrong or socially unacceptable. Alerts to White children may come in many forms: reprimand, silence, withdrawal of affection, and/or threat of emotional abandonment. To avoid these alerts and the experience of being wrong or socially unacceptable, White children learn to repress their desire for connection to People of Color. To bring to life this assertion, Thandeka shares White people's personal accounts of their earliest memories of race. One story Thandeka shared caught my attention—the story involved a White woman's

awareness of the threat of emotional abandonment if she continued a relationship with an African American man.

> In high school, Sally's parents, strong civil rights supporters, preached racial equality both at home and in the streets. Sally was flabbergasted when her parents prevented her from going out with a high school friend who came to pick her up for a Friday night date. He was black. The parents sent him away and forbade her to date him. "What will our neighbors say if they see you on the arms of a black man?" Sally was furious with them and thought them hypocrites. But she submitted to their dictates. "What was I going to do?" she asked rhetorically. "Rebel? Not in my household. They would have disowned me." (p. 7)

As I discussed earlier in this chapter in the section on Despair, at a diversity training in 2001, I unearthed an early memory about two African American boys, David and Darryl, who I met and developed a friendship with when I was ten years old. David was frequently grounded so Darryl and I played together. Wrestling was a part of how we played. My parents, uncomfortable with us wrestling in the front yard, asked that I no longer wrestle with Darryl. When I returned to this memory almost 25 years later at the diversity training, I had no recollection of playing with Darryl or David after being told that I couldn't wrestle with them anymore and felt profound sorrow. I will return to this story in the next section when I describe an early experience of colluding with racism.

Sources of White Shame

Previously in this chapter, I mentioned that I had attended a racial justice training in 2005 that facilitated my getting under the surface to feel the white

shame that I had been carrying. In this section I will share stories that were

sources of white shame for me and discuss their significance in my process of

understanding my shame about being white, grounding these stories in

whiteness theory.

According to Thandeka (1999) in *Learning to Be White* a "nonwhite zone"

exists in White people and is composed of the following interconnected

realms that influence the development of "white self definition:"

> (1) the psychic region that separates the self from its own
> feelings of positive resonance toward racially proscribed others
> and its negative sentiment toward its own white community
> for preventing the positive feelings toward the forbidden
> "other" from being expressed; (2) the residential ghettos to
> which the vast majority of the colored residents are invariably
> consigned in an American city or town; and (3) the field of
> interplay between the child's subjective, inner world and the
> surrounding objective, outer world beyond it. In this
> interpersonal field of interplay, the child learns through
> interaction with its caretakers what feelings to embrace and
> what feelings to reject in order to retain the affection of its
> caretakers. (p. 25)

Thandeka's (1999) discussion of the "nonwhite zone" offered me important

theoretical context regarding the formation of my white self-definition, which

I will draw from to contextualize the following stories associated with the

racial justice training, an experience that catalyzed my coming to

consciousness about white shame.

Prior to the racial justice training I made two commitments to myself

regarding how I would participate in the training. I committed to not trying

to make myself look good around People of Color and better than "those other White people that don't get it like I do" and to taking emotional risks by using my voice and being truthful.

The training entailed a week of intensive large- and small-group interracial and intraracial dialogues about racism. On the second day of the training while in the large interracial group, the facilitators asked that we individually and silently draw four pictures—one representing how we had colluded with racism, one representing how we had been affected by racism, one representing messages we received about people from different racial/ethnic groups, and one representing our witnessing racism. After completing our drawings, we would then get into our small, interracial group and share the drawings with one another.

Drawing One—Collusion with Racism

I divided my paper into four quadrants and proceeded to draw. In the first quadrant, I depicted how I had colluded with racism. I drew the picture of a house with five adolescents standing off in the distance away from the house. Some of them held eggs and some of them didn't. I also drew one egg in mid-air about half way between the house and the children. The house in the drawing belonged to an African American family with two boys, David and Darryl, who I stopped playing with after my parents requested that I not wrestle with Darryl anymore and who I mentioned earlier in this chapter in the section on Despair.

I lived in a predominantly white suburb in New Jersey in the mid 1970s, and David and Darryl lived four houses down the street from me. I was ten when David and Darryl moved into the neighborhood. I'd like return to the second realm of Thandeka's (1999) nonwhite zone discussed earlier in this section—the social and physical distance that white supremacy created ("the residential ghettos to which the vast majority of the colored residents are invariably consigned in an American city or town")—which alerted me to consider the spatial arrangement of race in the 1970s and how it may have affected my and David and Darryl's experiences as children. David and Darryl's family was the sole Black family living in a predominantly white neighborhood in the mid 1970s in New Jersey. While many People of Color were consigned to "the residential ghettos" due to deep structural inequities, David and Darryl's family had broken through housing discrimination barriers. We lived in the same neighborhood at a historically significant time—the Civil Rights Act had passed in 1964 and the Fair Housing Act had passed in 1968.

Additionally, the third realm of Thandeka's nonwhite zone—"the field of interplay between the child's subjective, inner world and the surrounding objective, outer world beyond" when the child "learns through interaction with its caretakers what feelings to embrace and what feelings to reject in order to retain the affection of its caretakers"—also seems important to consider at this time. Immediately after David and Darryl's family moved into the neighborhood, my parents sat me down at the kitchen table and asked me if I understood the meaning of the term "nigger." I didn't. They told me that it was a word that should never cross my lips and that if they ever heard me use the word that "there would be hell to pay." I knew the

word was serious. Also, at about the same time, my parents allowed me to stay up past my bedtime, which was unheard of during the school year, to watch the movie *Roots*. The horrifying images of the suffering of slavery that I saw when I was ten remain with me today. Prior to meeting David and Darryl as a ten year old, I knew that there was violent word associated with African American people, which was unacceptable to use and that there would be serious consequences if I did, and through viewing *Roots*, I was aware that through slavery White people had done horrific things to African American people.

The first realm of Thandeka's nonwhite zone—"the psychic region that separates the self from its own feelings of positive resonance toward racially proscribed others and its negative sentiment toward its own white community for preventing the positive feelings toward the forbidden "other" from being expressed"—is also important to consider as it relates to me as a ten year old white child. When I started playing with David and Darryl, at this point in my life, I had not yet developed a "psychic region" that separated me from "feelings of positive resonance toward racially proscribed others" nor had I developed "negative sentiment toward [my] own white community for preventing the positive feelings toward the forbidden "other" from being expressed."

When David and Darryl moved into the neighborhood I was aware that they were different. Their skin was brown. Also, my parents, through their talk with me about violent language at the kitchen table and their effort in making sure that I stayed up past my bedtime to watch *Roots*, had made me

aware that any kind of unkindness toward David and Darryl or their family was unacceptable and that race was significant.

Returning to the drawing about my collusion with racism, the eggs in the picture represented the eggs that my White friends in New Jersey threw on Mischief Night, the night before Halloween. In the drawing, I was now twelve and had gone out with a group of kids from the neighborhood for Mischief Night. (I hadn't seen David and Darryl in at least a year.) We had bars of soap for soaping people's windows and eggs for throwing at houses. I scrawled Xs and Os on one White families garage windows in soap, which was one street over from my house and then continued down the street with the group of White kids I was with. We turned the corner to head back to my street, which was also David and Darryl's street. Upon turning the corner, we found ourselves standing at the top of the street looking down at David and Darryl's house. There were no street lights and it was completely dark outside. David and Darryl lived in a two-story maroon house with black shutters and two-car garage. The house was quiet—no lights on and no cars in the driveway. As I stood at the top of the hill with my White friends and a bar of soap in hand, I felt that there was something different or wrong about egging or soaping David and Darryl's house. I didn't want to do it, but I didn't tell any of my friends that I didn't want to do it.

Then one of the White kids threw an egg at David and Darryl's house and we ran away, continuing on with Mischief Night. I ran away not completely understanding why, but feeling I had just been complicit in doing something hurtful to David and Darryl's family. While vandalism of anyone's property is unacceptable, my twelve year old psyche knew that there was a heaviness

(a long history of white violence) attached to egging a Black family's home. I knew I had participated in something that was wrong and that it somehow *meant something* for a group of White kids to throw an egg at a Black family's house.

For quite some time I only remembered the first part of the story about David and Darryl, that we used to play together and then we no longer did after my parents asked that I not wrestle with Darryl anymore. I wanted to remember more about David and Darryl, so periodically I took time to try and recall more memories. For at least a year I couldn't remember anything. One day while out on a walk I was mining for memories of David and Darryl and had an image flash through my mind of me standing in the street looking down at David and Darryl's house on Mischief Night. A wave of anxiety and shame washed over me, and I thought to myself "I hope I didn't egg their house." I struggled to remember if I had egged David and Darryl's house or if any of the kids I was with had egged their house. As I was processing this new memory as an adult who feels strongly committed to working for racial justice and who has spent a great deal of time witnessing the suffering that White people have caused People of Color, I felt horrified that I was involved in vandalism of an African American families home. I immediately flashed to a chapter, "Representations of Whiteness," that I had read in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (hooks, 1992). In this chapter, hooks discusses the terror of whiteness experienced by Black people "that is not formed in reaction to stereotypes but emerges as a response to the traumatic pain and anguish that remains a consequence of white racist domination, a psychic state that informs and shapes the way black folks 'see' whiteness" (p. 169). She describes her own experience of terror as a young girl and writes:

> Returning to memories of growing up in the social circumstances created by racial apartheid, to all black spaces on the edges of town, I reinhabit a location where black folks associated whiteness with the terrible, the terrifying, and the terrorizing. White people were regarded as terrorists, especially those who dared to enter that segregated space of blackness. As a child, I did not know any white people. They were strangers, rarely seen in our neighborhoods. The "official" white men who came across the tracks were there to sell products, Bibles and insurance. They terrorized by economic exploitation. What did I see in the gazes of those white men who crossed our thresholds that made me afraid, that made black children unable to speak? Did they understand at all how strange their whiteness appeared in our living rooms, how threatening?...Their presence terrified me. Whatever their mission, they looked too much like the unofficial white men who came to enact rituals of terror and torture. As a child, I did not know how to tell them apart, how to ask the "real white people to please stand up." The terror that I felt is one black people have shared. Whites learn about it secondhand. (pp. 170-171)

Even though as a kid my intent was not to terrorize, I am left wondering how my actions as a twelve year old affected David and Darryl's family given a long history of white supremacy and violence. What was it like for David and Darryl's parents to wake up and find eggs running down the front of their home? They were an African American family living in a predominantly white suburb in the mid 1970s. Did our actions on Mischief Night awaken terror associated with white violence and domination? Had they had previous experiences with being vandalized, threatened, or terrorized by White people? Had they ever experienced vandalism or any other threat of violence because of their race? Were they familiar with Mischief Night or was Mischief Night something of white culture? Intellectually, I know that I was "a kid who didn't know any better," who didn't grasp intellectually or

emotionally what my actions meant. As an adult, however, who has learned (and is still learning) how White people have caused People of Color to suffer, when I recalled this memory, I felt an intense welling of shame.

How does this childhood memory fit in the process of forming my white self-definition? I had just participated in a white shame producing experience that would go unacknowledged but would live quietly in my body for almost 30 years. I had been silent and not expressed to the other White kids I was with my concern or discomfort about egging David and Darryl's house. I had begun to develop the "psychic region that separates the self from its own feelings of positive resonance toward racially proscribed others" by not expressing feeling uncomfortable about egging David and Darryl's house. This experience marks the early beginnings of the development of my white self-definition.

Drawing Two—False Sense of Superiority

The second drawing and story I shared depicted how I had been impacted by racism. In the second quadrant of my large sheet of paper, I sketched some coconut trees to represent the Marshall Islands and then a picture of me with five or six Marshallese people around me. I drew the image of myself significantly larger than the images of Marshallese people.

Since the fourth or fifth grade I had been drawn to the idea of joining the Peace Corps. At age 23 I felt a very strong desire to completely remove myself from what was familiar and secure to learn about me and what I was capable of. Also, I was very attracted to learning about other cultures and wanted to

travel very far from the United States. So after completing my Bachelor's degree in Psychology, I joined the Peace Corps.

Thandeka's (1999) discussion of the physical realm of the nonwhite zone perhaps sheds light on why I was so drawn to joining the Peace Corps. She writes that this second more concrete realm refers to the "nonwhite ghetto in an American city, town, or suburb" and suggests that White people associate the "nonwhite ghetto" with "fear, sense of loss and dismay, and rage" and internalize these associations (p. 26). Thandeka proposes that the "nonwhite ghetto" then "becomes an objective symbol for both the Euro-Americans racial fears and her or his lost desires for a community that does not judge but embraces difference as good" (p. 26). She also suggests that the "nonwhite ghetto" strongly attracts White people because it is a physical representation of White people's "repressed desires [to feel connected with racial Others] looking for a way to escape their white confines" (p. 26).

I could not have been farther from my "white confines" when I lived and taught English, Science, and Health on Mae island of Namu atoll in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. The island of Mae is a mile long and a mile wide with no running water or electricity. Approximately 100 people lived on the island. Marshallese people are brown-skinned and speak Marshallese; English is the second language. I was the only White person living on the island and I had previously had 10 weeks of Marshallese language training. Did I perceive Peace Corps developing countries, and in particular living on Mae, Namu, the "residential ghettos to which a vast majority of the colored residents are invariable consigned" within the global context? Was I seeking community that "embraces difference as good"? Was I seeking connection

with racial Others and an escape from my "white confines"? In retrospect I believe I had been drawn to the nonwhite zone of the Marshall Islands, so that I could break from my white confines, make connection with racial Others, and recover a sense of wholeness. The connection I sought, however, was through a "helping" relationship marred by a long history of colonization. I had received years and years of racialized messages about white western superiority and the inferiority of brown skinned people in developing nations.

How did the racialized messages about white superiority that I was exposed to in the United States affect my experience as a Peace Corps volunteer in the Marshall Islands? When I first arrived on Mae I was invited to a welcoming party and was asked to speak. I sat in a cool cinder block classroom waiting for my turn to speak to a room filled with most everyone from the island. While waiting I thought about how I would say to everyone that I was there to help them. When it was time for me to speak, I stood up and attempted to say in Marshallese that I was there to help them. I was two or three belabored sentences into my speech when it became clear to everyone in the room and the head teacher that I could barely utter a coherent thought in Marshallese. The head teacher of the school very gently cut me off and suggested that I speak English and he would translate for everyone present. He translated beautifully in both English and Marshallese. I felt embarrassed and humiliated and thought to myself, "How am I going to help anyone when I don't know the language and I know almost nothing about the culture?"

While living on Mae, I had many encounters with my humility that illuminated how I had internalized a sense of white superiority masked as

benevolence. One day I decided to take the students in my eighth grade science class out on a biology field trip. We were going to name the plants and animals in our environment using Western scientific nomenclature. For our field trip we walked across the pass to another small, uninhabited island. As soon as we left the island students were off gathering different plants and animals from the land and the lagoon to show me. They showed me how and where to find everything and they taught me all the different Marshallese words they had for their plants, animals, land and waterscapes. They knew their landscapes so intimately that they were able to find shellfish in minutes that I would have to search hours for and would often never find. On that day I remember thinking to myself, "Why am I teaching Marshallese students Western scientific nomenclature when a vast scientific knowledge and language about their environment already exists? Who is teaching who here?" I felt an acute awareness that the students in my class had knowledge of place that I did not possess about any of the places I had ever lived. Why were White Western forms of knowledge valued more than Marshallese forms of knowledge? Why wasn't I taught during the Peace Corps teaching practicum about Marshallese knowledge systems about the environment, an intimate knowledge that very few White people from the United States possess? Why was I expected to teach from U.S. science textbooks that were completely culturally irrelevant rather than Marshallese science textbooks?

I shared this story because it represents a number of experiences that I had while in the Marshall Islands that illuminated for me the false sense of superiority I had internalized based on race and class by living in the U.S. As a child, I remember seeing Peace Corps commercials on TV and being very drawn to the idea of helping someone in a place that seemed very far away

from what I knew as a ten-year-old White girl living in a New Jersey suburb. What I didn't realize as a child was the subtext of these media messages— superior White person of "developed world" lifts up inferior Brown people of "underdeveloped world." I absorbed these messages, which created a false sense of superiority in me and I carried this false sense of superiority into my interactions with Marshallese people. When I arrived in the Marshall Islands, I unconsciously viewed myself as more educated and thought that I could "help these poor uneducated people lift themselves up." With every day that I spent in the Marshall Islands and every embarrassing and/or humiliating moment I had as a Peace Corps volunteer, I gained an awareness of the insidiousness of racism and how I'd internalized racism. Despite a false sense of superiority that I carried, Marshallese people were gracious. I was the recipient of their teaching, kindness, and compassion. My relationships with Marshallese people assisted me in recovering a part of my humanity I had not known I had lost.

While living in the Marshall Islands I learned about colonization intellectually and emotionally. When I returned to the United States, I began connecting the colonization I viscerally experienced in the Marshall Islands with the racism that People of Color, historically and presently, suffer in the United States. While in the Marshall Islands I had the time and space to heal the psychic region in me that felt estranged from "racially proscribed others," but at the same time had develop intense anger at my "white community for preventing the positive feelings toward the forbidden "other" from being expressed." (Thandeka, 1999, p. 25)

Drawing Three—Internalized Racism

To depict messages I've received about racial/ethnic groups different from my own, in the third quadrant of the paper I sketched a picture of a man and a woman tenuously holding one another's hands with another woman drawn standing on the hands. The man in the picture represents an Iranian man who I dated several times while in college. The woman in the picture holding his hand represented me. And the woman standing on the hands represented my mom. When I shared with my mom that I was dating a man from Iran, she responded, "Be careful, Deb. I just read a story in the paper of an American woman who had married a man from the Middle East. She wanted to get out of the marriage and when she tried to leave him and return to the United States, he kept her against her will." The man from Iran and I dated for a short time. I stopped dating him, because I felt pressure from him to have a sexual relationship, a pressure I've also experienced with a number of White men.

I have had friendships and intimate relationships with Men of Color, but despite these relationships I still struggle with stereotypical thoughts based in fear about some Men of Color, who I don't know. I chose this story because it's an example of how I have received false racialized messages that Men of Color are unsafe. As a woman living in a sexist society, I am concerned about my safety with all men who I don't know. As a White woman from a middle- to upper-class background, however, I have found (and will continue to find) myself in situations in which I simultaneously struggle with my subordinate identity as a woman and my dominant identities based in race and class, feeling concern about my safety and well being while at the same time

knowing that if I actively move myself from the path of a Man of Color that I may be acting from internalized racism and may not be acknowledging his complete humanity and sense of dignity.

Drawing Four—Witnessing Racism

In the fourth quadrant of the paper, I sketched an elderly bald man smoking a pipe and sitting in a lounge chair with a cartoon bubble that said "Oh, those #$%^&, you can't trust them. You never know what they're up to…" to illustrate how I witnessed racism in my family. The #$%^& in the picture represented the cruel things that used to come from my grandfather's mouth.

One summer, when I was thirteen and visiting my grandparents, my mom, dad, grandmother, grandfather and I were sitting on the porch and my grandfather in a light-hearted tone of voice used the "n-word" to refer to African American people. My parents had talked to me about the violence of the word when David and Darryl's family moved into our neighborhood, but they didn't say anything to my grandfather in that moment, nor did my grandmother respond. Nobody responded. Later, my parents pulled me aside regarding my grandfather's racism and said, "Even though your grandfather used that word, it is unacceptable for you or anyone else to use. It's very hurtful."

Many years later, in 2004, I went with my partner to visit my grandfather who lived in a nursing home. He had been diagnosed with dementia or possibly Alzheimer's and was too challenging—emotionally unpredictable and at times physically violent—for my grandmother to care for by herself.

When we arrived at the nursing home I noticed that most of the people caring for him were African American women. I was concerned that he had verbally abused them and was anxious that he would say something verbally abusive while I was visiting him. I hadn't seen my grandfather in a couple of years, and I'm not sure that he recognized who I was. I went with him to physical therapy where an Asian American woman supported him in moving through his exercises. She was kind to my grandfather and had a very playful, yet firm way of working with him. My grandfather said nothing ugly to her and I was relieved. After physical therapy, my grandfather, my partner and I went to eat lunch in the cafeteria. After we sat down at a table one of the nurses pushing a man using a wheelchair came over to our table and asked if we wouldn't mind if he joined us since we had an extra seat at our table. My partner and I said yes, and then we introduced ourselves and my grandfather to the man who had just joined us. I don't remember his name now, but I wondered if he was Jewish after hearing his last name. I again felt anxious that my grandfather might say something anti-semitic to the man who had just joined us if he heard his last name. Through most of lunch my grandfather said nothing, and then in the clearest voice I'd heard from him since I'd been with him that day he sarcastically said, "Great, now all we need is a rabbi too." My partner and I looked at each other in disbelief. I then looked at the man who had joined us, hoping that he was hard of hearing and had missed what my grandfather had said. I don't know if he heard my grandfather, but even if he didn't, what is important to note is that I didn't say anything to my grandfather just as my parents and grandmother hadn't years ago out on the porch in one of my first moments of witnessing racism.

I shared these stories about my grandfather because they represent some of my earliest experiences of witnessing racism, which was a part of my family experience and has been a source of shame in me. I have difficulty reconciling my feelings about my grandfather. I was my grandfather's first grandchild and I believe I held a special place in his heart. I have very strong memories of feeling loved and comforted by him. As a child, I always snuggled into his lap or right next to him whenever he sat down in his brown, velvet lounge chair, and I found comfort in the smell of the cherry smoke from his pipe, the sound of his voice, his laughter and his singing. My grandfather was very capable of loving.

My grandfather was also very capable of unkindness and cruelty through his words and actions with his own children, his wife, and his sons and daughter's in law. And, if he was capable of being unkind and cruel with his family, then what would prevent him from being cruel to a human being or a group of people he had no relationship with? In my recollection, there was nothing that could prevent this kind of cruelty. Without a moment's hesitation or remorse he used racist and anti-semitic language. In reflecting, what I find disturbing is that while he used this violent language, his tone of voice was light and sort of playful, as if it was just absolutely natural to refer to African Americans as "niggers," Jewish people as "kykes," Chinese people as "chinks," and Japanese people as "nips."

I am grateful that my parents talked to me about how the racist language that my grandfather used was hurtful and unacceptable. And as I look back on those moments when my grandfather made a racist comment or a joke, I wonder why my grandmother, parents, or I did not question or challenge

him, because in those moments when we allowed my grandfather to degrade the humanity of others, we also allowed him to wound our humanity and continue to wound his own. My grandmother and parents had learned to be silent in the presence of my grandfather's racism and as a child I learned to not question or challenge my grandfather when he was cruel or unkind. We had tacitly learned one of the rules of whiteness—silence in the presence of racism.

The Costs of White Shame

After I completed my drawings, I silently waited until it was time for us to move into our small groups. When everyone was finished with their drawings, the facilitator announced, "Okay, everyone, please get into your small groups. Share your drawings with one another. Discuss them with one another. Ask one another questions. You have one hour, then we'll break for lunch. After lunch we'll get into our intraracial groups."

I stood up, holding my large sheet of paper with my four red, stick figure drawings and I walked over to my group and sat down. My group included an African American woman, an African American man, a Biracial woman, and a White man. My memories of the details of our group's dialogue are incomplete; however, my memory of my emotional experience in the group is very clear. When I sat down, I was quiet, felt awkward, and was fairly consumed with shame about the meaning of my red, stick figure drawings depicting how I had colluded with racism, the impacts of racism on my life, racism I had witnessed, and messages I had received about my race/ethnicity. I wondered who would go first, knowing that I didn't want it to be me.

The White man in our group cried as he shared his drawing and talked about his father's racism. Then the African American man in the group shared how he had been taught by members of his family to not trust White people. The biracial woman in our group described feeling pushed and pulled by racism in her life experiences. And the African American woman in the group shared her story, which left a very strong imprint in my memory in terms of images, of the messages she'd received about her race. She was a little girl, maybe eight or nine. She'd gone to the mall with her family. In the mall there was a play area with a tent that was filled with about a foot of purple balls for children to play in. She asked her mom if she could go play in the tent with the other children and her mom said yes. Describing her experience in the tent she said, "I went into the tent and started running and playing in the purple balls. And then a little white girl saw me and said, 'Eeeeew mommy! A Black girl.' She ran out of the tent. I just sat there in the purple balls.'" I was flooded with shame and anxious about sharing my four drawings, so when the African American woman in our group shared this story, I barely heard her.

I then shared my four drawings. When I started to tell the story about my grandfather I started to cry tears that came from a very old place in me. As I moved into the story about egging David and Darryl's house, how I had colluded with racism, the old, deep tears continued. By the time I'd finished describing all four pictures, I had stopped crying. I felt exposed, vulnerable, exhausted, and relieved. I hadn't been annihilated by sharing the most unlovable parts of myself. The African American man in the group gently said, "You were a kid. You didn't know any better." I felt my sense of relief deepen and appreciated his kindness.

After we shared the stories of our drawings, we were silent with one another. In that silence I thought about how gracious the People of Color in my group were after I shared stories of how I'd lived racism. As my emotions settled and my shame subsided I was then able to be present to others in the group again and wondered what it had been like for People of Color in my group to listen to the stories I shared. I then asked, "For the People of Color in the group, what was it like for you to hear the stories I shared?" There was a short silence and then the African American woman in the group said, "Not to be mean, but I wasn't surprised by what you shared." "How could her honesty be mean?" I thought to myself. She then said, "Quite frankly, you're here. I know you're hearing me. But you're not listening to me."

I like to think of myself as a good listener, so my first inclination was to defend myself. Instead of defending myself, I decided to listen to what she had just said to me. And it was in that moment when I decided not to defend myself that I knew she was right. When she shared that a little white girl had run from her screaming "Eeeew mommy! A Black girl" I was so flooded with white shame from my own stories that I was not able to be completely present to her experience of racism and her suffering. And it was in that moment that it became vividly clear for me how my chronic unacknowledged experience of shame about being white interferes with my ability to be present and authentic with People of Color. I had heard the African American woman in our group, but I was not emotionally present to her story. I was too immersed in my own feelings of being unlovable to be present to her suffering.

In another meeting in our small, interracial group, I sought validation from the African American woman regarding how I had responded to a White woman, who in response to learning that I was attending a racial justice training said, "That's interesting. You know, Black people are just as racist as White people. There's a lot of 'reverse racism.'" My response had been, "I hope you spend some more time learning about racism. You may begin to feel differently about your experience that you've described as 'reverse racism.'" I often question if I've done or said enough to interrupt racism and in my interaction with this White woman, I had questioned whether I'd said or done enough. When we met in our small, interracial group, I had shared the story with the African American woman from the group and asked her if she thought I had done enough. I sensed tension surface in her body, but despite the tension I sensed, with the steadiest voice, she said to me, "I think you know the answer to that better than I do." She had created boundary for herself so that she wasn't in a position of having to tell me that I was a good enough white person. This story exemplifies how my unhealed white shame and guilt not only impeded my sense of self worth, but also has the potential to psychically deplete a Person of Color. Holzman (1995) described how guilt impeded her constructive work around racism as a White woman in the following excerpt:

> I will have difficulty moving past guilt to constructive work if I am using my guilt to persuade myself that I am a good person (Lewis, p. 44), or to elicit sympathy, or to ward off anticipated attack by others. All of these shift the focus from examining racism to taking care of me. They are especially damaging in settings where there are women of color present and I turn to them to comfort me and relieve me of my guilt by forgiving me (Pheterson, 1986; Root, 1989). Although comforting words and

> expressions of forgiveness may be temporarily soothing, the
> only lasting way to be free of rational guilt is to make
> reparation. (p. 327)

The African American woman from my interracial group, by drawing a strong boundary in which she was not in a position of having to "relieve me of my guilt by forgiving me" and reassuring me, very succinctly conveyed Holzman's (1995) insight that the "only lasting way to be free of rational guilt is to make reparation" (p. 327).

Prior to my experience at the racial justice training, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, I had an intellectual understanding of white shame and guilt, but had not developed an emotional understanding of how white shame limits authentic relationships with my self and others. At the racial justice training I realized the four stories that I shared all carried white shame and interfered with my ability to build relationships with People of Color and White people.

Regarding the psychic dimension of the non-white zone, Thandeka (1999) writes that "in the face of adult silence to racial abuse, the child learns to silence and then deny its own resonant feelings toward racially proscribed others, not because it chooses to become white, but because it wishes to remain within the community that is quite literally its life" (p. 24). The cumulative impact for an individual who from childhood has learned to set aside his or her "own resonant feelings toward racially proscribed others" is "an incremental loss of feeling" and "restraint from moral action" when confronted with racism. Psychically, the non-white zone manifests as anxiousness and avoidance in White people about naming race and racism

and an inability to express anger, sorrow, and discontent about the structural arrangement of race in the United States. Thandeka argues that White passivity when confronted with racism has its early roots in fear, which gradually develops into antipathy as the child learns to set aside feelings of love for racial others and begins to internalize negative attitudes and values of his or her white community about racial others.

Thandeka (1999) in the chapter "Abuse" of *Learning To Be White* discusses the "incremental loss of feeling" that White people undergo as they are taught about the rules whiteness (silence about injustice and set aside their desire for connection and relationship with People of Color) so as not to risk abandonment within their white communities. According to Thandeka, "restraint from moral action" accompanies this "incremental loss of feeling" (p. 25). White people learn to stop naming and feeling the suffering caused by racism, and instead set up systems of denial about the existence of racism and the suffering it causes, blaming People of Color for the suffering they experience. This system of silence, denial and blame maintains and perpetuates the white dominance, which is at the source of suffering for People of Color, and it represents a loss of humanity among White people.

HEALING

In this section I will describe intellectual and emotional processes of healing the grief and white shame I felt as I learned about racism and whiteness. To recover my sense of humanity, I sought concrete hope (stories of individuals and communities transforming suffering), pursued counseling to focus both on my personal history and my lived experience of whiteness, and began

recovering my sense of moral action. Disrupting the silence around whiteness, that is telling and retelling my stories that carried white shame, to other White people diffused white shame and led to the growth of compassion in me, which allowed me to genuinely reflect on how I may be thinking, feeling, and acting in ways that perpetuate white dominance. As well, I will discuss how the establishment of authentic relationships with People of Color and White people and self nurturance through time spent reconnecting with landscapes, yoga, and poetry offered me a sense of peace.

Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Mary Oliver

What happened to the despair and white shame that I described in the first two sections of this chapter? How did I transform the despair I felt about the existence of racism and the suffering it has caused and still causes People of Color to hope, and the white shame I felt about myself to compassion for me and other White people? I will address these questions in this section.

Recovering Spirituality and Hope

Earlier in this chapter I described the despair that I felt the more I learned about the depth of the oppression of racism on the lives of People of Color. I felt psychically exhausted and as I wrote in a journal I was "unable to stay ahead of the despair of it," which I interpreted as an attempt to avoid feeling my sense of despair. And I felt powerless, believing that there was nothing that I could do that would ever be enough to end all the suffering that I had grown aware of through my experiences in the Republic of the Marshall Islands with Peace Corps and the Micronesia South Pacific Program, research in Kenya, my work on the Diversity @ OSU website, and my day-to-day life. I realized that feeling despair about the world in which I live exhausted me and that I needed to seek a shift in my orientation to the world if I planned to be involved with social justice education for the long term. I decided to pursue the meaning of hope, a term that I had felt quite cynical about, and to seek beauty through directing my attention to how people and communities transform suffering to alleviate my sense of despair. In November 2002, almost two years after beginning work on the Diversity @ OSU website I wrote in a research journal that I recognized the importance of shifting my orientation to the suffering in the world from despair to hope:

I'm not sure where I am after reading *Pedagogy of Hope* (1995*). I am in the process of inventing concrete hope. I feel that I have a fairly deep awareness of how the world does not work. I know how it's wrong, and I think now I need to know how it's right—the invention of concrete hope. I want to be in a different position with the information that I ingest. I feel as if I have been absorbing the ugliness of it all. I can not absorb anything else. I need to feel as if I'm doing something meaningful—transformative…Something that allows room for my own transformation and creates space for others to transform. (Research journal, November 2002)

Through participation the Native Philosophies class, while I did experience an upwelling of grief, I also found solace, gentleness, and peace in the writing of Native philosophers, in particular Linda Hogan who authored *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Natural World* (1995). Her writing invited me to slow down and attune to the mystery and beauty of the natural world that resides in the seemingly smallest of moments. Regarding her work, I wrote:

I've found Linda Hogan through her writing and her presence in class to be very healing. Linda Hogan has shared her awe and reverence for the natural world and the knowledge it contains. She read poetry—Gentling the Human, Children of the Light, and Dimensions and talked about the things necessary to gentle the human—heart, spirit, secret, mystery, and the deeply hidden. She told a story of finding a jellyfish on the sand that was drying up and how when she returned it to the water it pulsed with life. The singular intelligence of schools of fish and flocks of geese inspire awe in her. Her description of the porcupine in *Dwellings* is gorgeous: "She has grown and walks and lives and continues, red blood pulsing through her heart and arteries, the red muscle lying over and upon itself, the organs so perfect inside, the air passing in and out as she breathes" (p. 145). She [Linda Hogan] likes to observe ants even though it's not considered "productive" time. I loved what she said related to her observation, "See

what ant knowledge is…they're really smart." I am learning to experience the world in this way—to slow down and observe what is extraordinary. I spent last summer paying close attention to a poppy plant in my yard. Almost every morning for about two weeks I would open my door and see flowers of fiery orange that had exploded into the world. I would take my coffee, sit next to the plant, and just watch it. I loved checking the buds to see which one might explode next. It seemed like so much of the plant's energy went into the explosion. The flowers lived for a short and brilliant time. (Research journal, December 2002)

Her writing opened up a part of me that had been mostly closed—an awareness of mystery and beauty and my spirituality and sense of hope. Though the Native Philosophies class, I began to make sense of what I had learned about myself while living in the Republic of the Marshall Islands—how, in addition to learning about the depths of white supremacy, I had realized a severed connection between myself and the land and people who I had perceived as the Other. In a personal essay, I wrote the following about the effect of Linda Hogan's writing on my growth:

> In *Dwellings,* she [Linda Hogan] wrote about the estrangement, emptiness, and loneliness that we experience in this culture because our connection between ourselves and the land and water has been severed. This excerpt from Dwellings is powerful: "Emptiness and estrangement are deep wounds, strongly felt in the present time. We have been split from what we could nurture, what could fill us. And we have been wounded by a dominating culture that has feared and hated the natural world, has not listened to the voice of the land, has not believed in the inner worlds of human dreaming and intuition, all things that have guided indigenous people since time stood up in the east and walked this world into existence, split form the connection between self and the land." Living in the Marshall Islands for a year on a remote island taught me

about how estranged I had become. I'm grateful for the time I spent there healing the parts of myself that had been severed. And I am in the process of restoring the connection between myself and the land and water. I'm trying to live in a way that does not feel fragmented. In class, Linda Hogan said that she writes because of her desire to share indigenous consciousness. She also loves writing and said that her writing is a way of learning, because "you're always ahead of your own mind." Her writing about indigenous consciousness in *Dwellings* reassures and guides me and provides me with a sense of hope. (Personal essay, December, 2002)

One of the most profound moments in my search for concrete hope, occurred while I was visiting Martin Luther King Elementary School in Northeast Portland in 2003. The experience affected me so powerfully that I began exploring the possibility of studying hope for my dissertation. In the excerpt below from a literature review on hope I shared the story of visiting Martin Luther King Elementary School and how my visit had been an antidote to the despair I had been feeling:

> Last September I'd arrived in a place in which I felt overwhelmed by sadness and fear, and I knew it was related to the content of my work. I was trying to find my way through what felt like despair. It was at that time that I recognized the necessity of inventing concrete hope. An experience at Martin Luther King School several months ago while assisting my major professor with a group of pre-service teachers brought me further along in understanding the concrete hope I was longing for.
>
> I visited Martin Luther King School last October to assist my major professor with a cohort of pre-service teachers. During the day I had time to visit in one of the teachers' classrooms. The teacher was white and was teaching in a classroom of children who were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

I spent a half hour in her room. The class was writing about their favorite color, what they liked to do, what they didn't like to do, who they loved, what they were scared of. As I was getting ready to leave the classroom, the teacher asked me if I'd noticed that the children were studying the poem "Today I think I'll Echo the Beauty of the Sun" written by Dr. Michael Ingram (2000) an African American professor and poet at Oregon State University. I hadn't noticed. The next thing I know, the teacher had asked the entire class to stand up and recite the poem, which reads:

Today I Think I'll Echo

Today
I think that I'll echo the beauty of the sun,
because like the sun, I plan to rise up and greet the morn
with dazzling brilliance that can't be denied
and majesty so great that the world can't hide.
So, today,
I think that I'll echo the beauty of the sun,
and then
I think that I'll echo the song of the birds,
because like the birds, I plan to sing a song so loud
that the sound of my own voice is carried across nations
and the power of my words will lift like the thunder
that began life's creation.

So, today,
I think that I'll echo the color of the grass,
because like the grass my color is rich.
So rich that the weeds can't even touch me.
Their poisonous lies and century old indignation can't
destroy me,
because like the grass,
you might step on me,
cut me,
cause me to fall,
but, just give me a minute
and I'll come back and stand up just as tall!

As the children were reciting the poem, I felt my chest tighten, and by the time the children were done reading, I could not hold back my tears. I felt awkward and embarrassed, but managed to tell them how I'd never had such a more lovely moment with poetry. The teacher then asked, "Class, are Ms. Burke's tears, tears of joy or tears of sorrow?" "They're tears of joy!" they yelled.

Children are wise.

I spent weeks revisiting and sorting through why I had been so powerfully affected by the children's poetry reading. The following excerpt from the paper "From Cruelty to Goodness" assisted me in beginning to understand the power of that experience and what my tears had meant that day: "Tears themselves interest me greatly—but not the tears of melancholy hindsight and existential despair; rather the tears of awe you experience when the realization of an ideal suddenly appears before your very eyes or thunders inside your mind; these tears interest me" (Hallie, 1993, p.5).

For me, the children reciting "Today I Think I'll Echo the Beauty of the Sun" embodied goodness in opposition to the cruelty of racism. Realistic hope resided in that moment for me. (Paper titled *Literature Review: Hope within the Context of Education and in Relation to Oppression*, March 2003)

Counseling

In addition to seeking concrete hope—goodness in opposition to the cruelty or racism—I sought counseling in an effort to sort out how my personal history may get tangled with my work related to social justice education. Segrest (2001) critiques therapeutic practice that focuses entirely on healing the individual as he or she participates in his or her family system without attending to the structural inequalities that may cause individuals, families,

and communities to suffer. When therapeutic practice focuses solely on the individual, structural inequalities go unnamed, while nonetheless, contributing to depression and pain.. The individual is partially healed, but society is not. According to Segrest, the depoliticization of therapeutic practice has insulated White people from grasping the psychic costs of racism. Regarding the failure of therapeutic practice, Segrest writes:

> The failure of therapy to take into account the political causes of personal and family distress is another factor that insulates white people from realizing the damage we suffer from racism and therefore from realizing our own stake in changing racist systems for ourselves, as well as people of color. (p. 44)

How have I realized the damage I've suffered and my "stake in changing racist systems" for myself and People of Color? The following journal entry, which I wrote for the course Multicultural Issues in Education, indicates that I struggled with the pain I felt about violence in the world; structural inequalities that privileged me as a white person; the dynamics of my family system; and the interplay of these three realms on my experience.

Journal #1: Privilege and the Luxury of Despair

> I have so much thought and feeling circulating through my system. I am unsure where to begin. I think I'll begin with the counseling appointment I just left. I began counseling because of feeling a chronic sense of isolation and loneliness. I have also been struggling with finding what is hopeful in this world. I think this experience has been more intensified over the last six months. I think the bombings of September 11 have influenced how I'm feeling. I think working on the Diversity at OSU Web site has influenced how I'm feeling. I think my history influences me. I think my family and friends have influenced

me. I think my temperament influences me. I know my race, class, and gender influence how I perceive the world and my experiences in this world. I think that it's impossible to identify all of the causal factors that make me the woman I am...I talked about my experiences with my father today in counseling and how it is connected to who I am and how I respond to my work on issues associated with diversity on campus. It's all connected and complex and I love the connections and complexity of it.

My dad grew up with a mother and father who were alcoholics. I just recently visited my dad and his wife Dee in Florida after not seeing them for about two years. During those two years we only had a handful of conversations. My grandparents (on my dad's side) also live in Florida. (My grandparents on my mother's side had both died by the time I'd reached eighth grade.) So I arrived in Florida and consequently felt as if I were a guest in my father's home. That is another story in itself. While I was in Florida I ended up asking my father about what he remembered of my grandfather's alcoholism. "I remember my father's drinking up until the day I left home when I was 19. His drinking was at its worst through high school," he responded. "Every night when he came home he was drunk. He couldn't walk. I remember him crawling up the front steps," he continued. "What was he like when he was drunk?" I then asked. "Unpredictable. Controlling." I said nothing and waited to see if there was more. "I remember one night getting ready to go out with some of my friends. I walked by my father and he told me to tuck in my shirttail. Nobody at that time was tucking in their shirttails and I said, 'Oh come on, dad.' He responded with 'You're not leaving this house until your shirt's tucked in.' So, I tucked in my shirt when I left the house, but then as soon as I walked out the door I untucked my shirt…I remember coming home one night, and I'd been drinking. Your grandfather had smelled it on my breath. I was in the bathroom sitting on the toilet. He came into the bathroom, lifted me off the toilet by my neck, and punched me in the face. He broke open my lip…If I did something he didn't like, he'd tell me to go upstairs, pull down

my pants, and wait for him with the belt. During counseling I came to understand the humiliation I experienced."

I shared this exchange with my counselor today and cried for the first time since my dad had shared it with me. She asked me where my sadness came from. I believe that much of it had to do with hearing my dad share that he'd been hurt in that way. I think that may have been the first time that he's shared that part of himself with me, although I've known for quite some time that there's a history of alcoholism on my dad's side of the family. I also cried because as he told me that story I understood why he'd been so difficult to access emotionally my entire life. I'd always believed it had something to do with me. Intellectually, I'd understood the effects of the alcoholism, but today when I shared the story in my counseling session I understood at my core how alcoholism had affected us both. I wished that I'd understood and forgiven him sooner. "What was going on for your father when he told you that?" asked my counselor. "He was very matter-of-fact sounding; if he was feeling anything I couldn't see it." I shared with her that I'd always been "the feeling one" in my family and that sometimes I felt as if I was not only experiencing my own feelings, but also the feelings of the rest of my family. I've noticed that I've brought this way of being, pain absorption, into the work I do on campus on diversity issues. And I'm recognizing that this way of being has taken its toll on me psychically. It's not good for me or my relationships. Several days after this conversation with my counselor, I visited the Oregon State Penitentiary with the Dean of Students, the Director of Student Involvement, and two students from the Black Poet's Society. We spent the evening with a group of African American men who are inmates. It was an extraordinary evening of poetry. I listened to the poets' share pieces of their lives. They wrote about the oppression of Black Men in the United States. They wrote about women and children they loved and missed. They wrote about hope for their lives when they got out. They wrote about their mistakes. They wrote about God. They wrote about wanting love and intimacy. They wrote about starting over, second chances, meditation, and introspection. At some point during all this I could feel myself moving into my way of being—

sinking into despair about the suffering of the men at OSP. My conditioning emerged and I began to focus on the suffering of all the African American men in the room and could feel myself sliding into hopelessness among a group of men, some of whom seemed inspired and hopeful about the possibilities of their lives despite their experience of being at OSP. Nonetheless, I was going to experience their suffering just as I had done as "the feeling one" in my family.

Victor Lewis, who was in the documentary "The Color of Fear," said in a workshop at the Oregon Diversity Institute something to the effect of: "Pay attention to your despair. It probably tells you more about the conditions in which you were raised than what is happening in the present moment." Victor's comment and my conversation with my counselor flickered in my consciousness and I noticed what was happening in me while at OSP. Part of my white privilege and class privilege I think involves having the space or luxury to indulge in someone else's despair. When I noticed myself heading off on an old and familiar emotional trajectory that really didn't feel quite right, I made a decision to explore a new trajectory in terms of being. Why did I want to go to despair about the experience of the African American men at OSP? I think it had something to do with recognizing the distance between our worlds. From listening to their poetry, it seemed that we had lived very different histories. And in that moment it was clear to me that we were living very different lives. Somehow I thought feeling what I perceived to be their pain would bring me closer to who they were rather than acknowledging the distance I recognized. At the same time, though, we were all in this room together experiencing poetry and this is what I chose to orient to—our connection at least for this evening. I was inspired by their depth and creativity. There were moments when a poet's words resonated with me. And sometimes when I was in those moments I'd hear some of the men responding to the words in a way that made me think that the words resonated with them too. For a short moment I felt less distance. And I am grateful. (Multicultural Issues in Education Journal #1, June 2002)

In this journal entry, I realized that I had projected the despair I felt from my personal history on to the lives of the African American men at OSP and that my projection of despair about my personal history almost interfered with my ability to be present to the beauty and strength of the African American men I was with. I also recognized the race and class privilege associated with "indulging in someone else's despair."

Segrest (2001) suggests that another cost of racism for White people is the development of an affective void, a disowning of one's feelings and denial about the pain People of Color experience associated with racism. Regarding the "affective void," Segrest writes:

> The affective void from which feelings and perceptions have been blocked into oneself and cast onto Others is the psychological space from which whiteness and maleness have mobilized throughout their histories…This void both justifies racist exploitation (by projecting onto the exploited all the cast-off fearsome and evil feelings of the exploiter—Freud's projection) and holds in its place (the exploiter cannot then feel the violence of his acts, because he cannot feel—Hughes's anesthesia). (p. 59)

Regarding how my individual therapeutic work opened up the space in me to be present to the suffering caused by racism I wrote:

> Somehow the process of healing my family history is connected with all of this. Without having begun the process of healing my history, I would not have been able to look at larger social issues—oppression. I keep thinking about my epistemological disclosure, in which I wrote a number of times how sick our culture is—a culture of domination that has severed us from ourselves and one another and the places we live. I need to

> look back through all the essays I wrote in Ethnic Studies and Philosophy. I processed a lot of grief related to the Marshall Islands and struggled with my spiritual self—my metaphysical life. (Writing journal, October 2006)

Through therapy I recovered my ability to be present to my own suffering and the suffering of others. I also came to realize that the sickness I focused on regarding "our culture" which meant White culture, hence I began to recognize that the sickness resided in me. I felt a great deal of grief about how whiteness had harmed others and how it had psychically harmed me.

In my writing journal, I reflected on how my family history was related to my experience of an "affective void" and the uncertainty I felt when I began the process of shifting away from living in an "affective void" and recovering my sense of feeling:

> What are the legacies I carry from my family? Alcoholism, abuse (emotional and physical), shame…I spent a lot of time as a kid and as an adult struggling with not feeling like enough. Segrest (2001, pp. 55-57) discusses the loss of feeling in White people that is inevitable when we are caught up in relations of dominance. She describes a loss of "oceanic" feeling, connection to the external world. Through counseling, but more importantly through my time in the Marshall Islands, I feel like I have begun to recover a lost "oceanic" feeling. I felt most authentic and whole when I lived in the Marshall Islands, in Kenya…In those places had I been able to reestablish my connection to the "oceanic" world. I had been able to break through the insulation of privilege. When the U.S. bombed Iraq the first time, I remember how deeply I felt grief. I remember people questioning why I felt grief so intensely and attempting to explain a feeling of closeness to people in Iraq even though I hadn't been there, because of my experience and time with Marshallese people…Segrest names why I do what I do—I'm

> trying to recover my own humanity, to recover my "oceanic"
> sense of interconnectedness. (Writing journal, October 2006)

Recovering Sense of Moral Action

Grief and moral outrage accompanied my ability to be present to the suffering of others, which made it difficult to remain silent in the presence of racism. Several years ago, while having dinner with my mother and father on 21st Street in Northwest Portland on a warm, summer evening in a predominantly white and affluent section of Portland. We were sitting outside on the sidewalk having dinner with a number of other White diners. White people in nice clothing on their way somewhere had been walking through all of us White people sitting, eating, and drinking outside on the sidewalk. I was enjoying the time with my mother and father and indulging my people watching tendencies when an African American man, who (based on the torn clothes he was wearing and the worn backpacks and black plastic bags he carried) I assumed was homeless, approached the section of sidewalk where all of us White diners were sitting. As the African American man walked through the group he periodically stopped and asked people for change. As the African American man had reached our table, a white man stood up and followed the African American man down the sidewalk yelling, "Get the hell out of here. Keep going. Don't' stop here. Just keep moving!!" The African American man turned to face him and the White man shoved him. At that moment I jumped up and put myself between the White man and the African American man. I could smell alcohol on the breath of the White man. Facing the White man I said, "You need to sit down and leave him alone." The White man in his drunken state was still focused on the

African American man, so I said again in a very calm and firm tone, "You need to sit down and leave him alone." The White man's friend then came over and persuaded him to return to his seat. I then returned to my seat with my mother and father. The African American man then began picking up the bags he had dropped after being shoved by the White man. I think I had been sitting down less than a minute when, again, the White man jumped out of his seat and started running toward the African American man and yelling, "You need to get the hell out of here now!" I jumped up again and placed myself in front of the White man. This time I had to push against him and move to stay in front of him so that he couldn't reach the African American man. While I was trying to keep him separate from the African American man I continued to say to him, "I can't let you do this. You need to go sit down now." His friend came over and I yelled at him, "You need to get control of your friend now." The White man was still focused on the African American man and it was at this point that my mother came running over and joined me, and said, "Listen mister, you need to go sit down right now." Something about my mother's presence and tone of voice deescalated the White man enough that he decided to return to his seat. My mother and I returned to our table. I then looked around at all the White diners. Everyone was still in conversation, sipping wine, and eating their meals as if nothing had happened.

Experiences and moments when I have interrupted racism have allowed me to begin to restore my sense of integrity, because those moments exemplify when my values (nonviolence and truthfulness) are aligned with my actions. Maintaining my sense of integrity has also required that, in addition to interrupting blatant forms of physical and emotional violence, I consistently

interrupt the insidious silences and the violence of language that renders people invisible or less than human without ever using a vicious word. This is where I still am challenged and at times, still silent. And when I am silent I struggle with shame. In the last chapter, Closing Reflections I will discuss strategies I've used to interrupt more subtle or insidious (maybe only to White people) forms of racism.

Transforming Shame to Compassion

Earlier in this chapter, I described my experience at a racial justice training in 2005 when I became conscious that white shame resided at the edges of my consciousness. Through the act of drawing and then discussing my experience of race with others in a small interracial group conversation, the shame that clung to the edges of my consciousness flooded into the center of my awareness and inhibited my ability to be present to the suffering of others in my group, in particular an African American woman who had shared how she had been wounded by racism. I grappled with white shame for almost a year following the racial justice training. In this section I will describe my experience of transforming the white shame I felt to compassion.

As long as structural inequality remains a pervasive aspect of U.S. society, I will be in the process of intellectually and emotionally integrating the psychic impacts of the dominance conferred to Whites as a group and me as a member of that group. Regarding awareness of white dominance and the necessity of White people confronting its reality Hitchcock (2002) writes:

> White innocence is a myth. Our innocence was lost long
> ago…we can only pretend to its restoration. Realists must

admit the only path to the future is through redemption that
comes from dismantling the racial structure of our society as it
exists and creating a society that is centered on multiracial
values. Any pretense to innocence is a narcissistic ploy that
simply delays the hard work before us. The issue before white
Americans is not one of creating innocence, but rather
managing a component of genuine guilt that pervades our
psyche. This guilt is both collective and individual. It can lead
us to denial, to self-flagellation, or to making genuine amends.
(p. 135)

My experience at the racial justice training clearly demolished any mythology
I clung to of white innocence. The intensely authentic interracial and
intraracial dialogues that I participated in opened up my awareness about
white shame I carried, which created the possibility for me to heal more of
my humanity and work against racism from a more authentic self. Following
the racial justice training I struggled a great deal with falling into modes of
self-flagellation; however, through telling and retelling stories that carried a
great deal of shame for me, counseling, and self nurturance through yoga and
poetry, I transformed the shame I felt to compassion, which led to a deeper
sense of self trust that I could make genuine amends to end racism.

Following our small, interracial group meeting when we shared stories of
how we'd experienced racism, we then all met in our intraracial groups. My
group consisted of fifteen White people, all who, like me, would characterize
themselves as White allies and committed to social justice. We all arrived
from our previous interracial, small groups, sat down in a circle, and settled
in for an hour and half discussion about our experiences at the racial justice
training so far and what it means to be white in a racialized society.

There was no possibility in this intraracial group for "any pretense to innocence" about racial inequality and its impact on our white psyches. Our discussion began with the facilitator saying in a firm and gentle tone, "So, let's talk about your drawings. What came up for you?" I felt my shame well up again about my drawings and decided to immediately share my story about how I had colluded with racism, egging David and Darryl's house, the story which had the strongest emotional charge for me. After I shared the story, there was silence and I wondered what was going on in people's minds. I again felt exposed and vulnerable; I had just shared a story that I believed made me unlovable and unworthy of being a White ally.

Then one of the White men in the group responded, "That may as well have been me." And in the next moment several other White men and women echoed similar sentiments, "Yea, it could have been me too." Then others in the group shared how they had colluded with racism. One White woman shared that as a residence assistant she had called campus police because a group of African American men were hanging out on a porch of a residence hall one weekend. The woman described how she had responded to the stereotypical messages she had received about African American men being dangerous and had called campus police despite the fact that the African American men were merely gathered in a group on the porch. Regarding internalized messages about her race, another woman, while unconsciously trying to rub her white skin from her arms, described feeling shame about being white. Her parents were anti-racist activists and were vocal with her when she was a child about the outrage they felt about the violence White people had inflicted on People of Color. Her awareness of a long history of white violence had caused her to feel ashamed of her white skin. Our group

spent two hours talking about what we carried in us about our whiteness, and I was struck by the depth of loss and shame that we felt.

According to Thandeka (1999), White is the "great unsaid" and to name or question the great unsaid in the presence of other White people violates the rules of white discourse (p. 3). This "self-silencing" comes up for White people within their own racial communities (p. 9). Fear of abandonment or loss of affection by White friends, family, and colleagues interferes with a White individual's willingness to confront and/or violate the rules of white discourse. Consequently, White people are often silent about racism and naming whiteness, which Thandeka asserts leads to a loss of self-respect and a sense of moral failure.

At the beginning of our intraracial group meeting, at my core I was afraid that I would be abandoned by my White colleagues at the training. I thought that I was the only person who had such hideous stories to share about how I had lived racism and that other White allies in the group most likely grew up without having colluded with racism or carrying shame or grief about how their souls had internalized racism. Being silent about the shame I was carrying while in my intraracial group would have been easier in the moment, but would not have addressed the psychic weight of white shame that I had been carrying for quite some time, so I shared my story of colluding with racism. Rather than being abandoned by my White colleagues, I felt compassion and support from them.

Through listening to my White colleagues stories, I gained a better understanding of how they had been psychically harmed by racism and

realized that I was not the sole person emotionally grappling with psychic costs of white dominance. I didn't expect to hear as many stories as I did from other White allies about how they had lived racism and the experience confirmed how important it is to interrupt the silence of whiteness. We spent two hours naming the "great unsaid" and violating the "self-silencing" rules of white discourse. Breaking the rules of white discourse created space within our intraracial group for healing and affirmed for me the importance of doing the emotional work of healing white shame for my own psychic well being, which in turn strengthens my ability to be an ally to People of Color.

Kaufman (1992) writes that only through assimilation and transformation of shame is it possible for an individual to develop a "new vision of self" and a "coherent and integrated identity, one that is fundamentally self affirming" (p. xvi). Helms (1990) also expresses this idea of "embracing a new vision of self" in her discussion of the Autonomy stage of white racial identity development. Through my experience at the racial justice training in my intraracial group, I clearly understood the necessity of healing my white shame and cultivating compassion for me and other White people, which is, I believe, essential for developing a healthy white racial identity.

During our intraracial group meetings at the racial justice training, the sole focus of our work involved examining how we had lived our white dominance in our thoughts, feelings, and actions. The process of examining our white dominance entailed reflecting on our lives, recounting stories of how we had intentionally or unintentionally harmed People of Color, and being present to the emotions that surfaced in us and those whom we listened to.

When I returned home, I made a decision to orient myself differently in conversations about race. Rather than assuming an all knowing stance in discussions with others (White people) about race, I decided to speak honestly and vulnerably with other White people about how I have struggled with racialized thinking and white shame. I chose to be forthcoming about the mistakes I have made over my life around race and continue the conversations about white dominance that I had begun at the racial justice training. I decided to name the "great unsaid," discussed by Thandeka (1999)—whiteness—with the White people in my life (e.g., family, friends, and colleagues). I decided to tell and retell my stories about how I have struggled with internalized racism to diffuse the white shame I felt.

I found the process of disrupting silence about whiteness in conversations with White people a compassion producing experience. By talking about how I have internalized racism and worked emotionally and intellectually to undo internalized racism, I noticed that space opened up for White people to speak more honestly and vulnerably about their experience of being White. I experienced love and compassion from the White people I shared my stories with, which strengthened my compassion for those who were vulnerable with me.

I chose to tell and retell the story of egging David and Darryl's home—a story about how I had colluded with racism—to White friends, family, and colleagues, which opened up the space for me to shift from feeling ashamed of who I was to compassionate about how I'd been psychically harmed by whiteness. As discussed in the section on Despair earlier in this chapter, to begin healing the grief I felt around the loss of intimacy and connection with

People of Color, I shared my memory of David and Darryl with my family following a diversity training I attended in 2001. After returning from the racial justice training in 2005, I decided to talk with my mom and her husband again about my memories of David and Darryl and share with them the shame generating story of egging David and Darryl's house. I shared how I had been with a group of White kids on Mischief Night and had soaped and egged David and Darryl's house. "You didn't really do that did you, Deb?" my mom asked with disbelief and disappointment in her voice when I told her the story. I said, "I did." She then asked, "Did you realize what you were doing?" and I replied, "On some level I did. I felt a great deal of shame when I shared the story at the racial justice training and I'm still feeling ashamed." My mom said softly, "You didn't know any better, Deb. You were a kid," and then my mom's husband gently said, "Don't try to make her feel better about it. Let her feel what she's feeling." I appreciated him allowing me the space to feel shame without any attempts to reshape the story or fix the shame I felt about the incident. Kaufman (1992) writes that in order to support the healing of a person who is feeling shame it is important to validate their experience of shame rather than deny the reality of his or her experience of shame. While the desire to deny the reality of a person's experience of shame may originate from love and wanting the person to feel good about his or her self, denial of the person's experience may lead the person to feel shame about feeling shame. According to Kaufman, in relationships, shame must not be avoided or denied. An individual's experience of shame must be acknowledged, so that the individual may either restore and/or deepen trust with another, thus disrupting the sense of isolation, which accompanies and maintains shame. Whether or not my parents realized it, that evening through their

compassionate listening and validation of my experience of shame, they had been active in the process of my healing.

After sharing the story with my parents, several weeks later I shared the story of egging David and Darryl's home with my partner on a weekend morning. I worried that this would be the story that made me unlovable to my partner. He was quiet after I shared the story. After maybe a minute, which seemed much longer, I asked, "So what are you thinking?" He said, "Do you remember my friend Lewis, the Black kid that lived down the street from me in Ohio?" You two used to throw flower pots at each other's head and play chicken on your bikes, right?" I asked. "Yea, that's him." He paused and then said, "I was in third grade and a White kid from my class had come over to play with me. My teacher thought it would be good for us to play together because we were both kind of bookish. I didn't really like him though. The kid wanted to pull some sort of prank, by making a structure out of popsicle sticks, putting a candle in it and leaving it on someone's porch…Maybe the structure was a cross…I'm not sure. I don't remember what it was. If it was a cross, I didn't know what it meant in third grade. I'm pretty sure it wasn't a cross. Anyway, it was a structure that involved a candle, and we decided to put it on Lewis' porch. We snuck up to his house and left the structure with a lit candle sticking out of it on the porch, rang the doorbell, and ran." My partner paused in the story and we were silent for awhile. At the same moment that I my partner's remorse welling about the story he just shared, he said, "I don't know how that prank affected Lewis' family. What if they thought we did it because they were Black and it left them fearful about living in their own neighborhood? What if we introduced a fear in their lives that they've carried for the last 25 years?" He then finished his story, "I

remember Lewis' dad came to our house and talked to my dad about what happened. My dad called me over and asked me if I was involved. I didn't want to get caught and felt ashamed of what I had done, so I said 'no.' I was afraid of disappointing my dad and Lewis' dad." He then, in an attempt to bring levity to our conversation said, "See, you're not the only bad White person in the world."

As my partner, a person who I love for many reasons with one of the most important reasons being his kindness, shared this story that carried white shame, I felt a welling of love for him, because he had been so honest and had allowed himself to be vulnerable. I was also reminded of the stories that the White group shared at the racial justice training that carried shame and felt a combination of sadness about the psychic weight that many White people seem to unknowingly carry and gratitude for my partner and other White people who are willing to be authentic and the psychic costs of whiteness.

I also felt less alone in my process of healing shame, knowing that he and other White people have struggled with similar emotions and felt reassured by the love and support in my relationship and home, which gives me energy to continue the emotional and intellectual work to address internalized racism in me and other White people. This experience with my partner was significant in my process of healing shame. Not only did he validate my experience of shame through listening; he allowed himself to vulnerable as well. Kaufman (1992) discusses the importance of creating relationships that allow space for vulnerability around the parts of the individual's selves that carry shame; this vulnerability allows space for "mutual understanding," which transforms shame.

I also shared my story of egging David and Darryl's house with a White friend who I love dearly, deeply trust, and who teaches me about and supports me a great deal in being a White ally. She responded, "I grew up in an all white neighborhood. If there had been any People of Color in my neighborhood, it's possible I could have done something very similar." She then paused and in a very gentle voice asked, "Do you think that you're judging something that you did as a child with standards for judging adult behavior?" Again, I felt love and compassion about a part of me that I believed was unlovable. My friend also invited me to be forgiving of myself with her question about the adult standards I was using to judge my behavior as a kid. At the time of this conversation, I had told this story to several other people and its emotional charge had diminished enough that I was receptive to beginning the process of forgiveness of myself.

Holzman (1995) discusses the importance of being cognizant of racial group dynamics, knowing when and with whom to process intense feelings of shame and assuming responsibility for finding the people and places in which to heal white shame. I was very cognizant that I needed to find White people who I trusted to listen to the intensity of my feelings of shame and the stories that were at its source and that I did not want to invite People of Color to bear the weight of my white shame. Knowing the importance of being thoughtful about when and with whom to heal the shame of whiteness, I felt very anxious about sharing this chapter with my major professor, an African American woman, because it contained so much information about how I have internalized racism and manifested it in my interactions and relationships with People of Color. I was afraid that what I wrote would restimulate the pain she has experienced from racism and that she would lose

trust in me as White ally, colleague, and friend. Again, I experienced a supportive and compassionate response. She also shared another perspective about how the experience might have been interpreted that would never have crossed my mind.

When I gave my major professor an early draft of this chapter, I felt a great deal of anxiety about the self exposure (shame) involved with this chapter, in particular the story about egging David and Darryl's house. When she and I got together to discuss the chapter, she asked, "What might it have been like for David and Darryl's family if their house had not been egged or soaped on Mischief Night as all the White families' houses had been? What if they had been left out of the "banter" that came with Mischief Night? Is it possible that they could have interpreted being egged as inclusion in the "banter" of Mischief Night? In our conversation, she affirmed the reality of my experience of shame and at the same time invited me to explore different perspectives about the impact that my egging David and Darryl's house may have had. I found her perspective soothing and at the same time was concerned that I would use her perspective to distance myself from the idea that I had colluded with racism. Several months after sharing this story with my major professor, she read the story in one of the early drafts of my white shame chapter and shared more of her thoughts and feelings about this story. In an email she wrote:

> Hum, your story reminds me of the times our house was tp'd
> [toilet paper in trees and around yard]. While tping was
> something that was often done among [my son's] friends, I do
> wonder if other people also had their porch urinated on.

> Because of race, the question comes up for me. (Email
> correspondence, December 2006)

When I read her response to the story, I was grateful for her reminiscence and honesty. I also felt a wave of nausea when I read that her porch had been urinated on. I think the question she posed in her email about the role of race in her story about her porch being urinated on must be acknowledged. Engel (2001), in her chapter "Toward an Antiracist Feminism," reminds White women who want be allies to People of Color to always ask: "Are there racist implications?" (p. 86). In all of the incidents of our home being soaped or tp'd, we never woke up to find that someone had urinated on our porch. A long history of violence associated with white racism leads me to believe that race is significant to my major professor's story. The fact that she has to wonder, I believe points to racist implications. The honesty and openness of my major professor in response this autoethnography and in all of our conversations about race, her invitations to explore multiple perspectives related to the stories I've shared with her, and her generosity and compassion with me has been integral in the process of my healing white shame.

Holzman (1995), a White woman, suggests that there is a productive element regarding guilt and shame so long as the feelings are not excessive and an individual commits to doing the necessary emotional work to diffuse these feelings. She also notes from her experience that she is more receptive to learning when she is treated in a "way that does not generate irrational and overwhelming guilt and shame" (p. 325). What was healing about the process of telling and retelling the story of David and Darryl? Each time I brought stories about my whiteness out into the open I lessened the silence and

emotional intensity of my shame. I also received kindness and compassion from the people with whom I shared this story.

Creating authentic relationships in which race and racism are honestly and openly discussed with People of Color and White people whether in personal or professional realms has been a source of healing for me. I wrote earlier in the chapter about the African American woman in my interracial group at the racial justice training whose truthfulness about her interaction with me alerted me to how my unhealed white shame interfered with my ability to being completely present to the pain she felt and feels from racism. After our interracial group meeting I made a commitment to be present to her experience. Throughout the remainder of the training, I listened to what she said verbally and non-verbally about her experience at the training. I heard her voice shake with frustration when she had to point out to us White people that we were drawing on our privileged position when we said things like, "I know this is important work, but I just don't have time with my busy teaching and research schedule to deal with racism too." Following one segment of the racial justice training when we had met in our intraracial groups and were returning to the large interracial group, I looked for her. Her eyes were red and swollen and she was sitting quietly with her arms folded looking toward the floor. She was in pain. I remained attuned to her for the rest of the training and allowed myself to witness her suffering.

At our final small, interracial group meeting I told her that though I had not been present to her in our first small, interracial group meeting that since then I had been present and witnessed her suffering. I shared that, because of her honesty, I had realized I had not been present to her in our first meeting and

that after that realization I committed myself to staying connected to her experience through the remainder of the training. I shared with her all the ways that she had shown me her suffering whether or not she realized it. I told her that I had seen her red, swollen eyes from crying and her crossed arms that seemed like an attempt to protect her from anymore pain. I told her that I had listened to her stories and heard the intensity of the emotion from her stories that made her voice shake. I told her that I admired her strength and courage to be authentic with our small, interracial group, especially me, and that what she had spoken affected me and mattered to me. I told her that I had learned how my shame got in the way of me being in an authentic relationship with her and I asked her for forgiveness. We then sat and stared intently at each other. She began to cry and so did I. Though my time with the African American woman from my small, interracial group was short, I am grateful for her authenticity and truthfulness. My interactions with her poignantly revealed to me the necessity of me in directing energy into healing my white shame.

Being in the physical presence of People of Color and listening to People of Color soothes me. Seven months following the racial justice training I went to Portland to visit my family. I was relieved to get out of the city I live in, which I perceive as fairly homogeneous—predominantly white and middle-to upper class. I had gone into downtown Portland for a music festival and had taken public transportation. When I got on the train I was instantly comforted by the racial and ethnic diversity of the people on the train. I remember using all of my senses on the train, taking in the experience and feeling intense joy. Later that day, I wrote about the experience in my journal.

…And I don't want the distance from People of Color, because the longer I have the distance, the more I feel that stereotypical thoughts are able to lodge and grow in my mind. I've been living in mostly white Corvallis for too long. It's messing with my head. I rode the train into Portland today and I felt so fucking soothed to be in a train with People of Color. There were three Latino teenagers to my right. One boy kind of chubby with about 2 inches of hair on his head. I mostly remember the diamond stud he was wearing in the cartilage of his ear. I wanted to make a connection with him. Then there was the brown skinned older woman with the service dog. A white poodle with a fluffy tuft of fur on his head and big beautiful white ears. She was caring for a White man who was a little person. He was using a wheel chair. Again, I just wanted to talk with them, feel connected. Bridge the fucking distances. I've been wanting to go to an African American church in Portland. Why? To just be close, at least physically, to learn, to listen, to bridge the fucking distance. (Personal journal, June 2006)

In the chapter, "The Matter of Whiteness" in the book *White*, Dyer (1997) describes a "discourse of white bawdy" that "posits an elemental attraction of some white people to non white people" (p. 6). Dyer suggests that this feeling of "elemental attraction" occurs in sexual relationships and friendships, heightens awareness in white people of the salience of race, and reminds White people that they can never be completely at one with People of Color specifically because they are white.

hooks (1992) provides a deeper analysis of the "discourse of white bawdy" in the chapter "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* and writes that "within the current debates about race and difference, mass culture is the contemporary location that both publicly declares and perpetuates the idea that there is pleasure to be found in the

acknowledgment and enjoyment of racial difference" and terms this phenomenon the "commodification of Otherness" (p. 21). hooks asserts that "ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture" (p. 21) and that the longing or desire for connection with racial Others by White people has its roots in the colonial history of white supremacy. A crisis in identity and fear of the "terrorizing force of the status quo that makes identity fixed, static, a condition of containment and death" (p. 22) generates longing and desire among White people for connection with People of Color; however, asymmetrical relations of power associated with a long history of white domination introduce risks of cultural appropriation, exploitation, and/or White people behaving as tourists in the lives and cultures of People of Color. Regarding the idea of White people as tourists in the lives of People of Color, hooks writes:

> To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other. (p. 23)

hooks (1992) also states that longing or desire in White people for intimate relations with People of Color has the potential to be a "critical intervention challenging and subverting racist domination, inviting and enabling critical resistance" (p. 22), though there must be critical attention to the quality of relationship and the tension that lies "between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation" (p. 39). hooks advises that critical thought and

reflection be given to the ways the desire for pleasure, and that includes erotic longings, informs our politics, our understanding of difference, so that rather than exploiting or appropriating People of Color, "we may know better how desire disrupts, subverts, and makes resistance possible" (p. 39).

Given hooks' (1992) and Dyer's discussion of the "commodification of the other" and the "discourse of white bawdy," respectively, I continually examine and reflect on the motivation of my desire to be in relationship with People of Color. Am I attempting to alleviate feelings of shame about being white? Am I seeking to escape sameness and homogeneity? Am I seeking a relationship from a place of appreciation or am I seeking appropriation? As I seek and form relationships with People of Color I am continually mindful of how internalized whiteness may be affecting the sincerity or authenticity of the content of my interactions with People of Color. I am also aware that when mindfulness shifts to intense self consciousness, that I may need to address underlying white shame, which could potentially undermine creating authentic relationships with People of Color.

Authentic relationships with White people have also provided me with solace. I reduced my sense of loneliness through relationships with other White people who are allies to People of Color and with whom I can talk about race and trust that they will honestly examine their white dominance and challenge me on mine. Following the racial justice training, I and three of my White colleagues from the training decided to get together to support one another in the intellectual and emotional work of examining whiteness in our own lives and being able to name the dominance of whiteness when it comes up in our spheres of influence. After my first meeting with them, I felt relief

that I was able to talk so honestly with them about whiteness. We shared stories of the challenges we had encountered over the five months since the training—moments when we were able to interrupt racialized comments and moments when we were silent. We talked about what got in the way of us using our voices and we attempted to challenge one another to look more honestly at our experiences of being white.

For example, I shared with them the deep disappointment I felt in myself three or four months after the racial justice training after two different experiences with groups of White friends. In the first experience, one of my friends shared of story of being in Indian Princesses with her father. The intent of her story was to convey how the father-daughter experience of Indian Princesses connected her and her father to one another. In her story she shared that when fathers and daughters in Indian Princesses greeted each other, they said, "How, How." I was already struggling with the idea of Indian Princesses and reflecting on the fact that my brother and dad had been in Indian Guides, and felt my stomach muscles tighten, indicating that I couldn't remain quiet. I knew that my friend's intention was to communicate the importance of her relationship with her father, but when she shared the greeting, I awkwardly and less than gracefully responded, "Your greeted one another with 'How-How'? You're not serious are you?" She replied, "I know that's so racist." Her husband then tried to explain and said, "It was something that brought her and her father closer together. When I went out to Wisconsin to help her move across the country with me, her father and I went to pick up the U-haul. He spent an hour and a half talking about how much he loved his daughter and how important Indian Guides was for them." I could hear her husband's defensiveness and did not want to elevate

myself above anyone else and shared, "My brother and dad were in Indian Guides. I suspect they greeted each other with 'How-How' as well. I have got racism in my history too. I was just surprised that White people seriously greeted each other by saying 'How-How.'" I sensed discomfort and tension in the room and loneliness welled in me as I thought to myself, "It's so deep. Racism is right at the foundations of how White people—fathers and sons and daughters—connect with one another."

Later that evening when we were saying goodnight to one another, another one of my friends came over to say goodbye to me, held up her hand and said, "How-How." I felt like I'd been punched in the stomach and wondered how she had missed that "How-How" had been acknowledged as racist earlier in the evening. I had no emotional energy to ask her why she chose to say goodbye to me with "How-How" and left feeling disappointment and loneliness.

The second experience occurred shortly after the first experience when I spent a Friday evening with some friends who were in the midst of dealing with cancer while also being in the first months of parenting. Part of the way that they released the stress in their lives was through laughter and to do this they chose to watch Ali G. episodes. I wasn't familiar with Ali G. and decided to join them in watching several episodes. As I watched Ali G., I noticed that I felt quite uncomfortable with his humor, which seemed mostly based on humiliation and caricatures (e.g., the character Borat) of people from marginalized groups. My friends, though, had a different experience and laughed through most of the episodes we watched. That evening I chose not to talk about my experience of watching Ali G., because I thought that talking

about why I felt discomfort with the show would get in the way of my friends experiencing some much needed laughter. Rather than expressing my discomfort, I attempted to find redemptive qualities about Ali G.'s humor. I shared that I was impressed with his improvisational skills and appreciated, through some of his comedy, how he exposed homophobia and racism. After the evening ended, as I was driving home, I felt disappointed in myself for not being truthful with my friends and overwhelmed by how much humor is based on demeaning others and targeting aspects of a person's identity (race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, ability/disability).

In the following journal entry, I wrote about struggling with my silence and self forgiveness in these interactions with my White friends, in which I felt I had not done enough to interrupt racism:

> Somewhere in me there's a tension around compassion or forgiveness of myself if I choose not to address race or racism and fearing falling into complacency. Complacency has a psychic cost. I don't even know if it's complacency. Is complacency the right word? Maybe it's more fear of causing someone to feel uncomfortable, fear of not being liked, fear of changing the dynamics in a social setting—all part of whiteness, the silence around race. I am still struggling with my friendships and how to talk about race and be truthful about how I'm feeling and thinking about race. I struggle with this in some of my relationships. I struggled with this the other night while visiting [two friends] who were watching Ali G. I didn't find anything he said or did funny and yet felt obligated to go along with the laughter. A great example of how racism perpetuates itself. If you don't actively confront it, then it keeps happening. And then I have these moments when I question how these moments of small interruptions, my talking openly and honestly about my experience of watching Ali G, change any of the suffering caused by racism. And I don't know if it

does. I do need to take a stand for my own humanity though.
The fucking show hurts my soul. (Personal journal, April 2006)

Two months later I continued to process the experiences that I had with my white friends and wrote about the connection between not using my voice to name whiteness and the costs of white shame in the following journal entry:

Every time I don't respond to a racist comment, I deepen my sense of shame, my sense of misalignment. Hence the grief I felt after that evening with [my White friends]…I utter a few words less than gracefully, but I did not say enough. The grief was about how broken I feel and I don't want to be a part of white groups that without any consciousness whatsoever continue to perpetuate the misalignment—"an internal price exacted from him for his ongoing membership in the 'white' race was psychic tension and discomfort" (Thandeka, 1999, p. 8). (Personal journal, June 2006)

Shortly after these two experiences with my White friends, I met with my White colleagues from the racial justice training. I shared my stories with them and how I was feeling deep disappointment in myself. After listening to me, they shared similar struggles that they had had when they didn't speak up about racism. After everyone had talked about their struggles, one colleague said to me, "I want to return to your story of not wanting to question Ali G. with your friends who are going through a very stressful period with cancer. Do your think that you were feeling bound by a culture of politeness that's very characteristic of White people?" His insightful question gently challenged me to look at another aspect of my whiteness that I had not explored—politeness. I felt relieved and strengthened after meeting with my White colleagues, knowing that I can authentically talk with them about whiteness, and wrote the following about being with them in my journal:

> I met with [my White colleagues] yesterday and I felt an
> incredible sense of relief. Mainly, we're all struggling and I felt
> much less alone in it. Who are the White people on campus
> who I could talk with authentically about whiteness? (Personal
> journal, April 2006)

Regarding White women being strong allies to People of Color, Holzman (1995) stresses the importance of White women finding supportive people and environments to do the healing work necessary surrounding their personal history, so that they have the emotional resilience and space within themselves to confront their racism. Through counseling I have been in the process of regaining my sense of wholeness and healing aspects of my personal history, which allowed me to realize that I had identified with social justice education through how I had experienced abuse in my personal history and had projected the broken parts of my self and identity into my work. Not surprisingly, I often felt overwhelmed with despair and shame, though I was resistant to acknowledging the shame. I began to realize that the farther I traveled in healing my grief and despair about my own personal history, the more able I was to address the grief and shame I felt about racism.

I believe that the emotional work I have done around my personal history created enough emotional space in me at the racial justice training to begin emotionally understanding racism from my dominant social position rather than my subordinated parts of my identity. Through an in-depth examination of how I have lived white dominance at the racial justice training, I confronted my internalized racism and accessed white shame that I had avoided acknowledging fully.

Following the racial justice training I was in a constant state of analyzing my thoughts and behaviors and felt emotionally wrought. My mind had been flooded with the thoughts of the collective racism of White people. All of the hideous words and deeds of White people that had and still do deeply harm, physically and psychically, People of Color, circulated in my head. I felt shame acutely and sorrow about the emotional space I occupied. I decided to return to counseling to solely focus on healing my overwhelming sense of shame.

> Today as I watched my internal thoughts when I saw a Person of Color, I did it from a calmer place. I wasn't scared of what's in me. Part of it, is that I'm not stressed today or feeling like shit about myself [shame], which I do well. I think my stress level and feelings of incompetence fuel negative thinking about everyone in general—me and others—and so when it comes to People of Color all of the ugliness will bubble to the surface. Is it mine? I don't want it, but it's mine. (Personal journal, July 2006)

As well I felt grief and anger about the white shame I felt and the sense I had that I was innately flawed. I didn't want to direct my feelings inward, nor did I want to direct them outward on others. Holzman (1995), a White woman, regarding her experience of shame discussed how she projected the self loathing and anger she felt about her self toward those whom she perceived as the source of her feeling shame (People of Color), which she termed "counterblaming" (p. 328). According to Holzman, "counterblaming," redirects an individual's sense of being inherently flawed toward another person, generating a false sense of feeling powerful rather than powerless, thus creating social distance which serves to protect the individual and reduce his/her sense of vulnerability. In the above journal entry I had

identified a "counterblaming" dynamic in myself and during the periods when I felt white shame intensely. During that time I maintained a very strong consciousness that the shame I felt was due to the psychic effects of whiteness rather than blaming People of Color for the shame I felt.

I shared with my counselor that I thought that the white shame I was struggling with fueled the ugly thoughts circulating in my mind when I saw a Person of Color, which in turn intensified the shame I felt. I was in a downward spiral and wrestling with the collective white psyche that swirled in my head, and I didn't want any of it. The following journal entry indicates the degree of distress I felt:

> I feel like the critique and analysis is going to completely shut me down with self consciousness and self flagellation. I question every thought and feeling I have and it feels debilitating. I am scared of what lives in my head right now. (Personal journal, April 2006)

Regarding the cost of unhealed white shame and guilt and the paralysis it causes, Engel (2001), a White woman and anti-racist feminist wrote:

> I have finally learned that I cannot be the completely perfectly antiracist white person. The goal is to face the truth and commit oneself to act in the face of it—to act on heart and guts and principle and politics. And there's no place for guilt. It prevents action. White liberals are famous for expensive guilt. You can wallow in your feelings and the person next to you might be getting beaten up by a cop at the same time, or being called a name, or something much less obvious. (p. 87)

I was in the midst of "expensive guilt." Through counseling I wanted to alleviate the intensity of the shame I felt, which was debilitating. My sense of self worth had plummeted and. I had been frightened into inaction regarding teaching and conducting community based research focused on social justice, a significant aspect of my life's work.

After the racial justice training I was even more aware of whiteness and felt an intense responsibility to name it every time I noticed it. At times I did name whiteness and at other times I chose not to. When I chose not to take on a conversation about whiteness I felt disappointed in myself, which triggered my feeling shame. I wrote in my personal journal that I felt I was taking on the "weight of ending racism":

> I'm feeling heavy after a day of [work with a predominantly White group of people]. Looking back on the day I was afraid someone was going to say something hurtful, insensitive, or ignorant…I think that I want to take on all the weight of ending racism in my own sphere and there's just too much. I feel like I'm using racism too loosely…What am I talking about? I'm talking about white oblivion, numbness, insensitivity, acceptance of the status quo. I want White people to be aware of this, of White privilege, how it works as a system. (Personal journal, May 2006)

Shortly after I wrote the above journal entry, I shared with my counselor that I thought I had more emotional work to do regarding my personal history associated with shame and that perhaps the racial justice training had stimulated old feelings of shame. To me, this seemed conceivable. I view finding peace with my personal history as an ongoing process, in which I will arrive at periods in my life where I will feel I have completely processed some

aspect of my past, and then at a later point may find that I need to revisit the emotions associated with that aspect of my past that I thought was at rest. My counselor questioned, however, whether shame from my personal history was surfacing at this particular time. She then posed the following question for me to consider: Because so few White people engage as deeply emotionally and intellectually around racism as you do, do you think it's possible that you're feeling the collective shame of White people. As indicated in the following journal entry, my counselor's question broadened how I conceptualized the shame I had been feeling and assisted me in beginning to make sense of why I had been feeling shame intensely:

> [My counselor] and I were talking a few weeks ago in my counseling session and I said that I thought that my shame was old shame connected with my history. And she said, "You know, Deb. I'm not really sure that's the case with you. Very few White people tend to go to the places you go in mining your thoughts and feelings. And because they don't, I wonder if you take on White people's collective shame?" Her question had a lot of resonance for me. (June 2006)

Through counseling I realized that I had been experiencing "group based guilt," which Iyer et al. (2004) discuss in "Racial Wrongs and Restitutions: The Role of Guilt and Other Group-Based Emotions." "Group based guilt" is "grounded in the belief that one's group is responsible for an immoral act against another group" (p. 348). With group based guilt the individual may experience "guilt by association" and "guilt proper." Guilt by association may surface when a person revisits history and confronts the violence of his or her ancestors. Guilt proper occurs when an individual "feel[s] responsible for their group's collective misdeeds in the present" (p. 348). Additionally,

guilt proper also may be "based in the belief that one's group is (collectively) responsible for discrimination against another group" (p. 348).

Dyer (1997) discussed how the intensity of white shame and guilt may inhibit the ability of White people to examine their whiteness and writes that "One wants to acknowledge so much how awful white people have been that one may never get around to examining what exactly they have been, and in particular, how exactly their image has been constructed, its complexities and contradictions" (p. 11). As I gained clarity about why I felt white shame so intensely and had processed the emotions of the story about egging David and Darryl's home (how I had colluded with racism) along with other aspects of my lived experience of whiteness, I then felt able to reflect back on how white shame had influenced my behaviors and interactions with People of Color.

On a walk in the trees, after several months into processing my experience at the racial justice training and working through my white shame, I was reflecting on my history of relationships with People of Color. I realized that at times in my relationships with People of Color, I had attempted to alleviate my feelings of shame by setting myself in the role of White savior, which I wrote about in the following journal entry:

> When I started work with the Diversity @ OSU website I still identified with how I'd been harmed by others in my personal history. I also remember when people asked me why I was so passionate about social justice and particularly racial justice I responded that I'd had experiences in my own life when I wasn't treated with complete dignity or my humanity wasn't honored and I couldn't stand the thought of that happening

because of race. I believe I wrote that in the "Seeing through the Eyes of Students of Color" paper/presentation. I then thought about [an African American woman from Portland] and how I was drawn to her struggle with a corporation that she and her husband had worked for. Her husband died of cancer, which she believes is linked to TCE that had contaminated the grounds of the corporation where her husband worked. I really wanted to help her somehow and thought that I could connect her with university resources. And I think I was attracted to the idea of being the White Savior, like in the movies when a White person goes into an inner city school and does miracles with a group of Kid's or Color or with a sports team. And then I thought about how much these films distort white thinking…I know People of Color who, on a daily basis, think, feel, and act to bring justice into their lives and communities, not because they want to be a savior, but because they love their families and communities and their survival depends on it. That would be a much better movie. (Personal journal, June 2006)

On that day I recognized how white shame fueled my desire to be the White savior and began thinking about the asymmetry I am capable of introducing in my relationships with People of Color if I'm entering relationships from a White Savior mode of thinking, a shame based place that motivates me to solely think about how I can alleviate my own sense of being flawed. Regarding entering relationships with People of Color from a place of shame I wrote:

What is it that concerns me about White people helping, whether it's in the Peace Corp or in racial justice work or community service? What does it mean to help for White people? What has it meant to help for me? I think that I've used helping as a way to get off the hook. So what's the hook? Is it privilege? It's about getting me off the bad White person hook. I'm trying to erase my sense of badness. When I offer kindness

> to people, what is the nature of my kindness? Is it really kindness? Or am I trying to alleviate my sense of shame? How do I help if I'm coming from a place of shame? Reading *From Cruelty to Goodness* (Hallie, 1993) several years ago strongly affected me. The following quote is deep: "I found that kindness could be the ultimate cruelty, especially when it was given within that unbalanced power relationship. A kind overseer or a kind camp guard can exacerbate cruelty, can remind his victim that there are other relationships than the relationship of cruelty, and can make the victim deeply bitter, especially when he sees the self-satisfied smile of his victimizer" (p. 4). (Personal journal, May 2006)

At the racial justice training, I deepened my cognitive and affective understanding of shame and realized the importance of healing my harmed "sense of core self" and sought counseling and deeper relationship and connection with friends, family, and colleagues. In addition, I worked to reconnect with my own sources of strength and self love. Kaufman (1992) discusses the importance of self nurturance as a means for healing shame. Self nurturance internally generates strength and love for one's self and allows for "building inner security" and "reowning disowned parts of the self," (p. 149) which foster a sense of wholeness and "internal security, inner peace, and safety within the inner life" (p. 149).

Seven months after the racial justice training I was still processing white shame and decided to go to Eastern Oregon with my partner to car camp and mountain bike, which provided me with much needed physical and psychic rest. Our trip to Eastern Oregon, which reconnected me with the natural environment, assisted me in restoring my lost sense of coherence and integration Through time spent gazing at the vastness of Eastern Oregon, being in my physical body through biking and hiking, and living very simply

for a week, I continued healing the white shame that I had been struggling

with for months. The time and space to be in the landscapes of Eastern

Oregon, which I found very nurturing, assisted me

with reconnecting with my "sense of core self." In my personal journal, I

wrote about the solace I found through my week spent in the desert.

> I just spent a week in Eastern Oregon not thinking about race
> for the most part, though it was hard not to given White
> people's history of stealing land from Native people…I felt so
> much relief to just be out in the desert. I spent a lot of time
> staring at landscapes, trying to reconnect with my center. I
> appreciated the perspective and the simplicity of our days.
> Wake up. Have coffee. The smell of sage. Hot dry air and sun.
> Drive. Stop. Pee. Eat. Vast landscapes. Desert. Sage. Junipers.
> Hot springs. Lakes amidst the dry. Poems from Rumi.
> (Personal journal, June 2006)

As indicated above in my journal entry, poetry also provides nurturance and

offers me perspective and solace. One week after returning from my trip, I

found the poem *The Peace of Wild Things* by Wendell Berry while reading

through my personal journals for the writing of this autoethnography.

Regarding the comfort the poem offered me, I wrote:

> I just sifted through all my professional and personal journals.
> I'm feeling anxious. I found a poem that someone gave me in
> the mid 1990s that still soothes me when I read it.

> **The Peace of Wild Things**

> When despair for the world grows in me
> And I wake in the night at the least sound
> In fear of what my life and my children lives may be,
> I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his
> beauty

on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their
lives with forethought of grief.
I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with
their light.
For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

It's interesting that I'd find this poem immediately after my trip
to Eastern Oregon, where I had some time to just be. At the
moment, my heart feels tired. I think it has been tired for a long
time. Somehow this poem gives me the space to rest from the
sadness I carry about how the world is not what I want it to be.
(Personal journal, July 2006)

In addition to reconnecting with landscapes, yoga is also a source of

nurturance and assists me with finding my stillness and goodness rather than

indulging thoughts of being unlovable. Through the practice of yoga, which

involves the alignment of the physical body (breath) with mind, I am able to

repair my severed connection with my "sense of a core self."

CHAPTER 4: CLOSING REFLECTIONS

In this chapter I will share closing thoughts on why I wrote *An Autoethnography of Whiteness* and discuss how my lived experience of learning about whiteness and racism fit in the literature on whiteness. Also, I will describe my intellectual and emotional process of writing this autoethnography and constructing the text. Finally, I will discuss practices that align well with the awareness I have gained through writing this dissertation and research directions I am drawn toward regarding whiteness studies.

WHY WRITE AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF WHITENESS?

Frankenberg (1993) wrote, "Whiteness and Westernness have not, for the most part, been conceived as 'the problem' in the eyes of white/Western people, whether in research or elsewhere" (p. 18). I chose to write an *Autoethnography of Whiteness* because I wanted to problematize whiteness and was in the midst of an ethical crisis about being a White researcher interested in studying race. Following the racial justice training I attended in 2005, I was completely overwhelmed with shame as a White person. Additionally, I had been reading about and struggling with white privilege and its relationship to research in communities that have experienced marginalization. Following the racial justice training, based on the disequilibrium I felt, I couldn't imagine doing a research project focused on the lives and experiences of People of Color that would not feel like extraction, especially if it was a project that I generated in isolation rather than in relationship with People of Color. Regarding the relationship of my white privilege to research I wrote:

At this moment, I especially don't want to do research in a Community of Color. Why? Because I can't shake this sense that I will be extracting from People of Color for my own personal gain—my PhD. Ethically and morally, I can't do it. I don't want to write about other people. I want to write with people and I don't trust that I can do that right now through my Ph.D. process. What do I want to do with stories that I've listened to about race and racism? I want to write them and tell them in the spaces that I move through. Most of the spaces that I move through are pretty white. Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) writes about the "privileged who refuse" (White people who work for racial justice) doing research about the lives of People of Color and then returning to the centers and trying to illuminate the problem and make a case for institutional change. This act reinforces white privilege. I want to create spaces at the center for People of Color to tell their own stories. How do I do this through my research? I really have hit some sort of tangle about being white and doing research in Communities of Color. [One of my committee members] suggested that I view doing research in Communities of Color as "intervention" rather than "extraction." I like that reframing. I'm not in a space where I think I have no place in doing research with Communities of Color, though for right now, I've hit a juncture in my life where I need to sort through my tangled insides. Listening to peoples' stories and writing them down and then sharing what I've learned in privileged circles…It's not working for me. It doesn't feel like applied research. It doesn't feel active. I will facilitate conversations, teach, and name racism as often as I can in all the spheres of my life, but right now I feel like I'm reinforcing privilege by doing a Ph.D. about the suffering of People of Color. I don't trust that I can do research that is transformative unless it is deeply collaborative. (Personal journal, May 2006)

I was looking for hope in the lives of People of Color as a remedy for my own despair, but over and over again I kept coming back to whiteness in the research questions. I think that to remedy my own despair might mean studying me, my experience of being white and

what about being white causes me to feel despair. (Writing journal, December 2006)

Frankenberg (1993, p. 6) describes the tendency of White people to view racism "as an issue that people of color face and have to struggle with" and to not acknowledge how racism is intimately intertwined with the experiences of White people. According to Frankenberg, there are serious consequences for anti-racist work associated with this view of racism. She asserts that "with this view, white women can see antiracist work as an act of compassion for an 'other,' and optional, extra project, but not one intimately and organically linked" to the lives of white women (p. 6). In writing this autoethnography, I intended to strengthen my understanding of how racism is intimately intertwined with my experience.

HOW DO I FIT IN THE LITERATURE ON WHITENESS?

Frankenberg (1993) regarding interpretation of the narratives of the White women she interviewed stated: "As the narratives showed, there are multiple ways in which experiences can be named, forgotten, or remembered through changing conceptual schemata" (p. 70). This statement rang true for me as I sought to make sense of the stories included in this autoethnography. With all of the stories I shared, I explored multiple interpretations, some of which had stronger emotional charge than others. Regarding how I felt about my stories and interpreted and theoretically contextualized them I wrote:

I'm finding that as I write stories and sift through journal
entries that I'm watching or waiting to see how through this
process of writing and rewriting stories that the content of this

> dissertation will develop. Where will different stories take me?
> I am afraid of what I will learn when I dig deeper into my
> memories of whiteness. As I've been writing and reading
> *Learning to Be White* and *The Social Construction of Whiteness*, I
> often feel like the literature has given me a theoretical container
> for my experiences, which is simultaneously painful and
> relieving. And sometimes I'm not sure how well my
> experiences fit in the container and question if I'm trying to
> make them fit in a theoretical container. Are my experiences,
> memories, and stories fluid or solid? How malleable is the
> container? Does the container have leaks? I think my
> experiences; my memories of experiences are fluid and
> changing. They change as I write and rewrite them, consider
> them within different theoretical frameworks, and feel them
> again and again. (Writing journal, November 2006)

For example with the story of David and Darryl, the story thickened in terms

of its emotional content as I explored different interpretations of the story.

When my major professor suggested that perhaps David and Darryl's family

might have felt left out of the "banter" of Mischief Night if we had not egged

their home, I found it was much easier for me to sit emotionally with egging

David and Darryl's home. When I placed the story within the context of a

long history of white violence and thought about the potential impacts of

egging David and Darryl's home, however, I felt deep shame and guilt.

Racial Identity

At the time I began working on the Diversity @ OSU website, I rested at the

cusp of the Pseudo independence and Immersion/Emersion stages of white

racial identity development. Though at moments in the process of writing

this autoethnography I've felt that I've occupied all of the stages white racial

identity development simultaneously, at the completion of this dissertation, I

characterize myself as resting on the cusp of the Immersion/Emersion and Autonomy stages of white racial identity development, depending on the degree of calm and peace I feel internally on any given day.

When I began work on the Diversity @ OSU website I felt sorrow about the suffering of People of Color; however, I had not yet explored whiteness and white privilege. Through my work on the Diversity @ OSU website, intensive study about whiteness, and diversity and racial justice trainings, I developed a much deeper awareness of whiteness and white privilege and shifted into the Immersion/Emersion stage of white racial identity development. With this shift, I felt white shame more intensely and most intensely following my completion of the racial justice training. After reading my personal, professional, and research journals, I wrote the following regarding how I was making sense of how I had changed:

> I feel like I'm swimming a bit. I've been looking at my chronology—how I've changed over time. Grief and despair seemed to be my first wave of feelings with very little connection at least consciously to how I participated in a system of white dominance—white privilege. Over time, though, white privilege and shame caught up to me. I think it began to emerge when I started reading about whiteness. I began reading about whiteness after a long search for hope in the lives of People of Color. I finally returned to myself and found that learning and knowing as much as I could about whiteness felt hopeful. I could work with myself and with my white brothers and sisters. I began the intellectual work around whiteness probably two years prior to the [racial justice training]. From the racial justice training and the year since then I've been very focused on the emotional work of whiteness. So from my intellectual and emotional awareness, what did I do and how did what I did change over time? (Writing journal, December 2006)

Hitchcock (2002) describes the Immersion/Emersion stage of white racial identity development as an intense awareness of whiteness. Reading his description of his experience in Immersion/Emersion provided me with perspective and clarity about the intensity of my feelings following the racial justice training, which gradually decreased over time. I wrote the following in my writing journal:

> I found the answer to the question I had asked earlier about why the intensity of ugly racialized thoughts running through my head following the racial justice training despite my having been involved with social justice education intensely for the last five years. Hitchcock (2002) described having the N-word running through his head and wrote the following about the experience: "Whether or not I put the word in print, it was there in my head, popping up at the most convenient times. You see, I would often hear it when my family was present. It would be there in my mind when looking at my wife and my children. Not that I hated my family. Quite the opposite. They've always been my foundation and inspiration…. We're a close family and love for one another fills our lives.
>
> They say if you have a song in your head, you can get rid of it by getting someone else to sing it. I've tried that and it works. But who was I going to tell about this particular word that kept bouncing around in my consciousness. Am I racist? I wondered. Do I have some deep-seated hatred of my family? As much as I tried to repress this word and think positive things, it refused to go away. What was going on? What was happening was painful, even distressing at times. Where it led was to a new perspective on myself as a person. To the outside world it probably wasn't apparent…My personality stayed intact, my conscious mind kept control of my life, and I found I was not irredeemably racist after all. In retrospect, I simply was putting together a lot of things I had ignored before, and learning something new about what it meant to be white" (pp. 124-15). (Writing journal, December 2006)

Hitchcock (2002, p. 124) surmised that he was going through a "psychological change" and concluded that moral dilemmas accompany a shift from one state to another in white racial identity development. Following the racial justice training, my awareness of white shame propelled me into an intense moral dilemma that surfaced around my white privilege and conducting research in Communities of Color, which led to my decision to do a self study through this autoethnography.

The process of writing this autoethnography assisted me with integrating what I had learned about whiteness at the racial justice training. For almost seven months following the training, I was acutely aware of whiteness. I was in the Immersion/Emersion stage of white racial identity development (Helms, 1990). Almost one year after the racial justice training I wrote the following regarding my racial identity:

> I am in Immersion/Emersion in my white racial identity
> development. I have wanted to "help" People of Color through
> the website through research and have hit some point in my
> journey where I'm so clear that I can be most effective with
> other White people. This was a part of the crisis I was
> experiencing around doing research in Communities of Color.
> (Writing journal, November 2006)

Looking back on my acute experience of white shame while in Immersion/Emersion, I wrote the following in my writing journal:

> Reading *Lifting the White Veil* (Hitchcock, 2002) was very
> helpful for me in terms of making sense of what the hell was
> going on in me emotionally following the racial justice training.
> All the flooding of whiteness—the hideous thoughts, etc. were
> stimulated by the experience of the training. We were asked at

the training to look at white dominance—our own and as a group—and I had looked. I had paid attention to white dominance before, but mostly had attended to how other White people were awful. This time I had to attend to how I was awful. Following the training I was tracking my insides while at the same time being flooded with all the hideous language and thoughts whiteness had produced. It was almost like I was trying on racist thinking to see if it fit. And when I tried it on, then I felt horrified, which propelled my feeling shame…I was living in this space for months. I think my intense shame indicated that I had no desire to house the ugliness of whiteness in me. And I will always very consciously have to work against the ugliness getting into my mind and body as long as racism still exists…There's a fine line for me between becoming aware and developing a racial consciousness and slipping into self torment and flagellation. I teetered on that line for months while I struggled with my white shame. (Writing journal, December 2006)

Through the intellectual and emotional process of writing this autoethnography, I find that I have more moments when I reside in the Autonomy stage of white racial identity development. In Autonomy, an individual still maintains an awareness of whiteness, but the intensity or acuteness of that awareness diminishes, and she commits herself to the continuous naming of the racial structures that privilege whiteness (Helms, 1990; Hitchcock 2002). At the completion of writing this autoethnography, I feel more comfortable in my white skin, more compassionate with myself and other White people, and a strong commitment to naming whiteness and its associated structural inequalities in the different realms of my life.

In Chapter 3: Lived Experience I describe my affective experience—grief, despair, and shame—associated with learning about the depth of suffering caused by racism. The emotions I felt were very real; however, at times I

confused emotional expression with acting meaningfully to end racism (see Rosenberg's (1997) discussion of the "politics of empathy" in Chapter 1: Introduction) and projected my feelings of despair associated with my personal history on to the lives and experiences of People of Color. Two theoretical constructs assisted me in contextualizing my affective experience—the "politics of empathy" (Rosenberg, 1997, p. 83) and "privileged affect" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 69). Regarding the "politics of empathy," Rosenberg states that while empathy is an important component in understanding racism, it is also confused with action, thus creating a "false sense of involvement" for White people who are focused on being allies to People of Color in ending racism (p. 83). To support individuals in moving beyond empathy, Rosenberg emphasizes the importance of educators challenging students to continue to examine whiteness. During periods of despair about the depth of suffering caused by racism, I felt overwhelmed and powerless, which further fueled my sense of despair. Continuing to learn about whiteness, actively seeking beauty, counseling pertaining to my personal history and experience of white shame, and recovering a sense of moral action assisted me in shifting from despair to feeling hopeful and empowered.

Regarding privileged affect, McIntyre (1997) discussed how some White teachers "appropriated a set of affective strategies that minimized the consequences of racism for people of color and maximized the 'feeling realm' of the participants" (p. 69). At the racial justice training, when I experienced an upwelling of shame, I lost my ability to be present to the suffering of People of Color in my small, interracial group. I had, because of unacknowledged white shame, minimized the consequences of racism in the

lives of People of Color in my group and maximized my feeling realm. This experience powerfully revealed to me the importance of healing my unacknowledged white shame.

My experience of white shame at the racial justice training had hindered my ability to listen to the suffering of People of Color and listening is one of the most integral aspects of being an ally to People of Color in ending the suffering of racism (Kivel, 2002; Engel, 2001). Engel (2001) writes regarding her experience of listening:

> What I have learned most about working to end racism is the necessity of listening. The discipline of listening. The humility of listening. As a white, privileged woman I must listen intently and keenly to my sisters of color, in this country and throughout the world—the sounds, the tastes, the nuances, the subtleties. To remember the issues of class that are always present when we talk about race and how our economic system thrives on keeping us apart. (p. 90)

When I made a conscious choice and listened deeply to the African American woman at the racial justice training, rather than remaining in a very self focused place, swimming in white shame, I felt that I had opened up the possibility for authentic relationship and strengthened my ability to be a White ally.

Kivel (2002) stresses the importance of White allies listening so that they can support People of Color in resisting racism, which entails "the risks they bear in defending their lives and challenging white hegemony" (p. 94). Through listening to the experiences of People of Color, White people have the

opportunity increase their awareness and ability to name the myriad ways that White people "maintain dominance" (p. 94). Kivel also stresses the importance of giving "critical credence" (p. 94) to the experiences of People of Color, rather than responding defensively or by minimizing or denying experience.

Theoretically contextualizing my experiences also assisted me in understanding the nature of what I was feeling, which then provided me with guidance on the direction I needed to go regarding emotional work. For example, after reading the first chapter of *Learning to Be White* (Thandeka, 1999), I felt a tremendous relief in having words to articulate the intense emotions—white shame—I had experienced, which I reflected on in my writing journal in the following excerpt:

> A few months ago I felt like a moral failure and my sense of self worth [as a White ally] felt threatened…so deeply that I wasn't sure I could continue in social justice education. It was deep. I felt like a fraud. I have never read anything that so accurately describes shame and its origins, and in particular white shame. Thandeka articulated what my ongoing struggle has been— white shame. When I don't interrupt a racist comment, it trips my shame…my disappointment in myself. The question that comes up for me in those moments when I've lost my voice is: How can you be in this work? I also feel lonely with some of the white people I'm with. I'm grateful that I have friends that send me emails about how and when they're noticing race. (Writing journal, July 2006)

Reading the following excerpt from "The Souls of White Folks" (Segrest, 2001) about how many White individuals slip in and out of race consciousness reinforced for me the importance of slowing myself down for

to reflect on what I am thinking and feeling regarding race in my interactions and relationships:

> Meanwhile, I am struck by the extraordinary ease with which (especially white) individuals can slide from awareness of whiteness to the lack thereof and, related to that slippage, from race-consciousness to unconsciousness and from antiracism to racism, whether from year to year, situation to situation, or sentence to sentence. My own history, for example, is marked by a shift from consciousness both of my whiteness and of my own enmeshment in racism to an awakening to them. This trajectory also shapes the life-paths of many comrades with whom I share race, class, gender, and nationality. But my awakening is never complete. Although the initial transformation was one of major earthquake proportions, there is always room for another aftershock, always need for further awakening. White antiracism is, perhaps, a stance requiring lifelong vigilance. (p. 77)

Prior to the racial justice training, I felt disembodied in discussions about racism. I felt as if I was mouthing the language of justice; I felt inauthentic. I applied for the racial justice training because I knew I needed further awakening. I believe I sought an "aftershock" experience, which is exactly what I experienced during and following the racial justice training.

LIVED EXPERIENCE OF WRITING ABOUT WHITENESS

A periodic fear of abandonment accompanied my writing this autoethnography. According to Segrest (2001), one who practices radical subjectivity must immerse her or his self in "temporality without fear of the risks involved" (p. 67). While writing this autoethnography I was in an ongoing process of confronting my anxieties and fears. I did not practice

radical subjectivity without having to process and move though my fears about the risks I perceived. For example, I wrote the following regarding fear in my writing journal:

> A room full of People of Color with swollen eyes. I heard them weeping in the hallway. When I returned home after the racial justice training they were all with me. When I hear comments— derogatory and/or uninformed—I imagine how the comments would have affected all the People of Color with swollen eyes if they were in the room for the comments. I'm in the room. What's the impact on me? I talked about oppression… whiteness…this autoethnography in class [Thesis Writing] today and started feeling self conscious. Who won't like me? Who am I scaring away? Who am I pissing off? (Writing journal, August 2006)

Two months later, I still struggled with fearing abandonment and wrote:

> This is the path [practicing radical subjectivity] I am on in writing this autoethnography. I still fear the risks (abandonment). I am not without fear right now. When am I not without fear? What is my fear? My fear is of not being understood when I try to talk about whiteness with other White people…when I try to invite people into this autoethnography to see, hear, and feel what I've experienced. I'm afraid of being perceived as crazy, oversensitive, too emotional…And then with all the fear of being misperceived a sense of loneliness gets tumbled into the mix. (Writing journal, October 2006)

I also felt anxiousness about causing other White people to feel exposed or vulnerable through what I wrote in this autoethnography. I struggle with how to position myself in stories and struggled with whether or not I have the right to tell the stories of others.

I'm feeling anxious about how I'll handle this story [evening at friend's house]. I'm anxious about "exposing" White people, my friends and family, about causing them to feel shame, about making them uncomfortable. (Writing journal, June 2006)

In these periods of anxiousness about "exposing" White people I was confronting my whiteness. While reading Hitchcock's (2002) description of white culture, I immediately saw myself struggling with "white culture." Regarding white culture, Hitchcock writes:

In white culture, people are expected to be "mindful of the feelings"…of others. We do not act out our feelings spontaneously, but rather moderate them if we feel there is a chance others will be annoyed, that is to say, have their sensibilities violated…Those who do not follow this rule are seen as "out of control"…White culture then works hard to keep the volume down…We learn how to not step on toes, hurt other people's "feelings," to not make a scene, and all the other little social rules and practices of a lifetime. (pp. 115-117)

At moments I felt overwhelmed and self doubt about the task of writing an autoethnography that creates questions, provokes thoughts and feelings, and feels trustworthy. At the beginning of the process of writing, I wrote the following entries in my writing journal:

So what happens when a White woman uses her experience to discuss whiteness if (and I agree with this) "the oppressed can see with the greatest clarity not only their own position but also that of the oppressor/privileged, and indeed the shape of a social system as a whole?" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 8) What will I miss? What will my privilege prevent me from seeing? Where will I not have clarity? (Writing journal, June 2006)

I'm feeling daunted at the moment. Am I disguising an argument? I'm also having a wave of "I'm the only person thinking/feeling about this and it matters so very little to so many White people. I'm questioning the point of writing this…I had a hard night last night—lots of self-flagellation. You're crazy. No one else experiences this. You've made a whole lot of drama about nothing. Everyone else has got themselves figured out. I'm the one who's fucked up. How am I ever going to convey what I see, feel about myself and in other White people to White people who do not want to notice and who have set up lots of thought patterns so that they don't have to notice [race]? I'm going to do it by telling my stories. I need to make my own thought patterns visible. How or what happened that allowed me to break though my thought patterns that keep whiteness invisible to myself and other White people? (Writing journal, August 2006)

I also experienced intense self consciousness while writing this dissertation, especially after I read critiques of whiteness studies. For example, Dyer (1997) is concerned that whiteness studies will:

- reinforce white privilege rather than destabilize it;

- generate "me tooism" or the "poor us syndrome"—the idea that White people are disadvantaged because they are "burdened with responsibilities we didn't ask for" and/or desire attention when so many People of Color are receiving attention in a postmodern world;

- set White men as the "new victim group, oppressed by the gigantic strides taken by affirmative action policies" (p. 10).

Regarding these critiques, in my writing journal I wrote:

I will include the intense self consciousness I felt after reading Dyer's (1997) essay—the critiques/problems with whiteness studies and creating an "Iron John" movement for White

people. Did I do this with this dissertation? At the same time I think whiteness needs to examined, deconstructed, and discussed. I need to untwist how I have gotten psychically twisted by whiteness. I believe that's important for me and other White people to do, so that we can end racism. (Writing journal, December 2006)

I was thinking about my major professor this morning, how vulnerable I feel when I send her my chapters. I'm wondering what I've missed, where racism lies in me that I'm not aware of. I'm afraid of burdening her, being the White person that needs to be taken care of by the Woman of Color. (Writing journal, December 2006)

Frankenberg (2001) elaborated on Dyer's (1997) concern about the creation of an "Iron John" movement and described the following "false presumptions" about whiteness:

1. White people were once the oppressors but are no longer because of the economic and cultural transformations brought about by the civil rights movement.
2. The gains of the civil rights have now created the possibility, if not yet the actuality, of racial equality, and there is now an ever present danger of "overcorrecting" past inequality and placing whites in danger of victimization.
3. The government does not yet quite understand that white people are now an oppressed group, so that government is increasingly antiwhite.
4. White people can and should now benefit from civil rights discourse, suing concepts like "reverse racism," "uneven playing field," and "race blind" to help ameliorate their own predicament.
5. Many people of color are still angry. This must be because: (a) they have not yet woken up to the new reality but are struck in history, (b) they are simply

> inherently angry people, or (c) they hate white people
> out of habit.
> 6. Many white people are angry. This is because things
>   have gone too far, and whites are now victims of a
>   history not of their own making. (p. 85)

In writing this autoethnography my intention was not to reinforce Frankenberg's (2001) "false presumptions" about whiteness, though intention and impact are not one in the same. I began this dissertation with a quote about awareness and the suffering that comes with opening one's heart to "a world of pain and distress" (Feldman, 2006). Using writing as a method of inquiry offered me a space to explore my lived experience of whiteness as completely as I could, so that I could increase my understanding of whiteness (knowing that my understanding is not complete); heal and create more authentic relationships with my self and others; and direct my efforts as a researcher and educator toward creating just communities rather than impeding the creation of just communities because of unexamined racism. I hope that those who read this dissertation will engage with its content emotionally and intellectually, discerning the similarities and differences of our stories; reflecting on their lived experiences of whiteness; and from awareness identifying actions to end the suffering of racism. I appreciated Feldman's (2006) thoughts about the potential for liberation associated with awareness:

> Awareness is born of intimacy. We can only fear and hate what
> we do not understand and what we perceive from a distance.
> We can only find compassion and freedom in intimacy. We can
> be afraid of intimacy with pain because we are afraid of
> helplessness; we fear that we don't have the inner balance to
> embrace suffering without being overwhelmed. Yet each time

> we find the willingness to meet affliction, we discover we are not powerless. Awareness rescues us from helplessness, teaching us to be helpful through our kindness, patience, resilience, and courage. Awareness is the forerunner of *understanding*, and understanding is the prerequisite to bringing suffering to an end. (Feldman, 2006, p. 69)

I also felt challenged in trying to find my voice. I wanted to write truthfully, compassionately, and without blame as I shared my story and the stories of people who I love and at the same time feel deep disappointment about. The following journal entry reveals my struggle with truthfulness and compassion as I wrote about my grandfather's racism and role in our family:

> I am writing about my grandfather and I'm feeling so much sadness about his death, about the loss of his humanness, the pain he felt and then inflicted on his family, my dad especially, how it affected me. Part of his legacy was violence in my family—alcoholism, emotional and physical abuse. Thandeka writes about the dysfunction of white families. I want to ask my mom and dad what it was like for them when my grandfather went off on his racist tangents. Also, I want to ask them if they ever tried to interrupt or challenge him. I'm trying to write this compassionately and without blame, but also truthfully. And at the moment Sigrid Nuñez's quote from *A Feather on the Breath of God* is screaming at me: "One wants a way of looking back without anger or bitterness or shame. One wants to be able to tell everything without blaming or apologizing."

Also, while writing this dissertation, I attempted to be conscious of "raced writing," which meant that I observed when I chose to name and/or not name race, and when I did name race, whose race did I name and who did I assume was my audience when writing. I noticed in the process of writing and editing that I tended to name the race of People of Color before thinking to

name white as a race. I also found that I assumed that I was writing this autoethnography with a predominantly white audience in mind. In the essay, "White," Dyer (1997, p. 3) discusses how White people speak about nothing but "people," which means other White people due to the predominance of representations of whiteness in Western minds and imaginations. I observed myself getting caught in this mode, viewing white as normative, throughout the process of writing this dissertation. Regarding this phenomenon, Frankenberg (2001) writes "the efforts of white people, even antiracist ones, are all too easily entrapped within the webs of a gaze and consciousness one might conveniently name, as a shorthand, white" (p. 81).

Anxiousness also surfaced for me several times while writing the white shame chapter about just how deep racism lives in white bodies and especially my own. The following excerpts illustrate my anxiety:

> I'm realizing as I write about congruence of thoughts and feelings—mind/body that I'm struggling with what really resides in my mind and body. Is it my mind that fights my racialized body or is goodness in my body and it's my mind that's been racialized. Can I so simply split my mind from my body? What comes to mind right now is Tim Wise's story about his grandmother, a strong advocate of civil rights, who started spewing racial epithets at the end of her life when she developed Alzheimer's. I've set up a dichotomy of mind and body. As I write, I feel an ache in my body about not wanting the sickness of racism in my head. (Writing journal, August 2006)

> One thing that's been creating anxiety in me is the question: Is racism in White people's bodies? If it is where do we begin changing it so that it's not in our bodies? Do I start with my thinking? Or is racism in our heads and deep inside our body

our humanity is still intact? Is it possible to restore one's own humanity after it has been pummeled with the sickness of racism? All of this came up for me when I was writing about the misalignment of mind and body in the white shame chapter. I don't think it's so dualistic in terms of how racism lives within in us. (Writing journal, October 2006)

I found Dyer's (1997) discussion of his experience of racist thinking very valuable when I was fixated on the question of whether racism was in my mind or in my body. Regarding the existence of racism in white minds and bodies he wrote:

> Nor am I immune to white racism. It comes unbidden, when I am off guard. Most commonly it's when I'm driving, when, that is, I am both most tense (driving is dangerous to the point of insanity) and most distracted (the mind wanders and the music plays). If someone suddenly pulls out or blinks their lights for me to get out of the way when I myself am already driving at or over the speed limit, then at such moments self-righteous scorn and despair at the human race well up, uncensored. If I catch sight of the driver, then up pops a correlation between race, and gender, and bad driving. I'm shocked by it each time, by the fact that the correlation is so very readily to hand, but it doesn't stop it from coming along the next time. (p. 7)

After reading Dyer's description of racist thoughts coming to mind while driving, I was able to release the dichotomy I had tried established through fixated questioning about whether racism existed in my mind or body. My mind and body are not two separate entities; they are intimately connected. If racism reveals itself in my mind, then it's also residing in my body. When a racist thought, surfaces, I feel my body get tense, and quite often if there is a

Person of Color near I am always concerned that they can see the thought in my non verbal gestures (my body).

Dyer (1997) also discussed how he conceived the racist thoughts that entered into his mind in the least expected moments and wrote, "I don't believe that such thoughts are a 'real me' lurking behind a façade of anti-racism" (p. 7). In that statement he named the anxiety or fear I had been carrying about the racist thoughts that have entered into my mind. I had been fearful about being inauthentic and distressed by the incongruence of who I say I am, a White woman who is social justice educator, and what erupts in my consciousness—racist thoughts. Dyer (p. 7) then stated that racism is a part of the "cultural non-consciousness that we all inhabit," which "one must take responsibility for" but not blame one's self for. He also acknowledged "the shock of its [racist thought] arrival" especially when the White individual has close connections and relationships with People of Color. Dyer suggests that the shock associated with the arrival of a racist thought is a "distinct reminder of being white" (p. 7). His statement validated the distress I have felt when racist thoughts enter my mind and reminded me of the importance of being conscious and taking responsibility for how racism may get into my psyche without falling into self flagellation.

Also through reading Dyer (1997) I recognized that my trying to distinguish whether racism was in my mind or body was a manifestation of whiteness. Dyer asserts that whiteness has to do "with tightness, with self-control, self consciousness, mind over body" (p. 6). Regarding this recognition I wrote the following in my writing journal:

> Dyer talks about whiteness as having to do with tightness, self control, mind over body. This control of the body comes up around dancing, states Dyer, but what he's describing is deeper than the stereotypes of White people. (p. 6) I need to connect this with my struggling to figure out what's in my mind and body—why did I struggle with this? Why did I need to set up this split? I think I felt that as long as racism was only in my thoughts and not in my body, then I was more immune to white racism. If racism is in my body, then it's really deep, which frightens me. (Writing journal, December 2006)

The process of writing this autoethnography has been important in terms of my own awareness and also the conversations that occurred when I explained to others (mostly White people) that I was studying the impacts of white dominance on me. For example, in one conversation, a White woman asked me about my dissertation and when I explained what I was doing, she shared a story about falling in love with an African American man and her father's response to her relationship. Before sharing her father's response she paused and said, "I had no idea how racist my parents were until I started dating an African American guy." She then shared how her father explained his hierarchy of race and gender to her, asserting that White men were on the top of the hierarchy, followed by White women, followed by Asians and Native people, Black men, and then Black women were at the bottom of his hierarchy. She paused again after she'd shared her father's hierarchy and then said, "He told me because I was dating an African American man I was the equivalent of a Black woman in his mind." She was quiet for a moment and then said, "I really grew to love Black women and often wondered why my boyfriend was with me when there were all these amazing Black women that he could be with." As this White woman shared this story with me, I thought, "Another story that fits within Thandeka's (1999) discussion of racial

abuse in White communities (see section on white shame in Chapter 3: Lived Experience).

The emotional content of my writing often led me to spells of feeling psychically exhausted by the content of the autoethnography. For example while working on the stories for the chapter about white shame I wrote:

> I've been writing about the sources of white shame throughout my life. I've primarily focused on the ones I shared at the racial justice training. I still need to work on the last two stories. I feel pretty exhausted (emotionally) after writing them…I've been thinking about other ways that white shame gets triggered for me—the ugly thoughts that pop into my consciousness and not speaking up when someone says something ugly. I'm also wondering about my connection to shame as a result of my personal history. Do I have old shame that's just been sitting around? It's easy for me to feel I'm inherently flawed, especially when I writing these stories….What's the relationship for me between grief, shame, and despair? (Writing journal, August 2006).

> I'm emotionally frayed and physically tired. I feel like everything is sucking the life out of me. I think it's really important that I figure out how to protect the life that's in me and also do things that return life to me or give me energy. (Writing journal, October 2006)

While in the library writing this autoethnography, on the days when my writing was particularly difficult and I felt like I was reliving memories with emotions that were difficult to experience (e.g., shame or loss), I took breaks to go look at the paintings in the library and seek beauty. One day I paused in front of a painting titled "September—The Call" on the fifth floor (see figure 1). It was a painting of a woman surrounded by brightly colored birds. One of

the birds had lit on her right shoulder and looked as if it was cawing in a shrill voice at her. Another bird calmly perched on her left finger.
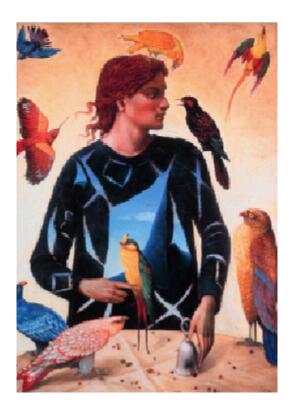

Figure 1. "September—The Call" painted by Katherine Ace provided solace through my writing about white shame.

Another bird of orange, yellow, green, and red soared upward while others circled near her head. There was a table in front of her covered with an ivory cloth. Small red berries were scattered about the table and three large raptors of blue, green, gold, purple, and orange perched on the table. The woman wore an argyle sweater. In a number of places the threads of her sweater had begun to unravel, which I thought the birds had done. In one place, the center of her chest, the threads had unraveled so much that you could see underneath her sweater. The unraveled threads of her sweater revealed a blue sky with wisps of clouds underneath. Initially when I looked at the

painting I was struck by the vibrance of its colors and the woman surrounded by birds. As I got closer to it, I perceived a tension between the woman and the birds. When I noticed that the threads of her sweater had unraveled, I thought that the tension was important, that the birds were trying to convey something to her. They were inviting her to get closer to her sky within. I connected this painting with my process of writing the chapter about white shame.

As I wrote the section on white shame, I re-experienced shame and sorrow, which made writing especially difficult. I decided to go visit "September—The Call" as respite from writing. As I looked at the painting I connected it to my experience of writing about white shame. I was unraveling the threads of my sweater to find my sky inside. When I returned to continue writing the section about white shame, before I began I wrote the following note to myself in my writing journal:

> The threads of her sweater are unraveling as the sky within her grows larger (Painting on the Fifth Floor of the Valley Library). I went to look at this painting right after writing this section about telling my stories [of colluding with racism] at the [the racial justice training]. Sifting through the places where I feel shame about being white feels like unraveling the threads of my sweater so that the sky within me can grow larger. (Writing journal, August 2006)

Each time I returned to the library to write, I returned to this painting to remind me of why it was important for me to be in this process of exploring my personal history and lived experience of race and connecting it to the larger cultural context of whiteness.

Six months after first connecting with the painting, I decided to read Katherine Ace's artist's statement and was struck by the following sentences: "I am interested in the role of dark feelings, thoughts and states of mind in the process of transformation. I am drawn to fire beneath reserve…" Through writing the section on white shame, I had the time and space to transform the shame I felt into forgiveness and compassion for myself, which I believe restored a sense of gentleness in me for my humanity. I also felt a renewed sense of empowerment to address racism in the different realms of my life. Regarding this process of shifting from shame to compassion, I wrote the following entries in my writing journal:

> I'm working on the unflattering story about the Marshall Islands when I realized that I'd been carrying a false sense of superiority and arrogance. Negative self exposure of one's self through the process of writing about white shame. Going over these stories again and again maintains my sense of humility. This writing demands that I be compassionate with myself. I hope that the compassion I can extend to myself I can extend to other White people as their learning about how they've been impacted by racism. (Writing journal, October 2006)

CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEXT

The process of writing this autoethnography was inductive. I began writing the autoethnography from the subject that had the most emotional charge and developed the text from there. At the time of initiating writing, white shame had the most emotional charge for me and so this is where I began. In my writing journal, early in the process of constructing the text I wrote the following about beginning with writing about white shame:

> Start with where you have most to say and write your way out.
> I will begin this dissertation where I have most to say. I'll start
> with writing a chapter about white shame. (Writing journal,
> August 2006)

The process I utilized for writing this autoethnography of whiteness involved identifying the themes that had strong emotional charge for me. I then wrote the stories associated with the themes without including any of my interpretation about my thoughts, feelings, and/or motivations. I then interpreted the story, including my thoughts and feelings along with my reflections as I revisited the story. Finally, I analyzed and contextualized the story utilizing theories associated with whiteness.

While writing the section about white shame, other experiences that had an emotional charge, which tended to be associated with struggling with despair as I learned about racism, informed me as to next directions for sections to include in this dissertation. As I was writing the section on white shame, I wrote the following exploratory thoughts in my writing journal about where to go with text construction after finishing the section on white shame:

> I've been thinking about other chapters. Hope, despair, and
> grief seem like important parts of the story…Feeling
> crazy…questioning yourself. Why care so much? Feeling like
> the only one, the only White person thinking about race. Could
> this be a chapter in the dissertation somewhere? Exploring my
> experience of naming whiteness and what that's been like for
> me. (Writing journal, August 2006)

Additionally, a professor who offered me guidance in the section of this dissertation on white shame asked me, "What prepared you for your

experience at the racial justice training in which you were able to acknowledge that you felt white shame and recognized how it inhibited your ability to be present?" In response to her question, I realized that emotionally processing the grief and despair I felt created space for me to begin to explore white shame. I wrote the following in my writing journal:

> Early on in this journal there's a question—what prepared me for this integrating experience at the racial justice training? And I immediately thought about the intense despair and grief I felt as I was ending my work on the Diversity @ OSU website. (Writing journal, October 2006)

As I wrote I also read and reread my retroactive field notes based on personal, professional, and research journals. Rereading the retroactive field notes assisted me with identifying themes and exploring how I fit in the literature on whiteness. For example in the following excerpt I wrote about the connection between my growing awareness of oppression and my increasing sense of despair as it connected with my white racial identity development:

> I am struck by how much I learned that first year of working on the Diversity @ OSU website. I think the more I learned the greater my already existing sense of despair became. In some ways I view that time period as a second Disintegration. I knew racism existed, but I was emotionally distant from what that meant. Peace Corps, thesis research in Kenya, the Diversity @ OSU website all brought me much closer, emotionally, to the impacts of racism. I opened myself up to being present to suffering. I'm not sure what to do with all my retroactive field notes. I think I'll read through them a little bit at a time. (Writing journal, October 2006)

While writing I struggled with time and space—my experiences, memories, and emotions were not linear. They overlapped, connected, diverged, and converged. One story would have tentacles that connected it to three or four other stories. In Chapter 3: Lived Experience of Whiteness, I found it challenging to write about grief, despair, and shame as separate experiences when they all felt connected. I recall moments when I felt shame, grief, and despair all in the same moment. I think, however, the challenge of writing about emotions in a linear format assisted me gaining clarity about the relationships among my feelings of grief, despair, and shame. At points when I felt overwhelmed on how to structure the text I typically wrote through my confusion. The following two journal entries exemplify my writing through feeling overwhelmed and confused about the relationships of despair and shame and coming to conclusions on how to proceed in constructing the text:

> I'm overwhelmed. How do I show the connections among my sense of despair (grief and rage) and shame? It feels awkward to put despair in one chapter and shame in another, though in terms of chronology I think it works. I did not acknowledge for quite some time that my white shame was a source of despair for me. In fact I didn't fully acknowledge white shame until the racial justice training. (Writing journal, November 2006)

> …It's difficult to write about grief and despair and shame and to have two different chapters. When I was feeling so much grief re: the Marshall Islands or about David and Darryl or about my grandfather I hadn't connected the grief I felt with my white shame. I need to think about segueing from the grief/despair section into the white shame section. (Writing journal, November 2006)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AS A RESEARCHER AND EDUCATOR

Kivel (2002) suggests the following points for being a White ally and listening to People of Color:

- keep in the forefront of consciousness the pervasiveness of racism and "rather than treating most events as isolated occurrences" seek patterns;

- be aware that if there is racism, then there is whiteness and examine how we [White people] may be "acting from assumptions of white power and privilege";

- "acknowledge any confusion or fear we [White people] may feel," so that we do not lapse into defensiveness; and

- seek support from other White allies so that the effects of whiteness on our psyches—"tendencies towards defensiveness or controlling behavior"—doesn't interfere with listening. (pp. 94-95)

I practice Kivel's (2002) first point—keeping in the forefront of consciousness the pervasiveness of racism—in exploring my own inner workings and in my relationship with others. I recognize that undoing racism is a lifelong process that requires deep intellectual and emotional engagement (Gerrard, 1995; Segrest, 2001). Regarding my practice, I wrote:

> So much of my practice is internal work—tracking my thoughts, shifting and reshaping them if they are prejudiced. I've also decided that when I have those thoughts I will name them when I am with other [white] people. I want to be visible about how I've been affected by racism. I think this is important to do with other White people. I am trying to be vulnerable and honest about my whiteness and how whiteness

> has messed with my head so that other White people may
> begin to feel comfortable enough to look at their whiteness. I
> need to model that we don't have race all figured out and that
> that continually trying to show others, and especially People of
> Color, that we've 'got it together around race' and are 'the cool
> white person' only gets in the way of us working on our racism
> and ending racism. (Writing journal, October 2006)

Additionally, awareness entails critical ongoing analysis of whiteness and the language of whiteness. At a holiday gathering a White woman, who I did not know particularly well, admired a candle on the fireplace. She decided to pick up the candle, which was quite large, to get a closer look at it and when she did she said, "Wow, this candle is heavier than a Chinamen's head." I had no idea how to respond to her comment about the candle, but had the familiar knot in my stomach that indicated that I needed to challenge or interrupt her comment, which was racist. In the moment, I did not know how to respond to her comment and felt anxious about changing the tenor of the evening and was silent. The next day I called a White friend and shared the story with her, because I was disappointed that I had not interrupted the comment I had heard the night before. My friend responded, "Thanks for bringing up another aspect of whiteness." We both knew the term was derogatory, but did not know the terms historical roots, so she suggested that we explore more deeply the origins of the term "chinamen." The dictionary states that the term originated in the late 1700s; is "usually offensive"; and was often heard through the phrase: "He hasn't a Chinaman's chance of getting that job" (Retrieved November 2006 from http://dictionary.reference.com/browse /Chinaman,). This phrase grew from deep anti-Chinese sentiment in the Unites States, which led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which made it illegal for Chinese people to immigrate to the United States and establish

citizenship. The Chinese Exclusion Act "came several years after the end of Reconstruction and signaled a national, bipartisan agreement that the United States was to be 'a white man's country'" (Retrieved November 2006 from http://www.assumption.edu/users/mcclymer/His130/P-H/chinese% 20Exclusion/default.html).

As I researched the term, I experienced its emotional impact as I perused documents and images that reflected the intensity of white supremacy and its violence, which strengthened my resolve to not be silent when I hear the term again. While I still would have preferred to have interrupted the White woman's comment in the moment, I found that historically contextualizing the term felt empowering. Knowing and feeling the historical context of the term and its relationship to white supremacy, strengthened me to interrupt the use of the term if/when I encounter it again.

To practice Kivel's (2002) second point—examine white power and privilege—in conversations with other White people about race, rather than trying to explain the experiences of People of Color, I try to refocus our conversation on whiteness and white racial identity. I try to shift our conversations so that we reflect on how our experience of white privilege and dominance may be affecting and distorting our points of view about the lives and experiences of People of Color. Regarding the process of trying to refocus conversations with other White people, I am challenged, which I wrote about in my personal journal in the following excerpt:

> Last night when I talked with [White woman] I talked about
> white racial identity every time the focus moved to [African

American woman] and who she is. I shared with [White woman] racial identity development theory and that White people have a racial identity, which affects how they interact with and respond to People of Color. Despite talking about my white racial identity development, I felt like the conversation kept returning to [African American woman] as the problem. In conversations with White people, I need to continuously refocus the conversation on whiteness and bring it back to White people as part of the problem. I need to speak from my own experiences of coming to learn about whiteness…I'm feeling excited about my research. I'm noticing in my conversations with many White people is that People of Color become the central focus, the problem, when it's us. (Personal journal, April 2006)

Several months ago at a gathering composed entirely of White women our conversation shifted to race. One White woman described an experience in a Black neighborhood when she learned that her white racial identity was not neutral. Another White woman in the group responded to her story by saying, "Those people are just so territorial." I had a very strong surge of anger and at the same time wanted refocus the conversation and said, "I think that there are a number of ways that White people have been violently territorial about space…Slavery, lynchings, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (separate but equal ruling), stealing land from Native people, redlining, opposing affirmative action. I think White people have been and still are very territorial about legal, economic, and educational systems in this country. Why are we so territorial?"

To practice Kivel's (2002) third and fourth points—acknowledgment of confusion and fear that may cause defensiveness and seeking support from other White allies—I have sought counseling specifically focused on my

affective experience of learning about racism and whiteness and have

cultivated authentic relationships with other White allies (see Chapter 3:

Lived Experience). Through counseling I have been able to process difficult

affective states (e.g., white shame) and through relationships with other

White allies, I have created compassionate spaces in which I know I will be

able to examine white dominance.

hooks (1994) stresses the importance of always challenging and questioning

the "mind/body split," that is, the separation of feelings from thoughts.

Adhering to the notion that there is a split between mind and body inhibits

the possibility of holism in educational and research settings and hinders the

process of self actualizations for researchers and participants and professors

and students.

Regarding the significance of vulnerability and disclosure in educational

settings, hooks (1994) asserts:

> When education is the practice of freedom, students are not the
> only ones who are asked to share, to confess. Engaged
> pedagogy does not seek simply to empower students. Any
> classroom that employs a holistic model of learning will also be
> a place where teachers grow, and are empowered by the
> process. That empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be
> vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks. Professors
> who expect students to share confessional narratives but who
> are themselves unwilling to share are exercising power in a
> manner that could be coercive. In my classrooms, I do not
> expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share
> in any way that I would not share. When professors bring
> narratives of their experiences into classroom discussions it
> eliminates the possibility that we can function as all knowing,

> silent interrogators. It is often productive if professors take the
> first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic
> discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and
> enhance our understanding of academic material. But most
> professors must practice being vulnerable in the classroom,
> being wholly present in mind, body, spirit. (p. 21)

When exploring theories of privilege and oppression I intend to be open, honest, and vulnerable about my lived experiences of the different aspects of my identity—dominant and/or subordinated—and to seek to learn about others—their lived experiences and identities. This is important to me for several reasons:

1. Honesty, openness, and vulnerability open up intellectual and emotional space for awareness and empowerment in me and those whom I am in relationship with.

2. Vulnerability decentralizes my power as a researcher and educator, lessens the hierarchical relationship that exists between professors and students and researchers and participants, and builds trust. If I expect students and research participants to take risks and be vulnerable and reflective about their lived experiences as they relate to theories of oppression, I must also be willing to take those same risks.

3. Honesty and openness about whiteness shifts the white gaze from People of Color back to whiteness, thus destabilizing the normative space that whiteness occupies in educational spaces.

To create open, honest, and vulnerable educational spaces, I plan to utilize dialogue, which is the catalyst for reflection and action, according to Freire (1993). "Love, humility, and faith" serve as the foundations for dialogue, thus allowing the development of non-hierarchical relationships, reciprocity, and

mutual trust. Regarding the relationships among love, faith, and humility to the building of trust in the process of dialogue, Freire writes:

> Whereas faith in humankind is an a priori requirement for dialogue, trust is established by dialogue. Should it founder, it will be seen that the preconditions were lacking. False love, false humility, and feeble faith in others cannot create trust. Trust is contingent on the evidence which one party provides the others of his true, concrete intentions; it cannot exist if that party's words do not coincide with their actions. To say one thing and do another—to take one's own words lightly—cannot inspire trust. (p. 72)

Through research and teaching, I am committed to creating spaces for reflection and critical thinking that inspires individual and collective actions to address injustice and suffering.

Active hope, another essential element of dialogue, allows those in dialogue to imagine a just world and determine the actions necessary to transform injustice to justice. Regarding the absence of hope in dialogue, Freire (1993) states that in the "encounter of women and men seeking to be more fully human, dialogue cannot be carried on in a climate of hopelessness. If the dialoguers expect nothing to come of their efforts, their encounters will be empty and sterile, and bureaucratic and tedious" (p. 73).

With dialogue, those involved are encouraged to connect their concrete experience of reality with the abstract, which supports an individual in making meaning of his or her lived experience and identifying "generative themes" (themes that illuminate how a person thinks about, acts on, and transforms her/his reality) from his/her lived experience of reality (Freire,

1993, p. 87). Making meaning and seeking generative themes requires relationships "in and among people together seeking out reality" through dialogue. Regarding the role of educators and researchers who participate in dialogue whether through research or teaching, Freire writes:

> It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, not to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their views and ours. We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their *situation* in the world. Educational and political action which is not critically aware of this situation runs the risk of "banking" or preaching in the desert. (p. 77)

As a researcher and/or educator participant in dialogue, my role is not to impose my points of view on others, it is to create a space in which all may discuss their points of view and the experiences which led to the formation of unique points of view and to share information that will invite all present, including myself, to critique, challenge, and transform their points of view and relationship to reality.

Frankenberg (1993), regarding her research discussed the following three realizations, which I think are essential for me to maintain awareness of as an educator and researcher:

> First, there is frequently a gulf of experience of racism between white people and people of color; second, that white women might have a range of awareness in relation to racism, with greater awareness based on, among other things, their long-term connectedness with communities of color…; third, that there is a cultural/racial specificity to white people, at times

more obvious to people who are not white than to white individuals. (p. 5)

As I wrote this autoethnography, I constantly questioned what I was not able to see. I also wanted to make abundantly clear that my psychic experience of pain related to racism as a member of a dominant group that has received endless benefits because of white skin privilege is vastly different than the experiences and suffering of People of Color. When I enter research and educational settings, I must keep at the forefront of my consciousness the "gulf of experience between white people and people of color" and continually seek to increase my understanding of what that gulf contains. Hurtado and Stewart (2004) stress the importance of researchers continuing to examine the "privileged side of oppression" and to critically reflect on the relationship of the "different standpoints of the researcher and the researched" (p. 316). I think as a White educator and researcher I must constantly examine the "privileged side of oppression" and be mindful of this in my relationships with students and research participants. If I do not vigilantly attend to how I have internalized white dominance, then I risk perpetuating and maintaining racism.

Regarding the second realization, that White women might have greater awareness about racism based on long-term relationships with Communities of Color, I think that it is important that when I am identifying and defining research questions and that I do so in relationship with Communities of Color. hooks (1989) validates the importance of transforming consciousness in an effort to be anti-racist and asserts that researchers must move beyond

individual consciousness in order to work for structural change. She writes in the chapter, "Overcoming White Supremacy: A Comment":

> While it is important that individuals work to transform their consciousness, striving to be anti-racist, it is important for us to remember that the struggle to end white supremacy is a struggle to change a system, a structure…For our efforts to end white supremacy to be truly effective, individual struggle to change consciousness must be fundamentally linked to collective effort to transform those structures that reinforce and perpetuate white supremacy. (p. 119)

I have progressed intellectually and emotionally in transforming my consciousness and striving to be anti-racist and recognize that this will be an ongoing process; however, I don't feel that I have progressed as far in terms of connecting to a collective effort to transform the structures that maintain and perpetuate white supremacy. I believe that it is essential that I embed research in collective efforts, which means that I will undertake, identify, and define research in relationship with People of Color and that those who participate in the process of research will share in the interpretation and representation of findings. In terms of educational settings, rather than developing course content and teaching in isolation, I will seek collaborative teaching relationships with Colleagues of Color and White allies.

Frankenberg's (1993) third realization "that there is a cultural/racial specificity to white people, at times more obvious to people who are not white than to white individuals" requires that I continue to critically examine the history and impacts of whiteness on White people and People of Color in my research and teaching and examine how historical patterns of white

dominance manifest themselves presently in individual and social relationships intra- and interracially. Aal (2001), a White, anti-racist organizer, describes the paradoxical nature of privilege as it relates to learning about whiteness and how he works with his own obliviousness to whiteness:

> I became an "expert" at being racist from having been born and raised "white" in a country that is structured along racist lines. At the same time, because I am a beneficiary of this system, the impact of racism is almost entirely invisible to me. In order to get real insight into the dynamics, it has been necessary for me to read history and analysis by people of color to get the view from "outside." In order to survive each day, whether there is a white person in the room or not, they have to deal with the consequences of a world ordered by white skin privilege. They are the experts on whiteness and its impact on themselves, white people, and the United States as a whole. (p. 294)

Regarding the cost of not critically examining whiteness, Hurtado and Stewart (2004) write, "If whiteness is never articulated, then it is people of color, as a group, who can be scrutinized and blamed to exalt the perfection of that which is 'natural' and left unexamined" (p. 317). Rather than approaching interactions with People of Color from a place of scrutinization and blame, I will read history, be present and listen intently so that I may learn more about whiteness, which often is much more obvious to People of Color than me.

Aal (2001, p. 295) in his essay, "Moving from Guilt to Action: Antiracist Organizing and the Concept of 'Whiteness' for Activism and the Academy" asserts that in order for "whiteness studies" to not "slip from being the

examination of an important social/political category to becoming just another career path" or "fodder for the academic paper mill" that it must be engaged with communities struggling for social justice. Aal states that to end racism, work must focus on those who benefit from and perpetuate (either consciously or unconsciously) the structural inequities of racism. In terms of future directions for research in whiteness studies, I intend to focus my efforts in the following research agenda suggested by Aal (2001):

- examine how whiteness "as a set of overlapping identities, structures, and power relations keeps the United States divided along the lines of race, class, and gender" (p. 296);
- identify the barriers that White people within academia construct that prevent People of Color from accessing higher education;
- examine interpersonal racism, that is, the behaviors and attitudes of White people, who consciously or unconsciously identify with the "white power structure," that break the trust of People of Color, thus eliminating the possibility for "long-lasting relations of solidarity" in ending racism (p. 299); and
- "critique Western rational thinking and individualism" to "overcome the dualist splits between mind and body, individual and community, spirit and idea" (p. 301).

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