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THE SOMATIC EXPERIENCE OF WHITE PRIVILEGE: A DANCE/MOVEMENT THERAPY APPROACH TO RACIALIZED INTERACTIONS

A DISSERTATION

(submitted by)

WENDY ALLEN

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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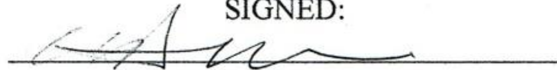

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined the somatic experience of White privilege in participants who were committed to developing a nonracist White identity. It postulated that there are somatic cues and expressive signatures of White privilege that, once identified, could be addressed through basic dance/movement therapy interventions used at the intrapersonal level. Awareness of these cues may help White people navigate their privilege in racialized interactions thereby reducing further enactments of racism.

Using Critical Race Theory and Whiteness Studies as conceptual frameworks and building on research exploring the impact of oppression on the body, this study sought to answer the following questions: (1) How do White people experience skin privilege? (2) What is the impact of sociocultural and institutional norms around race on the self-image, body language, and interoception of those who hold racial privilege? (3) What are the somatic markers of privilege? Interviews included verbal and non-verbal prompts designed to elicit information about how participants recognize and experience White privilege through sensation and movement. The non-verbal portions of the interviews were based on theoretical approaches from the field of dance/movement therapy. Data was analyzed using a constant comparative method with Helms' White Racial Identity Development model as a frame of reference for sorting and coding.

The eight themes that emerged were consistent with the literature on privilege while also providing additional information about its somatic components. They were: disorientation, marked by confusion and tension resulting from a

disrupted worldview; self-structuring, demonstrated through the creation of internal lists that appeared to re-establish equilibrium; polarization in self and in relationship to others; describing privilege through contrast; self-consciousness, marked by embarrassment and self-deprecating humor; seeking affirmation from others; maintaining awareness through regular engagement with one's privilege; and seeking wholeness or reintegration.

Findings suggest the field of dance/movement therapy has existing approaches that could support White people in developing more racial stamina by supporting: increased racial self-awareness and the ability to witness oneself; tolerance for sensate experience including strong or uncomfortable feelings; access to a range of thoughts, movements, and responses; and empathy in racialized interactions. Potential applications include both clinical and educational settings.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This dissertation explored the somatic experience of White privilege by inviting White people to reflect on their felt sense experiences in racialized interactions. Scholars from many fields including, counseling, Critical Race Theory, Whiteness studies, somatics, education, and women's studies, have made important contributions to the literature on privilege, racism, and oppression. This study endeavored to expand on this work by broadening its focus from oppressive actions and their impact, to include the internal experience of the oppressor.

A concern in examining this topic was that attending to the experience of the person in the racially privileged location would reinforce social norms by centering Whiteness. However, because White people are frequently unaware of their privilege, the topic needs to be more centralized for them. To this end, the literature on White privilege and Whiteness often refers to the invisibility of privilege and the need to make it *seen*. In this dissertation it is suggested that it needs to be *felt.* The descriptions provided by the participants in this study offer an initial understanding of the felt experience as well as some preliminary ideas for how to work with privilege from a somatic, dance/movement therapy informed, perspective. Such an approach has the potential to be a contribution to the existing literature on privilege, as well as to the literature on applications of dance/movement therapy.

Based on an approach used in Critical Race Theory called narratives and counternarratives (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013), I also include some personal experiences and reflections in an

effort to own my positionality and continue to make my "Whiteness" more conscious. As a White person, this means engaging in continuous self-reflection as part of my investigative process.

Personal Reflection: *Unaware*

> *I hurried down the hall to get to the meeting on time. It was important that I be there…as Chair of one of the programs in the building I needed to demonstrate my support. A White student used a racial slur in class when talking to their professor, a person of Color. I needed to be at this meeting. We needed to figure out what to do.*
>
> *As I sat in the meeting, I noticed that the majority of the faces were white. And I noticed that the white faces were doing a lot of the talking and planning about how to handle things. I noticed that the white voices were dominating the discussion. I wondered what the instructor of the class thought about the plans being formed. I asked. I said, "Is this OK?" The response I got was entirely unexpected and became a starting point for my own learning about privilege and oppression. She turned toward me and, speaking emphatically, she told me questions like mine were part of the problem. She went on, speaking about White Supremacy and how ignorance like mine was functioning to keep things locked in place. I can't remember her exact words. I do remember being horribly embarrassed and totally confused. As the heat rose in my cheeks, I tried to speak and became more flustered and uncertain. I felt my breath catch as my chest tightened and my throat closed. Through my abdomen there was a rushing sensation that felt chaotic and unstoppable, like flood waters crashing through a small riverbed. The sound of my own blood thundered in my ears. My thoughts became blurry and I struggled to find some familiar internal landmark I could use to orient and ground myself. I wanted to run out of the room. Hot tears were starting to rise in my eyes. My white colleagues quickly jumped in to try to explain my intentions. I don't really remember what happened after that. I just sort of checked out.*

I have spent years trying to fully understand this incident. I have engaged in deep self-reflection and consulted with White allies and people of Color in carefully selected contexts such as affinity groups and ally groups. I believe that what I was missing that day was the understanding that, as a White professor, my experience in the classroom was not the same as my colleague's experience. By asking if it was ok

to come into her classroom, I was suggesting that our experiences as professors were the same, despite the difference in our races. I assumed her classroom was hers to run. This assumption was based on my experience as a White person with skin privilege. I did not consider the influence of institutionalized racism or even recognize its pervasive presence. I did not have daily experiences of racism where students challenged my knowledge and expertise by taking more space, asking more questions, publicly contradicting me, and requiring me to provide more evidence to legitimize my points. I did not have to deal with more subtle expressions of bias in the form of unchecked white privilege (like mine) that fueled assumptions of shared experience and defined the baseline of normalcy with little awareness of other worldviews and the lasting impact of history. If students preached "oneness" and a "common humanity" that supposedly allowed us all to transcend difference and settle into a loving coexistence, I could belong without having to leave my racial identity behind.

My obliviousness to the differences between my experience and my colleague's experience rendered her daily reality in our institution invisible and left her and others shouldering the burden of racism when the responsibility really lay with me and my White colleagues. This experience became a catalyst for my exploration of White identity and the motivation for this study.

Purpose

Making Whiteness visible to those with racial privilege, in order to counteract the centering of Whiteness and the corresponding assumption that Whiteness is "normal," is at the core of much of the literature on racism and

nonracist identity development (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Wildman & Davis, 1997). Recognizing Whiteness exposes the invisible dynamics of privilege and marginalization that perpetuate racism and its influence on the lives of White people and people of Color. However, seeing Whiteness and examining privilege are not simple tasks. As White people become aware of their racial identity and the advantages it has afforded them, there is often a corresponding realization that racism is not just "an ugly page from history" or "an embarrassing heirloom from the past" (Tehranian, 2008, p. 117), but rather a persistent phenomenon that continues to exist today. Whiteness becomes visible everywhere as both an identity and a social construct, seen, for example, in the limited color tones of beauty products available at the market or in the expectation that "professionalism" is embodied in a certain, very culturally bound way. Within the United States, the painful history of colonization and slavery and the institutional sanctioning and normalization of White dominance can make recognizing Whiteness difficult, not just because there is much to distort and cloud the view, but because there can often be a strong reaction in Whites when confronted with the realities of their own race. This reaction is often negative, highly emotional, and almost immediate with the effect of preserving the status quo and enabling the White person to persist in the comfortable reassurance of their current worldview. The verbal and nonverbal behaviors expressing this reaction are further enactments of privilege and racism. The purpose of this study was to learn more about the somatic aspects of the reactions White people in the United States have as they come to understand their racial privilege. By examining the ways that racism is perpetuated and enacted

through these somatic reactions, this dissertation research aimed to identify body-based approaches that could support the development of a nonracist White identity.

Significance

The literature on anti-oppression education points out that while cultural competence is frequently understood to be about the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the emotional responses that occur around the topic of race necessitate attention to feelings and unconscious biases (Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006; Hogan & Mallot, 2005; Lucal, 1996). Because the positioning of Whiteness as a cultural norm keeps White people from thinking of themselves in racial terms, White people may be particularly prone to negative, defensive, and sometimes hostile emotional reactions to racial dialogues (Boatright-Horowitz, Marraccini, & Harps-Logan, 2012). This reactivity may also be due to the fact that, for Whites, acknowledgment of racial identity includes facing the reality of a history of systematized racial domination and White privilege (Boatright-Horowitz, Marraccini, & Harps-Logan, 2012).

Carter (2005) contended that it is essential for White people to examine their affective experiences and somatic reactions along with their intellectual understanding if they are to develop cultural competence. While much of the literature on White reactions to racial dialogues recognizes the need for an affective focus (Carter, 2005; Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pedersen, 2006; Hogan & Mallot, 2005; Lucal, 1996), there is little information on how to work with emotion and affect and their corresponding sensate and energetic roots in the body. Moving from an intellectual understanding to an affective one requires that the focus be turned to

the body to increase awareness of the sensate experiences that accompany the emotions and reactions often expressed in dialogues about race.

With its focus on internal sensate experience and the assumption that all movement expression "is reflective of both intrapsychic dynamics and one's socially evolved mode of relating" (Schmais & White, 1986, p. 26), dance/movement therapy offers a way to understand and work with the affective and emotional experiences that arise around racial privilege. In a study on the embodied experience of oppression, Johnson pointed out,

> Although conceptual frameworks from education, counseling, and critical embodiment studies offer powerful lenses through which to view experiences of oppression, existing social justice models (e.g., anti-oppressive education, multicultural counseling and social work) are insufficiently inclusive of the body's role in navigating oppressive social interactions. (2014, p. 80)

Through an inquiry into the body's role in perpetuating White privilege and racism, in this dissertation I strive to expand the body of research and literature that examines and creates social action around racial dynamics. I postulate that there are somatic cues and expressive signatures of White privilege that, once identified, could be addressed through basic dance/movement therapy interventions used at the intrapersonal level. Awareness of these cues may help White people navigate their privilege in racialized interactions thereby reducing further enactments of racism.

Definition of Terms and Key Concepts

The role language has played in the construction and perpetuation of racism in the United States is notable. Language is one of the ways humans shape, define, and understand experience. Spacenko (2008) argues that this formation and the subsequent spreading of ideas through communication can shape and adjust reality. One of the hallmarks of privilege is the ability of the dominant group to define reality for marginalized populations (C. Sherrell, personal communication, 2015). Because the narrative of the dominant group is institutionally sanctioned and normalized, the categories and concepts defined by the language of these narratives are profoundly influential yet problematically exclusive (Cohen, 2004). Therefore, I approach this section on definitions with thoughtful deliberation and intentionality, aware of my location as part of dominant white culture and the historical significance of definitions in this context. I also attempt to challenge the dominance of White norms by including key concepts and ideas from authors, theorists, and clinicians of Color.

Culture

Culture refers to “all those things that people have learned to do, believe, value, and enjoy in their history…the ideals, beliefs, skills, tools, customs, and institutions into which each member of society is born” (Sue & Sue, 2013, p.42). Significant to this study are definitions of culture that include how culture is learned through transmission. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) define culture as consisting of “patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols” (p. 181). They go on to explain that “the essential core of culture consists

of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action" (p. 181). Johnson focused on the central role the body and nonverbal communication have in the transmission of these ideas and values, pointing out that because "we learn about social systems through patterns of interpersonal nonverbal communication," the body and its expression have a significant role in "reproducing social patterns of inequity and injustice" (2011, p. 14).

Dominant Culture

The dominant culture is the most powerful and influential culture in an environment where multiple cultures are present. Frequently, social norms and parameters for presentation and behavior are determined by and modeled after this group, creating an environment in which those who do not fit or will not comply are pathologized.

Race

In the past, race was understood to be a set of identifiable physical traits that were inherited biologically. Modern race theorists have determined such a definition to be arbitrary and antiquated (Bennett, 2004; Betancourt & Lopez, 1993). Race is now understood to be a social construct developed by those holding power to categorize people in relation to dynamic economic, social, and political conditions (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Omi and Winant (1994) explained,

> Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. Although the concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics, selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always and necessarily a social and historical process. (p. 55)

Racism

Racism refers to a system of oppression based on racial identity (Feagin & McKinney, 2003). According to this definition racism is not simply an expression of prejudice occurring between people, it is the institutional structures, policies, and practices which create and perpetuate the beliefs and behaviors that drive domination and oppression. Scholars such as bell hooks, use the term *White Supremacy* as it not only emphasizes the systemic aspect of race but also identifies racism as the primary responsibility of White people rather than people of Color (hooks, 1994).

Whiteness

According to Frankenberg, "whiteness is a location of structural advantage, or race privilege" (1993, p. 1). The term *Whiteness* refers to a systemic perspective that includes the ways that White people and people of Color are socialized to participate in and uphold an oppressive system (Frankenberg, 1993).

White Privilege

White privilege refers to the benefits and unearned advantages White people receive because of their skin color. Although White privilege can be recognized in

personal interactions, it originates and operates at the institutional level. Peggy McIntosh (1988) describes privilege as "unearned power conferred systematically" (p. 82).

Oppression

Oppression refers to a concept that can only be understood in relationship to privilege and the larger social system. Goldenberg and Goldenberg (2004) defined a system as "a set of interacting units or component parts that together make up a whole arrangement of organization" (p. 512). Oppression exists because privilege exists; they are polarities in a system.

While many definitions of oppression focus on the intentionally cruel or unjust uses of power, several authors suggest that current forms of oppression are often more covert and even unconscious (Sue & Sue, 2016; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Swim & Cohen, 1997). The more subtle demonstrations of oppression are frequently missed because "[they are] perceived to be normative, and therefore do not appear unusual" (Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004, p.117).

Mindell (1995) described how these subtle or unconscious expressions of oppression are often communicated through nonverbal, somatic cues resulting in a "double-signal"–an unintended, unconscious message revealed by the body that contradicts the intended verbal message. He stated, "Double signals describe secondary processes–things you may not want to identify with if you realized you were saying them…[they are] dream-like [and] convey a person's deepest feelings, spiritual experiences and unconscious sense of power and rank" (p. 54).

Scholars in the field of nonverbal communication support this idea suggesting that there is a range of nonverbal behaviors, often performed unconsciously because they are normalized by dominant culture, that express and perpetuate oppressive dynamics (Manusov & Patterson, 2006; Freeman & Henley, 1995). This range, which includes such things as the use of space, the degree of expressivity, and the level of familiarity, demonstrates the presence of interactional asymmetries in the communication between individuals with differing social status (Johnson, 2014). Perhaps most notable is the assertion that those holding less social power are more sensitive to or more aware of the other's nonverbal expression (Henley & LaFrance, 1995; Sue & Sue, 2016). This imbalance of awareness suggests that a lack of consciousness around aspects of nonverbal communication and its impact on others is a part of how privilege functions (Sue & Sue, 2016).

Literature on inclusion recognizes such nonverbal asymmetries and double messages as microaggressions. The term "microaggression" was first proposed by psychiatrist Chester Pierce in the 1970s and was defined by Sue and Sue as, "brief and commonplace daily verbal or behavioral indignities" (2013, p. 150) that have the following attributes:

> They (a) tend to be subtle, unintentional, and indirect; (b) often occur in situations where there are alternative explanations; (c) represent unconscious and ingrained biased beliefs and attitudes; and (d) are more likely to occur when people pretend not to notice differences. (2013, p. 154)

Frye (1997) suggested that these messages create conditions that inhibit movement and motion in the bodies of those that are oppressed. She ties this experience to the root or etiology of the word oppression saying:

> The root of the word 'oppression' is the element 'press'. Presses are used to mold things or flatten them or reduce them in bulk, sometimes by squeezing out the gases or liquids in them. Something pressed is something caught between or among forces or barriers which are so related to each other that jointly they restrain, restrict, or prevent the thing's motion or mobility. (p. 146)

Frye's perspective is further developed by Johnson (2009) whose research on the relationship between trauma, oppression, and the body demonstrates the negative impact oppressive nonverbal dynamics have on the body.

Domination

Domination refers to relational power that comes from and is sustained by the ongoing patterns of oppressive treatment of particular social groups (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Racialized Interactions

Racialized Interactions are exchanges that intentionally or unintentionally center Whiteness and maintain white privilege through the exclusion and marginalization of people of Color. These interactions often include microaggressions or "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color " (Solorzano et al., 2000, p.60). Because microaggressions are

typically unintentional and unconscious, White people are often not aware of them as they occur in these interactions (McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 1997; Sue et al, 2016).

Cultural Competence and Cultural Safety

Cultural competence comes with the acquisition of awareness, knowledge, and skills that enable one to relate effectively across difference (Sue & Torino, 2005). The literature on cultural competence has suggested that competence is demonstrated through sensitivity to the social predicaments of those in particular ethnic or racial groups as well as an understanding that members of these groups share certain cultural traits, values, beliefs, and attitudes that inform behavior (Good, Willen, Hannah, Vickery, & Park, 2011). The problem with this perspective is its tendency to assume the normalcy of Whiteness and "to reify and essentialize cultures as consisting of more or less fixed sets of characteristics" (Kirmayer, 2012, p. 155) without consideration for the individual's personal history or the influence of other social factors. This oversimplification effectively erases individual differences leading to the universalization of particular traits and the reinforcement of racial stereotypes. More recent literature on cultural competence has recognized the complexity of intersectionality and the impact of systemic power dynamics and social inequity (Modood, 2007; Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Alternative constructs such as cultural safety (Papps & Ramsden, 1996) and cultural humility (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) have been proposed as more socially conscious and responsive replacements for cultural competence. The notion of "cultural safety" originated in New Zealand in the 1980s in response to Maori discontent with medical care (Kirmayer, 2012). Although there is some overlap in

the concepts of cultural competence and cultural safety, cultural safety does not emphasize developing competence through knowledge about particular cultures. Instead, cultural safety "emphasizes recognizing the social, historical, political and economic circumstances that create power differences and inequalities" (Kirmayer, 2012, p. 158). In other words, cultural safety requires a systems perspective combined with self-knowing and self-reflection around one's own sociocultural identities and their potential impact and influence on relational dynamics. Cultural humility attempts to address overgeneralizations and stereotypes through listening and learning from those in marginalized racial locations (Kirmayer, 2012). This concept is most effectively used in conjunction with cultural safety as it has the inherent risks of potentially othering the person, requiring them to educate the person in the dominant location (Johnstone & Kanitsaki, 2007).

Interoception

Interoception is the perception of internal sensations including those associated with organ functioning and emotions. Scholars contend that since sensations are the informants of emotions, "interoception can be seen as a precursor and even a blueprint for emotional response" (Price & Hooven, 2018). As a result, sensitivity to interoceptive information "allows an individual to be aware of an emotion cue early, and therefore to process, interpret, and strategize at the onset of stressful events" (Price & Hooven, 2018). In this way interoception is not only a means for awareness of emotions, but also a means for regulating them (Craig, 2015). This concept will be an important part of the discussion on awareness and witnessing later in this study.

Somatic Markers

This term refers to somatic events such as feelings, sensations, and movements, that inform decision-making (Damasio, 1994). According to Bartol and Linquist (2013), these somatic experiences are "tags" of changes that occur in the autonomic nervous system in response to particular objects or events.

Nonracist White Identity

This term refers to a phase in Helms' White identity development model (1995) which will be further explored in this research as a framework for understanding White privilege and the development of an nonracist White identity. Helms suggests that developing a healthy White identity requires movement through two phases, each with three racial identity statuses. The first phase is "abandonment of racism" and includes contact, disintegration, and reintegration statuses. The second phase is forming a Nonracist White Identity and includes pseudoindependence, immersion, and autonomy (Helms, 1995). The characteristics of a nonracist White identity are most evident in an autonomy status and include "increased awareness of one's own Whiteness, reduced feelings of guilt; acceptance of one's role in perpetuating racism; and renewed determination to abandon White entitlement" (Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 327).

Summary

This chapter introduced the somatic experience of White privilege as the topic of study, discussed its purpose, and provided definitions for the words and key concepts that will appear in the sections that follow. The chapter also considered the potential significance of the study and how it might contribute to the existing

literature on White privilege and somatic approaches to anti-oppression work. Through the review of literature and the data gathered from the study, the following chapters will establish the basis for the application of dance/movement therapy to the experience of White privilege.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

These ceremonials in honor of white supremacy,

performed from babyhood, slip from the

conscious mind down deep into muscles…

and become difficult to tear out.

Lillian Smith

Research suggests that even White people who identify as anti-racist and consciously act in ways that are intended to support equality, regularly engage in racist acts (Pierce, 1970). This is because racism is institutional and systemic, so deeply embedded in the structures and practices of society, it is internalized by individuals as "normal". This chapter explores the literature on privilege and dance/movement therapy, making the case that despite this normalization, individuals are ultimately responsible for their behaviors and actions. Several scholars have acknowledged the links between oppression and the body (Cantrick, Anderson, Leighton, & Warning, 2018; Johnson, 2009). Because, as these researchers argue, the body is "central in the exploration of oppressive dynamics, [it] is also crucial in the journey towards healing" (Cantrick, Anderson, Leighton, & Warning, 2018, p. 192). This healing is not limited to bodies marginalized because of their characteristics or abilities, this healing needs to occur at the institutional and systemic levels where privilege and marginalization originate. Addressing the dominant ideology that drives oppression means that those with privileged identities need to become aware of and examine what is happening in their bodies.

I begin this chapter by reviewing relevant scholarship on Critical Race Theory and Whiteness Studies to form the framework for the conceptualization and understanding of race and White Privilege. Literature from the fields of counseling, sociology, women's studies, somatics, and dance/movement therapy provide a framework for considering the role of the body in power dynamics. Specifically, research on Whiteness studies, cultural embodiment, and somatic conditioning provide a basis for the discussion of how privilege is expressed and perpetuated through movement and the body. In addition, I explore the ways in which White people discuss and/or do not discuss racism, supremacy, and privilege. Included in this discussion are the strategies White people use to maintain and perpetuate racist systems and structures in the United States. Finally I discuss the field of dance/movement therapy and the possible ways its theory and practice might be useful in addressing White privilege.

This literature review examines White privilege in the context of the following research questions:

1. How do White people experience skin privilege?
2. What is the impact of sociocultural and institutional norms around race on the self-image, body language, and interoception of those who hold racial privilege?
3. What are the somatic markers of privilege?

Conceptual Frameworks

Critical Race Theory

Following the Civil Rights era legal scholars and activists began to note that the progress made in dismantling discriminatory practices was stalling and, in some cases, “being rolled back” (Delgado, 2003, p.125). Although civil rights cases challenging discrimination proliferated after the Civil Rights Movement, the outcomes of these cases did not reflect a fundamental shift in underlying sociopolitical structures. In fact, in areas such as legislative districting, affirmative action and criminal sentencing, the decisions seemed to sustain or perpetuate structural and systemic inequities rather than dismantling them (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). Frustrated and seeking an explanation for the apparent reversal of momentum, a group of legal scholars including Derrick A. Bell, Charles Lawrence, Richard Delgado, Lani Guinier, and Kimberle Crenshaw, began to interrogate the legal system and its role in perpetuating oppression (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). The insights and observations of these scholars became the foundation for Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Critical Race Theory offered a perspective on race and racism that continues to provide a framework and foundation for considering race in the United States. Unlike its predecessor, Critical Legal Studies, which drew from European thinkers such as Hegel, Marx, and Freud, Critical Race Theory was inspired by prominent figures in the Civil Rights Movement such as Martin Luther King, Jr., W. E. B. Du Bois, and Malcolm X (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). The revolutionary thought and perspectives of these individuals laid the groundwork for Critical Race

Theory and advanced the understanding of the dynamics of racism and White Supremacy in the United States.

Basic tenets of critical race theory and the "Rules of Whiteness". Critical Race Theory scholarship challenges dominant perspectives on race and racial dynamics through the following insights and observations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009):

1. Racism is "normal" and therefore invisible to the perpetrating group.
2. The interests of people of Color are only acknowledged and accommodated when they also somehow benefit or converge with the interests of White people.
3. The perspectives of White people have long created the dominant discourse and determined "reality". However, the narratives and counter-narratives of those oppressed by racism provide important challenges to the hegemonic stories of White people.
4. Race is a social construct that has been mutable over time. The only consistency has been that race is defined by the White majority in a way that affirms the continuing social position and power of that group.
5. Race is only one of many identities a person may hold. The intersection of these identities can have a significant impact on a person's perspective and experiences.

These basic tenets of Critical Race Theory challenge some of the unspoken but unconsciously agreed upon "rules of Whiteness". These rules effectively maintain the racial status quo by establishing pervasive social norms around the behaviors

and actions of White people in relation to the topic of race. These rules and their relationship to Critical Race Theory are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Racism is "normal". The first observation of Critical Race Theory is that racism is so entrenched within society, it is indistinguishable from the institutions and structures it affects. According to Mills, "Racism is a global White supremacy and is itself a political system, a particular power structure of formal and informal rule, privilege, socioeconomic advantages, and wealth and power opportunities" (1997, p.3). Because racism is so pervasive and so entrenched, it seems normal and therefore goes unnoticed by those who benefit from it. Morrison (1992) used the metaphor of a fishbowl to describe this phenomenon. The bowl, like White supremacy, is "the structure that transparently (and invisibly) permits the ordered life it contains to exist in the larger world" (p. 17). She explained that recognizing racism is like suddenly seeing the bowl itself after looking at the fish, the castle, the pebbles, and the bubbles. This shift in perspective is disorienting and the result is that Whites cannot understand the world they themselves have constructed (Morrison, 1992).

The political, social, and economic advantages White people benefit from are outside of their awareness making it difficult for them to comprehend the impact of White domination and the experiences and perspectives of those in racially marginalized locations. Mills (1997) stated:

> As a general rule, white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self-deception on matters related to race are among the most

> pervasive mental phenomenon of the past few hundred years, a cognitive and moral economy psychically required for conquest, colonization, and enslavement. And these phenomenon are in no way accidental, but prescribed, by the terms of the racial contract, which requires a certain schedule of structured blindnesses and opacities in order to establish and maintain the white polity. (p. 19)

Because normalization has made racism almost impossible for White people to see, many White people are unaware of their racial power (DiAngelo, 2016) and the oppressive impact of their actions and behaviors (Lawrence, 1987).

The invisibility of racism to those with racial power not only perpetuates oppression but also creates many obstacles to potential change. The reactions White people have to the topic of race is evidence of the important role the normalization of racism has played in our society. To question this normalization is to potentially upend the structures and systems that are the framework of the dominant perspective of reality. As a result, many White people are either consciously or unconsciously committed to upholding the invisibility of racism. This commitment is therefore the root of many of the rules that maintain White supremacy.

The rule most relevant here is that "nice", well-meaning White people do not recognize racial difference or talk about race (DiAngelo, 2016; Tochluk, 2010). This rule originated in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement when society seemed to determine that explicit, outward expressions of racism were no longer acceptable. However, the values and beliefs that fueled racist acts were still prominent, they simply went underground, masked by White politeness (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-

Billings, 2009) and the denial of race as an issue (Tochluk, 2010). Barker (1981) referred to such strategies as the *new racism*, or new norms and practices that appear less racist than those from the past yet still produce similar racial outcomes. Sherrell (2009) understood this shift to be indicative of the capacity racism has to mutate. She likened it to a virus that can develop resistance to treatment by morphing into another version of itself. This ongoing mutation makes it possible for racism to persist. DiAngelo (2018) concurred, explaining that "All systems of oppression are adaptive; they can withstand and adjust to challenges and still maintain inequality" (p. 40).

Interest convergence. Bell's (1980) concept of interest convergence contended that any advances in racial equality have occurred because they were beneficial to White people in some way. The concept of interest convergence provides an explanation for the persistence of racial oppression. Racial marginalization can only be resolved when those in privileged locations find that dismantling oppression serves them too. In the meantime, many policies, behaviors, or actions that seem to be anti-discriminatory actually perpetuate the status quo. For example, Delgado and Stephancic (2001) suggested that while objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy could appear to be progressive on the surface, they actually function to preserve the self-interest of the White population. The result is that despite outward appearances, there is no significant change to the underlying structures. Protecting White self-interest (and therefore the status quo) is another rule of Whiteness, often demonstrated through White solidarity and a lack of self-reflection or interrogation of one's motives.

Narrative and historic context. The "normalness" of racism and therefore White privilege is often demonstrated and perpetuated through "majoritarian stories" (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). These stories are limited in scope, reflecting the experiences and perspectives of the dominant group while falsely assuming they are shared by everyone regardless of racial identity or sociocultural location. Critical Race Theory challenges this generalization by acknowledging that "the simple matter of the color of one's skin so profoundly affects the way one is treated, so radically shapes what one is allowed to think and feel about this society" that it makes standardizing the White experience impossible (Williams, 1991, p. 256). One's perspective is heavily influenced by one's position in society.

Positionality then becomes the frame of reference for knowledge and understanding, thus establishing an argument for the necessity of a more subjective narrative. Critical Race Theory advocates for the use of storytelling, personal narratives, and counter-narratives as ways to "cast doubt on the validity of accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 144). By legitimizing the voices of those in marginalized locations, CRT works to de-center Whiteness, inviting the silenced stories to be heard. These stories are often challenging for White people to hear, "trigger[ing] powerful emotions, ranging from denial, anger, and defensiveness to shock, surprise, and sadness" (Taylor, et al, 2009). The presence of these reactions suggests that these narratives threaten several assumptions that inform the rules of Whiteness.

Universalism. The first assumption is of universalism. In contrast to positionality, universalism assumes "that because we are all human, categories such as race have no meaning and provide no more or less opportunity" (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 202). A universal perspective allows one to bypass thinking about racial identity and how it might influence one's experiences and perspectives (DiAngelo, 2016). Because universalism allows White people to consider themselves outside of a racial context, it also allows them to believe that they are capable of an objective point of view, one that is free from the influence of social and historical conditioning. By contrast, positionality challenges White people to think of themselves as racial beings, which inevitably calls into question much of what they have believed to be true. What was perceived as objective knowledge about reality, is suddenly placed in a larger context that exposes indisputable fact as arguable and mutable, with reality being informed by position and perspective. For example, prevailing ideologies about capitalism, meritocracy, and opportunity demonstrate their limitations and become a less reliable way of measuring success and accomplishment.

Counter-narratives that contradict universalism and reveal this subjective reality often elicit strong reactions in White people because of the way they disrupt the White worldview. Such stories bring the racial history of the United States into the foreground and challenge White people to recognize and own their racial history and lineage. Acknowledging this history and its lasting impact requires an ability to bear witness to the pain and harm caused by racism and oppression (DiAngelo,

2016; Tochluk, 2010). How to develop the sturdiness to do this is a question in this dissertation and will be discussed in depth in later sections.

Being knowledgeable. Contextualizing the dominant narrative also challenges the notion that being White means being knowledgeable by placing the authority of who can and should speak about racism and oppression with those who directly experience it. Tochluk explained, “There is a pervasive perception of White people as experts in our society, which goes hand in hand with the regular dismissal of people of color” (2010, p. 127). Evidence of this can be seen in the relentless questioning of people of Color in prominent roles in education (Tochluk, 2010; Wise, 2008) and in the tendency of people to give more credence to something a White person says, even if it is exactly the same thing that a person of Color said just moments before (Tochluk, 2010). White people internalize the assumption of being more knowledgeable, often unconsciously, only noticing it when it is challenged. By lifting up the voices of people of Color, Critical Race Theory challenges White people to interrogate their perspectives, to tolerate the discomfort of not knowing, and to listen.

The social construction of race. Another dominant perspective that Critical Race Theory challenges is the concept of race itself. CRT theorists recognize that race is not a fixed term. Instead, it is fluid, the definition being continually shaped and adjusted by the needs of the dominant group (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Baldwin (1984, 2010) offered the radical idea that there is no such thing as Whiteness, Blackness, or race. He wrote, “No one is white before [they] came to America. It took generations, and a vast amount of coercion, before this

became a white country" (p. 136). In other words, although there are visible variations in skin pigmentation, the meaning of that variation is created. If one lived in a culture that did not make differences in skin color significant, the concept of race would not exist (Baldwin, 1984, 2010). In this way, race is what sociologists would refer to as a "social construction".

Johnson (2006) pointed out that socially constructed reality is powerful because it is experienced as "simply the way things are in some objective sense" (p. 20). He went on to explain that once human beings assign a name to something, the thing acquires a significance it would not otherwise have. It "takes on a life of its own as we forget the social process that created it and start treating it as 'real' in and of itself" (Johnson, 2006, p. 20). This "reality" then shapes how we think and feel about ourselves and others and informs our behaviors and actions. This process establishes the foundation for *othering.*

Othering, originally coined within post-colonial theory, is a term that can be defined as "a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities" (Powell & Menendian, 2016, p. 17). Othering applies to race and ethnicity as well as many other somatically expressed dimensions including, but not limited to, gender, size, and ability. Historically, differences in physical appearance, presentation, and expression have been the means through which othering and domination could be legitimized and enacted (Caldwell, 2014; Sherrell, 2018; Johnson, 2014). One way this has occurred is through the construction of "normalcy." What is understood and referred to as "normal" is only representative

of the dominant culture. Perspectives, expressions, behaviors, and appearances that do not conform to or fit this mold are pathologized (Klein, 2016). The result of this othering process is that those who are at the margins of the dominant group are assigned limited and often stereotypic social identities. These stereotypes serve a specific purpose in maintaining dominance. Delgado and Stefancic (2013) explained:

> Popular images and stereotypes of various minority groups shift over time...in one era, a group of color may be depicted as happy-go-lucky, simpleminded, and content to serve white folks. A little later, when conditions change, that very same group may appear in cartoons, movies, and other cultural scripts as menacing, brutish, and out of control, requiring close monitoring and repression. (p. 8)

The stereotypes change as the needs of the dominant group evolve. For example, as White people colonized the Native land they depicted Native Americans as savage warriors. When broken treaties and reparations were taken to court, Native Americans were portrayed as lazy, foolish, or drunk. These images reduced the complexity of Native culture to simplistic, singular stereotypes that served the White agenda (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). Unfortunately, this harmful dynamic continues today and can be readily seen in the vicious portrayal of immigrants from particular nations.

Intersectionality. Critical Race Theory maintains that one's internal and external experiences are shaped by the intersecting nature of one's multiple social identities (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). In addition to embodying many other sociocultural identities, I am White and I am cisgender female. These

privileged and marginalized locations interact in complex ways to become part of the way I internalize dominance and racism (DiAngelo, 2006). For example, I have found that if left unexamined, my marginalized location as a woman works to reinforce patriarchy, which, in turn, keeps me from speaking out about racism. Therefore, I am finding that as I work to unravel my racism, I also need to look at how I have internalized sexism and patriarchy. Crenshaw (1991) suggested that one's intersecting positions function in a symbiotic way, reinforcing and sustaining one another to preserve the status quo. By embracing intersectionality, CRT centralizes the way patterns of dominance are learned through intersecting identities and challenges the idea held by some White people that their marginalized locations make them less racially privileged (DiAngelo, 2006).

Whiteness Studies

Whiteness Studies or Critical White Studies (CWS) is an offshoot of Critical Race Theory that specifically examines the constructs and implications of being White and racially privileged. Although this field of study is often referred to as "new" (Doane, 2003), the focus on Whiteness as a unique identity has been occurring among people of Color in the United States for centuries (hooks, 1992; Roediger, 2001). Slavery and racism have required people of Color to "know and understand the white people better than the white people know and understand them[selves]" (Johnson, 1912). For generations scholars of Color such as Du Bois (1920), Ellison (1952), Baldwin (1963), Allen (1975), and Morrison (1992) have maintained that "whiteness lies at the center of the problem of racism" (Applebaum, 2016, p. 2). What is "new" is the emergence of Whiteness Studies in White

consciousness. By the mid 1990s White academics in the U.S. were questioning and writing on how the construction of Whiteness had shaped American culture and history (Fishkin, 1995).

Whiteness Studies problematizes Whiteness, refocusing the traditional discourse on race from its emphasis on a racialized other to an interrogation of dominant racial norms and constructs (Doane, 2003). Anderson (2003) suggested that there are three main themes in the Whiteness Studies literature, all reflecting the tenets of Critical Race Theory from which this paradigm emerged. They are: (1) a disruption of Whiteness as normal; (2) an acknowledgment of the presence of a system of White privilege; and (3) an understanding that race is socially constructed and can therefore be deconstructed (Anderson, 2003; Applebaum, 2016). Like Critical Race Theory, Whiteness Studies interrogates and aims to disrupt the underlying ideologies or rules that function to maintain White supremacy. Therefore, the field examines the characteristics of White supremacy and the reactions White people have to the topic of race.

White supremacy. Underlying both racism and White privilege is the foundation of White supremacy. No longer reserved for extreme hate groups, this terminology is used by race scholars to refer to a sociocultural system of domination and the assumed superiority that legitimizes it (DiAngelo, 2016). Ansley (1997) explained,

> By "white supremacy" I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control

> power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings. (p. 592)

The significance of using the term to refer to a widespread systemic condition rather than to label a few disturbing individuals is that it acknowledges a *pattern* of social domination that is not only historic but also ongoing. Frankenberg (1997) talked about Whiteness as “a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed” (p. 1). In other words, “rather than isolated acts of individual race prejudice that only bad people engage in, racism is a network of norms and practices that consistently result in advantage for whites and disadvantage for people of color” (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 152). The notion of pattern is key because it pushes against many of the ideas and structures that perpetuate racism, including individualism, binary thought, and even the current discourse on White privilege.

Individualism. Individualism contributes to the perpetuation of White supremacy in several ways. First, an individualistic perspective conditions what we are able to see and not see in terms of racial harm. King (2018) offered the metaphor of the stars and constellations as a way to explain this conditioning. Gazing at the sky on a clear night, an inexperienced eye would see a multitude of twinkling stars, whereas a more experienced eye would discern the larger patterns or constellations of stars. King maintained that a similar phenomenon occurs around the patterns of racism. Racism is seen by those who hold privilege as

individual acts of harm, while the larger patterns of domination that perpetuate oppression go unrecognized.

King used the police shootings of young African American men as an example. As White people talk about the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, they often describe "a 'star of harm' – an isolated incident" (2018, p. 50) with much emotion and outrage. As a person of Color, King saw the "constellation of harm… a repeating racial group pattern" (2018, p. 50) that painfully condones such behavior as normative. When such shootings are seen as individual incidents, the conversation about them can focus on the moral character of the specific individuals involved. This reinforces a good white person/bad white person dynamic that ultimately serves to distract attention away from a larger social pattern of racism and White domination, thereby allowing White people to avoid responsibility and racial group membership. African American scholar Omowale Akintunde (1999) stated:

> Racism is a systemic, societal, institutional, omnipresent, and epistemologically embedded phenomenon that pervades every vestige of our reality. For most whites, however, racism is like murder: the concept exists, but someone has to commit it in order for it to happen. This limited view of such a multilayered syndrome cultivates the sinister nature of racism and, in fact, perpetuates racist phenomenon rather than eradicates them. (p. 1)

DiAngelo (2016) claimed that individualism is "one of the primary barriers to well-meaning (and other) white people understanding racism: as long as I don't see

myself as *personally engaged* in acts of racism, I am exempt from it" (p. 195, italics in original). By viewing myself as an individual and perceiving repeated acts of racism as singular events committed by racist individuals, I am able to detach myself from the long, painful history of domination and perceive myself as a "good white person" (McIntosh, 2012).

Binary thinking. The construction of the racist=bad/non-racist=good polarity allows White people to miss the fact that oppression as a structural concept is "reproduced by the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society" (Applebaum, 2016, p. 4). The systemic perspective offered by the concept of White supremacy is intended to illuminate the ways practices and policies stemming from "good" intentions can still be racist because they contribute to the maintenance of an unjust system. Bell hooks (1989) explained,

> When liberal whites fail to understand how they can and/or do embody white supremist values and beliefs, even though they may not embrace racism as prejudice or domination, they cannot recognize the ways their actions support and affirm the very structure of racist domination and oppression that they wish to see eradicated. (p. 113)

In other words, understanding racism simply as prejudice and deliberate acts fails to recognize that one can be complicit in the perpetuation of oppression even if one does not perceive oneself as racist – even if one perceives oneself as good. In fact, a person may have good intentions and still be complicit. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed this particular issue in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail (1963):

> The Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not…the Klu Klux Klanner, but the white moderate who is more devoted to order than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says, "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I can't agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by the myth of time; and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a "more convenient season". (p. 3)

This quote suggests that even among people who support equality, the socialization around White privilege and its corresponding beliefs ultimately serve to maintain White comfort and undermine action for social change. By failing to recognize the limited applicability of pervasive dominant social norms and continuing to rely on underlying racist structures, White people perpetuate oppressive norms rather than changing them.

Furthermore, when the negative impact of well-intended actions are pointed out, the binary thinking of racist=bad/non-racist=good can cause White people to become defensive because they believe they are being associated with the fundamentally bad or immoral people they understand to be racist. Rather than listening and trying to understand the impact of their actions, White people focus on maintaining their "goodness" by denying or negating the experience of others (DiAngelo, 2016). These defensive reactions have a somatic component that will be discussed later in this chapter.

For the moment, it is important to examine the concern many White people have about whether they are a good or bad person. The concern serves to re-center Whiteness and the needs, feelings, and perceptions of those with White skin privilege. Feminist scholar Marilyn Frye (1983) asked, “Does being white make it impossible for me to be a good person?” (p. 113). Similarly Linda Martin Alcoff (1998) queried, “What is it to acknowledge one’s whiteness? …[is] it to acknowledge that one is inherently tied to structures of domination and oppression, that one is irrevocably on the wrong side?” (p. 8). Questions such as these contribute to the perpetuation of racism because they re-center Whiteness, are individualistic in nature, and fail to interrogate the underlying structures and systems that maintain oppression. Applebaum (2016) suggested that more meaningful (and possibly stirring) questions are “What are the privileged ways in which [I am] implicated in the maintenance of white supremacy, often unwittingly? How does benefitting from the system make [me] complicit in the perpetuation of white supremacy?” (p. 6). One way to address these questions is through a critical analysis of White privilege which is the topic of the next section.

It is also important to note that while this paper focuses on the perpetuation of privilege and domination by “well-meaning White people”, this is in no way intended to minimize the significance and harmful impact of the ongoing explicit acts of discrimination and violence that occur on a daily basis in the United States. This focus is chosen in an effort to continue to illuminate the way racism is perpetuated in less visible, overt ways for these are understood to be potentially even more enduring and pernicious (Lawrence, 1987).

White Privilege

White privilege refers to the benefits and unearned advantages White people receive on the basis of their skin color. Although the characteristics of the privileged group define the societal norm, those who hold privilege are frequently unaware of it (Wildman & Davis, 1997). Referring to White privilege as an "invisible knapsack of unearned assets" (1997, p. 291), Peggy McIntosh explained how she can rely on the benefits she has become accustomed to without being aware of using them at all. In fact, her experiences are so engrained as "normal" and "neutral", she easily assumed they were "universally available to everybody" (p. 295). Because White people view their Whiteness as normal, they do not recognize it as privilege. Its normalization hides it. Whiteness is "an attribute that, despite its power to shape lives, is seldom noticed by those who possess it" (Knowles & Peng, 2005, p.223).

Concerned with the functioning and impact of Whiteness in everyday life, Whiteness studies scholars have worked to uncover the invisible codes, markers, and assumptions that perpetuate and express White privilege (Frankenberg, 1993, 1997; Hurtado, 1996; Kidder, 1997; Rothenberg, 2002). Authors such as Peggy McIntosh point out the taken-for-granted advantages bestowed to white people on a daily basis. McIntosh's foundational essay, "White Privilege and Male Privilege" (1997) listed 46 social, political, and cultural advantages of being White in the United States. Included in the privileges she listed were these: not being assumed to be a representative of one's group; not having to educate one's children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection; and being able to worry about racism without it being seen as self-interested or self-seeking (in fact, among

liberal White people worrying about race is often regarded as altruistic, further evidence of being a "good White person").

Kivel (2002) suggested that White people learn about privilege through an ongoing socialization process that includes repeated experiences of preferential treatment during formative years. This process creates habituated ways of thinking that "are uncritically absorbed from our family, community, and culture" (Cranton, 2006, p.37). These habituated ways of thinking are not easy to deconstruct because the ongoing, daily experiences of White people continue to resonate with and reinforce such a world-view. Using a well-known analogy the authors of "White-Washing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society" (Brown et al., 2003) explained, "the last thing a fish notices is the water" (p. 34).

Critiques of White Privilege

Although the term "White privilege" was popularized by McIntosh's work, many scholars and feminist writers of Color such as bell hooks, Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, and Patricia Hill Collins, have been discussing similar ideas for some time (Kegler, 2017). In a recent interview (2015) Ta-Nehisi Coates suggested that the current interest in such ideas can be partially attributed to the addition of the term "privilege". He explained how "*privilege* is a word that [was] created to make white people comfortable" with difficult content. He contended that the word *privilege* and the images of wealth and success that it conjures up serve to buffer White people from considering how privilege and oppression are inextricably linked. McIntosh herself reconsidered her use of the word calling it "misleading" (1997). She went on to explain that the word connotes positive states and infers that privilege must

therefore be desirable or "something everyone must want" (291). Yet, as she pointed out, the traits the term actually refers to are far from positive or enviable.

Another criticism of White privilege is that it emphasizes a quality of passivity that minimizes the presence of White people's active interest in reproducing racial dynamics. For example, Sullivan (2006), like other writers on White privilege, repeatedly portrayed White people as being "constituted by" something outside of their consciousness or control. Vice similarly claimed, "Because of the brute facts of birth, few white people, however well-meaning and morally conscientious, will escape the habits of white privilege; their characters and modes of interaction with the world will just be constituted in ways that are morally damaging" (2010, p. 326). The world in this passage seems to exist outside of White people's agency and control even though it is their actions that historically created it and currently maintain it. Furthermore, this passage is an excellent example of how the discourse on privilege re-centers White individuals by focusing on the good/bad binary mentioned earlier.

In his essay, "The Color of Supremacy: Beyond the Discourse of White Privilege" (2009), Zeus Leonardo contended that because privilege is described as happening without the knowledge or consent of White people "it conjures up images of domination happening behind the backs of whites, rather than on the backs of people of color" (p. 262). A discourse on privilege that emphasizes passivity reinforces a notion of White innocence that not only maintains biased notions and good/bad binary thinking, but also obscures history and ongoing acts of domination. Leonardo continued his critique stating:

> The study of white privilege begins to take on an image of domination without agents…with the unfortunate consequences of masking history, obfuscating agents of domination, and removing the actions that make it clear who is doing what to whom. Instead of emphasizing the process of appropriation, the discourse of privilege centers the discussion on the advantages that whites receive. It mistakes the symptoms for the causes. (2009, p. 262)

Leonardo's writing makes clear that the privileges Whiteness Studies scholars address only exist because there are underlying structures of domination that make them relevant. While these social structures have historical roots, Leonardo argued that in order for privilege to continue, the structures themselves must continue as well. In other words, it is cyclical, the state of dominance that enables privilege continues to exist because it continues to be maintained by acts of domination (Leonardo, 2009). He argued:

> If racist relations were created only by people in the past, then racism would not be as formidable as it is today. It could be regarded as part of the historical dustbin and a relic of a cruel society. If racism were only problems promulgated by "bad whites," then bad whites today either outnumber "good whites" or overpower them. (2009, p. 267)

The good/bad binary, creates an image of the racist as "always other" that is inherently illogical. If Whites' self-image as nonracist were accurate, racism would, presumably, disappear. Yet there is evidence of racism and underlying structures of

domination all around us. As Bonilla-Silva suggested, we live in an environment where "racism thrives without racists" (2006).

Understanding White privilege as "unconsciously reproduced, passively inherited, and unwittingly maintained" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 231) both denies White complicity and establishes a situation where there is no potential for change. If privilege and supremacy are outside our control, how can White people have any agency in changing it? This binary - unconscious/no agency; conscious/agency - creates a dead end with no clear path forward for dismantling oppressive systems. Instead, one might consider the idea that one can be both unconscious and actively engaged.

The activity of White ignorance. The denial of complicity relies on a lack of awareness and obliviousness that is precisely part of what privilege affords. While privilege is often understood to refer to some sort of material gain or social advantage, it also involves preserving and even defending the ignorance that enables it (Applebaum, 2016; Leonardo, 2009; McIntosh, 1997).

McIntosh describes two different manifestations of privilege, positive and negative (2005). Positive forms of privilege are benefits that should be extended to and shared by everyone. For example, everyone should have access to good medical help. Negative forms of privilege, on the other hand, should not be available to anyone because they reinforce oppression and uneven power dynamics. McIntosh pointed to the privilege to be arrogant, ignorant, and dismissive, as examples of negative privilege. She explained, "I can remain oblivious to the language and

customs of persons of color who constitute the world's majority without feeling in my culture any penalty for such oblivion" (1997, p. 295).

Mills (1997) contended that not only is there no penalty, but that such ignorance is actually socially sanctioned. He explained that there is a set of covert meta-agreements he refers to as "The Racial Contract" between White people that serves to secure their dominance while maintaining the subordination of people of Color. To meet this end, the Racial Contract enables White people to misinterpret the world with the assurance that this biased perspective will be supported and upheld as the true version of reality by all those benefitting from it (Mills, 1997). As a result, ignorance "will *feel* like knowledge to those who benefit from the system because it is supported by the social system as knowledge" (Applebaum, 2016). Therefore, White ignorance can be understood not as "a lack of knowledge" but instead as "a particular kind of knowledge" (Mayo, 2002, p. 211) that protects White innocence and drives the discourse on race and racism away from deeper inquiries that question the underlying foundations of White supremacy. As a result, White ignorance becomes a kind of knowing that "actively protects systemic racial injustice from challenge" (Applebaum, 2009, p. 14). Medina (2013) referred to this kind of active ignorance as "meta-ignorance" or an ignorance of one's own ignorance. Meta-ignorance promotes a refusal to consider complicity and supports denial strategies that maintain the status quo. As White ignorance works to safeguard privilege through systematically supported mechanisms of defense, it becomes an active agent in oppression. Ignorance, therefore, is an *act*. It is the act of ignoring complicity and participation. It is the act of protecting privilege. It is the act

of consuming and perpetuating the dominant narrative on race. It is the act of supporting the systems and structures that sanction racism and racist acts.

Ignorance and complicity are deeply intertwined. Ignorance allows White people to be complicit without disrupting the portrayal of White people as "good" and "innocent". Complicity enables ignorance by allowing it to go unchallenged. The symbiotic relationship of these two dynamic forces is the foundation for many of the defensive behaviors and actions that White people exhibit in relationship to race and racism. Meta-ignorance, complicity, and defensiveness are all aspects of privilege that are reflected in how White people inhabit their bodies and move through the world. In order to understand the somatic experience of White privilege that this study attempts to address, it will be helpful to examine the ways that the body participates in the expression of privilege as well as the maneuvers that defend it. Participation at the somatic level may be automatic due to how social norms and ideals are transmitted nonverbally. The defense strategies also have a somatic component in that they work to maintain an internal homeostasis in the face of new and/or challenging information or ideas. The inward experience and outward expression that accompany these defenses are of particular relevance to this paper. The somatic signatures of participation and defense are the topics of the following sections.

The Non-Verbal Enactment of White Privilege

The concept of meta-ignorance demonstrates how privilege is not only about passively receiving benefits, but also about ways of being in the world that *actively* perpetuate dominance. Ahmed (2007) illustrated this point by drawing attention to

the tendency White people have to make themselves the center of attention without realizing it. Making a similar observation, Rich (1979) described what she calls "white solipsism" or the tendency of White people "to speak, imagine, think [and act] as if whiteness described the world" (p. 299, parenthetical added). It is important to note that while the discourse on individualism would have one believe that how a person inhabits their body or moves through the world is simply a matter of personal expression, literature from the fields of social justice, Whiteness studies, and somatic psychology suggests otherwise (Caldwell, 2018; Sherrell, 2018; Johnson, 2011, Sue & Sue, 2013). These fields contend that embodiment and movement are not only culturally bound but also deeply influenced by power and one's sociocultural locations. Somatic studies scholar, Rae Johnson (2011), suggested that actions and behaviors are somatic manifestations of the dominant social discourse. Furthermore, such behavior is interactional – as one moves through the world in a particular way it has an impact on others in the environment and influences how those people inhabit their bodies and the space. As I move through my world in privileged ways I perpetuate marginalization and oppression – even if I am not consciously intending to. As Johnson contended, the actions shaped by regulative discourse "effectively construct subjects as privileged or oppressed" (2007, p. 81).

Asymmetrical interactions. The literature on nonverbal communication supports Johnson's assertion by suggesting that there are some notable characteristics that consistently appear in the interactions between individuals with differing social statuses. Freeman and Henley (1985) suggested that one feature of a

power differential between individuals is the presence of asymmetry in their exchange. Asymmetrical interactions are characterized by one member of the interaction (usually the individual with the most power) having access to behaviors that are not available to the other person. Johnson (2007) provided a workplace example in which an employee may be expected to remain more formal while the supervisor has the privilege of accessing a wider range of nonverbal behaviors including those that are more casual, relaxed, or familiar. This asymmetry extends to the use of space and touch. As Johnson (2007) pointed out, in the United States those who hold more social power are afforded greater personal space and have the ability to move in and out of the personal space of others at will. Sullivan (2006) referred to this freedom of movement when he calls attention to the "white ontological expansiveness" that allows White people "to act and think as if all spaces – whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, spiritual, bodily, or otherwise – are or should be available to them to move in and out of as they wish" (p. 10). DiAngelo (2018) connected this freedom with a feeling of belonging stating,

> I am free to move in virtually any space seen as normal, neutral, or valuable. While I might worry about my class status in some settings, for example, when attending a "high-society" event such as a museum opening or an art auction, I will not have to worry about my race. In fact, my race will work in my favor in these settings, granting me the initial benefit of the doubt that I belong there. I will also certainly not be the only white person there, unless the event is specifically organized by, or celebrating, people of color. (p. 55)

In her article titled "Shape-in(g) Space in Violence" Dance/movement therapist Thania Acaron (2016) used spatial analyses to examine asymmetrical relationships and their potential impact on bodies, particularly those in marginalized locations. Defining *portability* as the act of carrying our sense of space with us as we move, Acaron explained how people have notions or expectations around what their "optimal" portability would be. These expectations or hopes are either constrained or encouraged by life factors. She went on to assert "the restriction of portability by another with or without consent…can be considered an act of violence" (p. 9). *Disarming the Playground* author Rena Kornblum (2002) acknowledged that although some spatial intrusions/restrictions can be unintended, they are still forms of violence nonetheless. That is to say, even if my actions are patterned by a process of socialization that occurs beneath my everyday consciousness, I am still causing harm.

Often when White people are told that they have harmed or hurt a person of Color through their actions, they will respond that they "didn't mean to". Such a response centers Whiteness by suggesting that the feelings and intentions of White people are more important than the impact on people of Color. Furthermore, in a social environment that sanctions a good/bad binary, intentions and impact can get confused. Sociologist Allan Johnson explained, "if something bad happens, someone's conscious bad intentions must be behind it. A corollary is that if your intentions are good, they cannot result in something bad" (2006, p. 114). Claims of good intentions do not account for the influence of an environment that sanctions and normalizes racism. In such an environment one's embodiment and expression

are conditioned by dominance and ignorance, leading to actions and behaviors that are harmful even when they are not intended to be. In other words, as a White person whose embodiment has been "constructed within the social and political contexts of day-to-day experience"(Johnson, 2007, p. 20), I do not need to intend to be spatially intrusive in order to be intrusive and have a harmful impact. Assuming access to space, filling space with my thoughts and feelings, and centering myself within a space, are just a few of the ways that I might violate someone's portability without consciously intending to.

Returning to the topic of asymmetry, Acaron provided an example of how differences in social locations result in particular spatial negotiations. Citing scholars from the field of women's studies, she pointed out how women make spatial choices every day that are informed by "fear of violence, genderization of space and socializations of power" (Acaron, 2016, p. 21). She went on to explain how such spatial negotiations are "considered a 'given' within women's experience" (p. 22) because acts of spatial violence against them are so normalized. For example, if a woman is walking after certain hours in a public park and something happens to her, she is somehow given part of the blame. (What was she doing out there so late? Why was she alone? Didn't she know that was dangerous?) Normalization means that instead of addressing the violent acts as unjustifiable, the woman is questioned about her purpose and intent for being in the space (Acaron, 2016). A similar phenomenon occurs with people of Color. A recent example is the incident at a Starbuck's in Philadelphia where two black men were arrested for trespassing while they waited for their business partner to arrive.

Henley and LaFrance (1985) noted that in interactions where there is a power differential, such as between a White person and a person of Color, the person in the marginalized location will tend to have a higher awareness of the nonverbal communication occurring and will tend to be more accommodating or adaptive to the dominant person's nonverbal communication style. When one considers the history of violence enacted upon people of Color in this country, it makes sense that those in marginalized locations would have a heightened level of awareness – one's survival would depend upon it (Sherrell, 2018). Citing the work of theorists in the area of trans-generational trauma, Burstow (2003) linked trauma and oppression arguing that individuals from marginalized or oppressed groups carry lasting psychological effects from their experiences. Because it would be easy to further oppress and marginalize these groups, Burstow is careful not to pathologize this trauma explaining, "trauma is not a disorder but a reaction to a kind of wound" (p. 1302). The wound is from "the insidious traumatization of living day after day in a sexist, classist, racist, ableist, and homophobic society" (Burstow, 2003, p. 1308). The traumatization is not only from the daily obstacles and hardships imposed by the systems and institutional structures of a racist society, but also from the daily assaults that occur in interpersonal interactions with those in positions of privilege. Burstow and others (Caldwell, 2018; Edelman, 2018; Sherrell, 2018) argue that these asymmetrical interactions in which a person of Color must carefully navigate interpersonal and institutional power dynamics are psychologically, psychically, and somatically expensive for the person in the marginalized location.

Furthermore, one might conclude that the accommodating quality of these asymmetrical interactions has the potential to reaffirm the expectation White people have that their perspective, position, and presence will be centered. Referring to this sense of entitlement Tochluk (2010) encouraged White people to consider "how we enter spaces where conversations are already occurring and the degree to which we speak in ways that assume correctness" (p. 121). From a somatic perspective one might also invite White people to consider how they inhabit their bodies and move through the spaces they are in.

Racial comfort. Because Whiteness provides a sense of belonging and centrality, it carries with it an expectation of racial comfort. In the dominant position, "White people are almost always racially comfortable and thus have developed an unchallenged expectation to remain so" (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 205). DiAngelo (2018) uses Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to explain the presence of this expectation. According to Bourdieu (1980) habitus is the result of the repetitive practices and actions of people in relationship to one another and their environments. Through this repetition thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions become familiar and expected. When this habitus is disrupted by unfamiliar social cues or challenges to one's perception, disorientation results and is quickly followed by attempts to restore balance or the comfort of familiarity (DiAngelo, 2018).

Because having privilege includes ongoing affirmation by the dominant social narrative, White people do not build tolerance for the discomfort of racial stress. Furthermore, because, as discussed earlier, Whiteness is "invisible", the

cause of the discomfort is likely to be externalized or blamed on the person or event that triggered it rather than on one's own racial identity and history. This blame results in a number of socially sanctioned actions that serve to re-establish comfort by defending one's dominant position and allowing its corresponding worldview to remain undisturbed.

Acknowledging the long painful history of racism is indeed uncomfortable for White people and requires a particular kind of sturdiness that will be discussed in more depth shortly. However, this discomfort is minimal compared to the painful experiences of those in marginalized locations and I in no way mean to equate the two. Such a false comparison is a mistake that can occur when White people say that "they don't feel safe" in cross-racial discussions or interactions (DiAngelo, 2016). White people seem to confuse safety with comfort (Sherrell, 2018) and appear to be addressing the fact that they are not feeling the comfort they expect or feel entitled to. Furthermore, a statement about safety from a White person in this context suggests that the prejudiced stereotype of the "dangerous black person" is part of what is informing their perspective. This stereotype is so pervasive that it even shows up in anti-racist discourse. For example, the term *White fragility* (DiAngelo, 2016, 2018), which is relevant to the discussion of habitus and racial comfort, refers to the "state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable" for White people (DiAngelo, 2016, p, 247). While it is important to identify this lack of racial stamina and its potential consequences, the term itself raises questions because it references the stereotyped image of a strong (and dangerous) black person and a delicate or vulnerable White person (usually a woman). Use of the

term also raises questions about what a possible solution might be. Even the term "sturdiness," which is introduced in this study as a possible counterpart to fragility, is problematic because it has the potential to be used as an invitation for Whiteness to become stronger or more solidified. While both these terms may benefit from further examination, the lack of White racial stamina they refer to plays a significant role in the defensive reactions White people have around the topics of race and privilege. The next section explores the literature about these predictable reactions.

White reactions to discussions on race.

White guilt. When I think back to the situation I described at the very beginning of this paper, I still cringe, experiencing the hot gritty feeling of the shame that arose in me. When I hear my colleague speak about the racial oppression of her ancestors and the challenges she faces on a daily basis I feel my head become heavy and my chest sink back. I'm not sure what to say or how to respond. I frequently remain silent. The literature suggests these reactions of shame and guilt are common among White people around the topics of race and racism (Feagin & Vera, 2005; Flagg, 1997; Grillo & Wildman, 1997; Helms, 1995; Katz, 2003; Kivel, 2002; McIntosh, 2005; Rothenberg, 2005; Tatum, 1997). These reactions have been the focus of recent counseling psychology research and have been linked empirically to White privilege. Several studies have identified a strong correlation between White privilege awareness and feelings of guilt (Iyer et al., 2003; Powell et al., 2005; Swim & Miller, 1999). One such study conducted by Swim and Miller (1999) found that higher levels of awareness around White privilege predicted higher levels of White guilt. And in their study examining the impact a course addressing racism had on

college students, Kernahan and Davis (2007) found that feelings of White guilt increased in White students.

Scholars such as Jensen (2005) and Kivel (2002) explained White guilt by situating it in a larger context. Both agreed that White people have White privilege through no fault of their own. Kivel pointed out that people do not choose their race, they are born or raised into it from birth. He wrote, “You are not responsible for being white or for being raised in a white-dominated, racist society” (2002, p. 12). Frequently a focus on conferred dominance, or the idea that racist values and beliefs are passed on generationally, allows White people to engage in a dialogue about racism without having to take responsibility for their own participation and investment in it. Milazzo (2016) argued that this view portrays “white people as *subjected to* rather than as co-creators and agents of the world” (p. 557). But rather than using the argument of socialization to excuse White people, both Kivel and Jensen advised that Whites should focus on and take responsibility for the way their actions continue to perpetuate oppression. This stance shifts the focus from guilt, which can be stagnating, to potential action, which can support anti-racist efforts.

Vice (2010), on the other hand, contended that White people *should* cultivate feelings of guilt and shame because these feelings are appropriate responses to the harm caused by White privilege. She went on to suggest that shame is more fitting than guilt because guilt “is a reaction to what one has *done,* not primarily to who one *is*” (p. 328). While Vice’s position challenges the portrayal of Whiteness as inherently good, it does little to advance the idea that privilege is perpetuated by the continual actions of White people. Furthermore, Vice’s argument re-centered the

affective experience of White people suggesting that White people should "concentrate on recovering and rehabilitating themselves" (p. 324) from the moral damage racism has done to them.

When White guilt becomes a way to re-center the experiences and needs of the White person, it ultimately prevents deeper reflection and levels of responsibility. Rather than working to understand structural racism, White people can become over-concerned with the intra- and inter-personal aspects of it, focusing on their own feelings and whether they appear to be racist to others (Applebaum, 2016; Leonardo, 2009). DiAngelo (2016) explained that guilt is an understandable response and is not the problem on its own. Instead, it is what White people do with these feelings that can be problematic. Frequently, in an effort to avoid the difficult feelings of guilt and restore racial comfort, White people take advantage of historical and institutional power to regain control of the situation that is highlighting their privilege and racism (DiAngelo, 2016, 2018; Johnson, 2009). DiAngelo (2018) explained,

> We [white people] wield this power and control in whatever way is most useful in the moment to protect our positions. If we need to cry so that all resources rush back to us and attention is diverted away from a discussion of our racism, then we will cry (a strategy most commonly employed by white middle class women). If we need to take umbrage and respond with righteous outrage, then we will take umbrage. If we need to argue, minimize, explain, play devil's advocate, pout, tune out,

> [get confused, go silent], or withdraw to stop the challenge, then we will. (p. 112)

These defensive maneuvers and denial strategies function to maintain White supremacy and reflect the limited capacity White people have for racial challenges.

White confessions. One common response to guilt is to seek absolution through "confessions" (Applebaum, 2010) that presumably function to restore the experience and image of goodness. According to Levine-Rasky (2000) such confessions of privilege serve as a "redemptive outlet" that allow White people to continue to perceive themselves as "good whites" in comparison to those "bad whites" who do not acknowledge privilege (p. 276). She hypothesized that the unexamined assumption is "that confessing to the inner working of whiteness in their lives would redeem them from their complicity with racism" (Levine-Rasky, 2000, p. 277). Such public self-disclosures ultimately re-inscribe privilege "put[ting] an unfair burden" on the person being addressed by requiring attention, time, energy, and even comfort (DiAngelo, 2016, p. 224). This is particularly problematic when the person being addressed has been injured or harmed by the enactment of privilege.

White tears. The term *White tears* refers to the expression of White privilege and racial discomfort through "lamentations about how hard racism is on *us*" (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 131, italics in original). Much of the literature on White tears focuses on the impact of White women crying in cross-racial interactions (Accapadi, 2007; Patton, 2014). Historically, this behavior has proven to be dangerous for people of Color, particularly black men who have been harmed, abused, and even

murdered, because they were believed to have caused distress for a White woman (DiAngelo, 2018). This history has relied not only on the stereotype of the "dangerous black man" but also on the sexist portrayal of White women.

The dominant social narrative has portrayed White women as "the foundation of purity, chastity, and virtue" while portraying women of Color using negative stereotypes and images (Accapadi, 2007; Hernandez & Rehman, 2002; Collins, 2000; Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1981). Palmer (1994) suggested that "the problem for White women is that their [racial] privilege is based on accepting [this] image of goodness" (p. 170) and the qualities of powerlessness and helplessness associated with it. The presence of these qualities is evident both in the behaviors of White women and in the ways they are responded to. When a White woman cries over some aspect of racism, White people assume she needs to be rescued. In these moments she becomes the focus of their attention. "While she is given attention, the people of color are yet again abandoned and/or blamed" (DiAngelo, 2018) and then expected to offer her comfort and reassurance that she is not a bad person (Palmer, 1994). In this way White women's tears serve to re-center White feelings and needs.

I vividly remember this happening in the situation I talked about in the introduction. After my colleague pointed out my White privilege and unconscious supremist attitudes and actions, I felt hot tears well up in my eyes. Pretty soon they were pouring out in a way that took me by surprise. I couldn't understand where they were coming from, or even exactly what they were about. And they felt uncontrollable…rising in big waves that felt impossible to contain. As I later reflected on this moment and the events that followed, I realized that the majority of

the people in the room rushed to my defense. My White colleagues began to explain to my Black female colleague what I was trying to say - essentially telling her that I shouldn't be held accountable for my impact and that she had clearly misunderstood my intent. I recall that my White colleagues asked me how I was doing and whether I was ok. I remember being offered comfort and support. And I remember that the entire conversation the group was having got derailed and became focused on my needs. In this way the tears prevented any substantial change from occurring. They maintained the status quo and revealed my racial insulation and lack of racial stamina.

White savior. The White savior is a White person who acts to rescue people of Color from their situation or circumstance. The term is "tied up in colonial history where [White] Europeans descended to 'civilize' the African continent" (Shringarpure, 2015). Historically, Africa has provided a "backdrop for White fantasies of conquest and heroism…A place where White people could become a god-like savior or, at the very least, have [their] emotional needs satisfied" (Cole, 2012). Embedded in this perspective and revealing its White supremist foundation, is the idea that people of Color are not capable of improving their own lives and need help. While this perspective acknowledges the difficult conditions of many African countries, it does not acknowledge the role White supremacy has played in creating the conditions, nor does it account for the tremendous amount of work that has already occurred in these locations (Cole, 2012).

Alluding to this past, the term "White savior" currently refers to White people who are involved in racial activism and advocacy and have set themselves up as

"one of the good ones" (Johnson, 2006, p. 118). The actions of the White savior are framed as benevolent, generous, good-hearted, well-intentioned efforts to help people of Color achieve racial equality. Apparent in this description is the belief that racism is the problem of people of Color and addressing it is for their benefit. Absent is the understanding that racism is the problem of White people and addressing it involves working with oneself in relationship to oppressive systems. As a result, the White savior may hope for or expect (consciously or unconsciously) that their efforts will be acknowledged and praised by people of Color.

The White Savior tends to manifest as a role that White people move in and out of as they work with their own racism and the feelings it brings up. My White Savior most recently showed up in my classroom where I caught myself on the verge of offering a student of Color additional office hours. The want to do something for them was powerful and I realized that it occurred just after a long class discussion on race in the field of dance/movement therapy. I felt vaguely guilty about my privilege and, apparently, was driven to try to do something good or helpful. I was dismayed as I realized how many aspects of privilege were at play: my need to make myself feel better (centering Whiteness); my assumption that any extra help from me would be wanted and appreciated; my want to appear good; and perhaps most disturbing, the underlying White supremist belief that this student needed extra help.

While this is not an exhaustive list of the reactions that White people have in response to their privilege and the topic of racism, it does start to identify some of the larger themes and patterns that are typically displayed. And while these

reactions all have an emotional, expressive layer, the literature does not specifically address how they are embodied and enacted somatically. The next section focuses on this with the hope that attention to how the body participates in White privilege will suggest other ways of working with it.

Body-mind dualism and a somatophobic culture. The split between body and mind has an important place in the discussion of the somatic experience of White privilege because it creates a hierarchy that establishes the foundation for many of the biases, stereotypes, and assumptions that drive racism and perpetuate oppression. This hierarchy also informs White embodiment and may offer some insight into the patterns of expression that are characteristic of Whiteness yet go unacknowledged because of their "normalcy".

The construct of body-mind dualism is found across centuries of Western thought from early Greek philosophers to more modern philosophers such as Descartes. These ideas run through all aspects of Western culture and have contributed to "a common view of the human subject as a being made up of two dichotomously opposed characteristics: mind and body, thought and extension, reason and passion, psychology and biology" (Grosz, 1994, p. 3). Furthermore, "dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart" (Grosz, 1994, p. 3). As a result, any discussion of mind-body dualism is necessarily a conversation about power relations (Jorgensen, 2013).

This hierarchy is evident in what is given value or status in Western culture. For example, things such as science and research that favor cognitive ways of

knowing, are given more credence or value than knowledge gained through other, potentially "bottom-up means" such as the arts (Caldwell, 2014). Logic and pragmatism, understood to be products of the mind, are valued over passion and emotion, or feelings associated with the body. Caldwell (2014) contended that the marginalization of the body can be seen "in the devaluing of the body itself as a source of identity and authoritative knowledge about our direct, lived experience of the world" (p. 80).

It could be argued that this devaluation of the body played a large role in the construction of race and racial dynamics that allowed the United States to flourish as a democratic and capitalistic nation. Beginning as early as Plato, social hierarchies have been constructed, legitimized, and operationalized by attributing either cognitive or somatic traits to particular groups of people. For example, Plato equated the body with the feminine and with qualities and characteristics that were believed to be undesirable. Linking the ability to be rationale and objective "to the conduct of a man", he affirmed the superior status of men by contrasting these traits to the emotional or passionate displays he attributed to women (Jorgensen, 2013, p. 51). Spelman wrote, "Plato's misogyny is part of his somatophobia: the body is seen as the source of all the undesirable traits a human being could have, and [according to Plato] women's lives are spent manifesting those traits" (1999, p. 39). The devaluation of a group of people by associating them with "bodily traits" is not unique to Plato. Price and Shildrick (1999) contended that "the association of the body with gross unthinking physicality marks a further set of linkages – to black people, to animals, and to slaves" (p. 2). These false connections are apparent in

many of the negative stereotypes and images that have played a significant role in the construction of social hierarchies in the United States.

Cushman (1995) explained that in the early American colonies the influx of a variety of European groups meant that there was no shared cultural identity. To deal with this absence and establish a basis for shared interest, the colonists developed a “negative identity”, a way of understanding self and determining how to be in this new environment by defining what was “other than American” (Cushman, 1995, p. 346). There is ample documentation of the negative images and stereotypes created with the intention of dehumanizing and making fun of different groups of people during this time period in the United States (Johnson, 2006). These portrayals established an association between having White skin and being an American that is still painfully evident in much of the political discourse occurring today. European colonists negatively characterized people of Color as a way to strengthen White identity as well as justify slavery and exploitation. Commonly, “black men were portrayed as lazy, stupid, absurd, corny, clownish, jolly” or brutish, strong, and dangerous (Tochluk, 2010, p. 63). Black women were “portrayed as crude, unclean, and very sexual” (Tochluk, 2010, p. 63). By contrast White people were constructed as innocent, clean, pure, emotionally reserved, moral, logical, and having a strong work ethic (Cushman, 1995; Tochluk, 2010). Notable in these examples is how easily these characterizations align with the polarization of body and mind. The racist characterizations of people of Color over-emphasize somatic qualities while falsely portraying intellectual shortcomings “evidenced” by an inability to overcome the urges and expressions of the body. White people, on the

other hand, are characterized in opposition to this image. They are portrayed as being able to control the body through their "superior" mental and intellectual capacity.

The time period of European exploration, colonization, and exploitation (the 1500s through the 1800s) coincided with the emergence of Descartes' version of body-mind dualism, often referred to as the "Cartesian split." According to Descartes, the mind and body were of different materials and used for different purposes (Descartes, 1991). Descartes described the body as "being made up of a certain configuration of limbs and other accidents of this sort" whereas the mind was "not made up of any accidents in this way," but was a "pure substance" (Descartes, 1991, p. 74). Prior to the appearance of Descartes' ideas, the mind-body relationship was understood according to orthodox Christian views. In this paradigm human beings were spiritual beings; their bodies and souls united. Because the body held spiritual significance, scientific study of it was religiously prohibited (Walker, 1955). Descartes' separation of mind and body paved the way for progress in medical science by demythologizing the body, thereby making it available to study (Mehta, 2011). As a result, the "human subjective experience lost its value. The rational, objective, scientific mind became the hallowed vehicle for understanding the world and one's place in it" (Tochluk, 2010, p. 67).

The increased value put on objectivity and rational thought provided yet another means for justifying the exploitation, colonization, and oppression of "primitive" cultures. According to the Western paradigm, those who demonstrated a connection to spirit and divine forces through cultural practices like dance were less

civilized and less intelligent. Anti-dance literature from the 1800s demonstrates how cultural practices involving the body were used to further marginalize people of Color. Centering European norms and traditions, anti-dance writer Crane pathologized the traditions and practices of Native Americans calling their dances "savage gesticulations" (1849, p. 11). He went on to postulate that "dancing forms a part of the religious ceremonies of the savage and the semi-civilized" people of regions such as India and West Africa (Crane, 1849, p. 11). Crane's perspective was not isolated. The association of people of Color with the body and its savage, animalistic expression led to "presentations" at the 1893 World Fair, which allowed "many to see the 'savages' for the first time, and their habits were noted…by antidance writers as evidence that none in polite society would consider imitating such behavior" (Aldrich, 2008, p. 29).

White politeness and the avoidance of feeling. Through body-mind dualism and the emergence of scientific study, White racial identity was defined. Associated with what is often referred to as "polite", Whiteness tends to be characterized by "emotional restriction and the isolated, self-contained individual" (Tochluk, 2010, p. 128). Through qualitative research involving interviews with White people, Tochluk (2010) identified such isolation and superficiality as regularly occurring themes among participants. She noted that many of the people she talked with "used language that linked whiteness with life on the surface of emotion" and with "images of ease, cleanliness, and sanitization" resulting in conversations that shied away from conflict or other potential sources of discomfort (Tochluk, 2010, p. 132). According to Jones and Okun (2001), this avoidance is the result of White

supremacy culture's tendency to equate raising difficult issues with being impolite. One participant reflected on how the avoidance of conflict and the associated emotions shapes behavior and relationships, leading to a quality of distance from self and other. She stated,

> It seems that white, middle-class to upper-class Americans have a persona, or a way of being, that does not include conflict or discomfort. So that means that language is censored. Behavior is censored. Ways of being are censored and censored sometimes to the detriment of those who enact these things, and because the investment in "normalcy" far outweighs the investment in the human condition in all its complexity, the human condition gets sacrificed. (Tochluk, 2010, p. 133)

Notable in this quote is the way that acceptable, polite behavior seems to require a surface approach that disconnects one from the more raw experiences of strong feelings and emotions that are part of being human. Scholar and diversity trainer, Lee Mun Wah believed this avoidance of emotional depth is a particular feature of White culture. He stated,

> I don't think that the white folks talk about how they feel. I don't think white males talk about how they feel up front. I don't think they deal with it too often. It's what they do or what they're thinking or sharing information. But it's not always how they are feeling. (as cited in Tochluk, 2010, p. 132)

Dance therapist, Anne Rust D'Eye concurred stating,

> Many people in the West have learned to clamp down and resist, or even fear, [the body and its sensations]. In particular, I believe that white people have learned to do this; it is a trait of being privileged that one has the social means to continuously distract oneself from things that are uncomfortable, including – or perhaps especially – inner sensate experience. (2017)

The avoidance of feeling may be particularly apparent in conversations about race or across racial differences. Stanley Cohen argued in his book *States of Denial: Knowing About Atrocity and Suffering* (2001) that the avoidance of emotional depth is an attempt to avoid the disturbing reality of the dynamics of privilege and oppression. He contended that when people are confronted with information that contradicts their worldview or their perceptions of themselves, they often attempt to avoid disruption and maintain the status quo by going into some form of denial. Johnson (2006) suggested that denial of privilege often takes the form of "not feeling anything" (p. 110). Because body-mind dualism sanctions the overuse of intellect and the avoidance of sensate experience, denial through either repressing or avoiding feelings tends to be a successful strategy for White people. One of Tochluk's participants shared, "How can you possibly live in a country where for 200 years you're enslaving a huge portion of your population and not have some kind of emotion? You have to put a lid on it. Otherwise, you couldn't be human and stand it, right?" (Tochluk, 2010, p. 143).

Seeing this idea reflected in the responses of others in her study, Tochluk summarized her findings by identifying "a collective sense that being white means

having a wall built up between people, having something *killed off inside* that is required for holding a false sense of superiority" (2010, p. 130, italics added). She went on to suggest that what might be "killed off" is one's own perceptions and self-knowledge. Such "percepticide" (Taylor, 1997) serves to shut down the cognitive dissonance between the image of White goodness and the atrocities of racism. Such percepticide allows for a general numbing that enables one to tune out the pain and harm one is causing.

According to King (2018) there is historical precedent for such numbness. Turning to the historical trauma of slavery in the United States she points out the well-documented fact that lynchings were often "a festive family occasion for white people" (p. 29). Reviewing photographs of these events she noted the White children standing near their parents watching the burned or hanging bodies of people of Color. She wondered how those children were feeling, asking,

> What was happening in their hearts and minds? They were not the direct perpetrators of these actions, but they witnessed a horror that was deemed normal. Were they frightened?… What was required of them to fit into that moment?… What price did they pay emotionally and spiritually to maintain belonging?... How did they adjust their hearts to reside with such human hatred? What did they do with their feelings? Surely they had some. Did it affect their ability to be intimate, alive, or empathic? What kind of adults did these white children become?... What human price over the generations was paid for such denial, dissociation, rage, and amnesia? (King, 2018, p. 29)

After writing at length about the lasting impact of these historical atrocities on people of Color, King turned the focus to those responsible for the violent acts, inquiring about the effect this history has had on White people. The dominance of White supremacy has meant that very little consideration has been given to what is lacking in White people, to the way the socialization of racism has created an absence of humanity.

Constructing domination. King (2018) traced the programming of oppression in the United States as far back as the sixteenth century when William Lynch, a British slave owner in the West Indies, came to the colony of Virginia to teach slave owners how to control their slaves. In his lecture entitled “The Making of a Slave” (1712) Lynch gave instructions for how to “master the psyche of slaves into full submission and respectful allegiance” (King, 2018, p. 48). Although not specifically mentioned in this speech, it is easy to imagine that “making a slave” would require a corresponding process for programming domination or for making a master. This programming would need to include things that made it possible for the master to do the violent and harmful acts that domination includes. Reviewing the literature on racism and White privilege and what has been written in this dissertation so far, several strategies for making a master - for creating psychological circumstances that enable domination of another human being - become apparent. They include the establishment of the “other”, the dehumanization of this group through image and stereotype, the construction of one’s own group as superior, and a separation or isolation of self from oneself and

other on many levels. Interestingly, the psychological training that prepares soldiers for their roles in combat uses similar strategies.

Killology, a term coined by Lt. Col. David Grossman, is the study of the psychological and physiological effects of killing and combat on the human psyche. This field of study emerged from an inquiry into the factors that either enable or restrain a soldier from killing another person in combat (McKinnie, 2016). The work of U. S. Army combat historian S. L. A. Marshall (2000) influenced the development of this field by suggesting that there were deep psychological factors influencing soldiers' abilities to perform their duties in combat. His research on the firing rates of soldiers in World War II, revealed that many of the soldiers were not aiming to hit their targets, apparently due to "their natural aversion to killing" another person (McKinnie, 2016, p. 2). In response, the U. S. Army instituted new psychological training for soldiers intended to establish the emotional distance necessary for committing acts of violence during war. Social psychologist Erich Fromm acknowledged that such distance is necessary writing, "There is good clinical evidence for the assumption that destructive aggression occurs, at least to a large degree, in conjunction with a momentary or chronic emotional withdrawal" (1973, p. 23). Achieving this emotional withdrawal requires methods that "remove one's sense of empathy" (Grossman, 2009, p. 34). Using cultural, moral, and social dimensions to establish a divisiveness that suspended empathy, the training constructed the enemy as other, a subhuman form of life lacking in intelligence, moral character, and development (Grossman, 2009). What is striking about these tactics is the resemblance they bear to the characteristics and constructs of racism

and White privilege. In both circumstances conditions are created with the intention of breaking down human connection and empathy so that domination can occur.

Returning to Tochluk's study one may recall that many of the participants referred to White culture as "surface-oriented, superficial, obvious, lacking shading and soulful nuance" (Tochluk, 2016, p. 135) all indicators of emotional distance. One participant in Tochluk's study recognized that maintaining this distance requires a disconnection from oneself stating, "People can only hold a false sense of superiority by remaining undeveloped and unrealized inside themselves" (Tochluk, 2010, p. 135). Anti-oppression educator Beth Berila explained that othering and domination necessitate "dehumanization, which entails disconnecting ourselves from our [own] embodied experience" (Berila, 2016, p. 34) in order to disconnect from others. Echoing the military ideology just discussed, she noted that a disconnection from feeling and embodied experience makes "it much easier to do violence to people" (Berila, 2016, p. 34).

Including the Body

Social justice scholar Sherrell (2018) suggested that the disconnection from one's own internal sensate experience in relationship to power and privilege is made possible, in part, by body-mind dualism. Scholars in the field of Whiteness studies suggest that in order to develop an anti-racist White identity, one must reconnect to internal sensate experience by addressing this underlying dualism. Tochluk explained that race work "involves healing from our cultural splits wherein our history has encouraged us to value the head, mind, and rational over the heart, body, and emotional" (2010, p. 252). She suggested that in order to overcome these

long ingrained patterns and become more sensitive White people need to "notice the emotions that arise within [them]" and learn to "pay attention to that feeling-knowledge" (Tochluk, 2010, p. 252). For example, when race is being discussed or comes to the foreground in a situation, White people could act in opposition to their social conditioning by learning to attend to the sensations arising in their bodies in response. Rather than retreating to the comfortable familiarity of intellectualization and the distance it affords, White people could stay engaged in dialogues about race by staying connected to themselves, to their empathic nature, to their own feelings and sensations (Berila, 2016; King, 2018; Tochluk, 2010). Learning to attend to one's own feelings in this way necessitates two things: (1) a willingness to take seriously and value the information gathered from the "bottom up" and (2) a willingness to break through the perfectionistic, intellectual, distanced, "sanitized, and controlled way many [White people] deal with difficulty" (Tochluk, 2010, p. 252). As a result they may also be more able to acknowledge and accept the importance and validity of the feeling-oriented knowledge that comes from others.

Anti-oppression educator Beth Berila further developed this idea by contending that "the work toward social justice *requires* a re-connection to ourselves and to others, so that our profound interdependence is both revealed and treasured" (italics in original, 2016, p.34). Suggesting that both the ideologies and power dynamics that uphold systems of oppression are "embedded in our very being", she posited that the process of creating new, liberatory possibilities is an *embodied* one (Berila, 2016).

White Racial Identity Development and the Body

Berila's point of view is affirmed by the literature on White racial identity development. Theorist Janet Helms identified two phases of development, each with three specific racial statuses (1995). The phases are (a) abandonment of racism and (b) defining a nonracist White identity. The six specific racial identity statuses are distributed equally between the two phases: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudoindependence, immersion, and autonomy (Sue & Sue, 2013). Of particular relevance to this discussion is how Helms characterizes the White person's relationship to their body in each of these phases and statuses.

Contact status. This status is characterized by an obliviousness to racism and a corresponding belief that everyone has an equal opportunity for achieving success. People in this status demonstrate a lack of understanding of prejudice and discrimination and a tendency to minimize the importance or influence of race (Sue & Sue, 2013). Because this status involves a lack of awareness two opposed belief systems can coexist: (1) An unexamined acceptance of White supremacy with its relegation of those in racially marginalized locations to an inferior position and (2) The belief that race does not matter or a "colorblind" stance. The co-existence of these two opposing beliefs allows White people to avoid perceiving themselves as members of the socially dominant group or as having biases and prejudices. In other words, it allows White people to continue to perceive themselves as "good". Because the presence of these two opposing ideas could create a dissonance that demands further reflection or attention, the lack of awareness that Helms attributed to this status is key to keeping it in place.

Disintegration status. If the individual is faced with an experience that reveals the privileges of White skin, they may move to the disintegration status. The hallmark of this stage is the "breakdown of the denial system" that allowed for the ignorance and lack of awareness to exist (Sue & Sue, 2013). The breakdown of this system can result in the emergence of feelings of guilt and shame (Helms, 1995). In addition, as the White person becomes increasingly aware of their Whiteness they may become conflicted over the perceived polarities that previously went undetected. For example, I may be troubled by the dissonance between my belief that I am not racist and my feeling of discomfort around people of Color. Helms pointed out that a constructive resolution of this internal struggle might be difficult due to the emotions it evokes. She suggested that rather than confronting the internalized racial myths, biases, and prejudices, the White person might try to reinstate their ignorance by avoiding people of Color, not thinking about race, or seeking reassurance of their "goodness" from other Whites (Helms, 1995).

Reintegration status. This status is best described as reactive, with the pendulum swinging from the emerging awareness back to an intensified version of the Contact status. Attempting to resolve the dissonance described above, the White person retreats to the familiarity of the dominant racial narrative. The result is a stronger attachment and more conscious belief in White superiority and a corresponding perception that people of Color are to blame for their own problems (Helms, 1995).

Pseudoindependence status. This status marks the second phase of Helm's model and involves establishing a nonracist White identity. A person is likely to be

launched into this phase by what is often described by people as an intense, jarring, or emotional encounter in which one is woken up from the reintegration status (Sue & Sue, 2013). As a result of this awakening, White people attempt to understand racial differences and often look to people of Color, rather than to themselves, to uncover and confront racism. Although the intention is to be helpful to those in marginalized locations, the White person may unintentionally enact and perpetuate racism by working to help people of Color adapt to the dominant racial norms. Racial issues are worked with intellectually and conceptually and, as a result, "understanding has not reached the experiential and affective domains" (Sue & Sue, 2013, 236). In other words, understanding White privilege and racial dynamics tends to be more of an intellectual exercise rather than an embodied one.

Immersion status. This stage marks a shift in attention from relying on and helping "the other" to focusing on oneself as a racial being. Helms explains that the person engaged in this process reflects on the personal dimensions of racism and the ways they benefit from White privilege. This important shift from other to self is accompanied by an "increasing experiential and affective understanding that was lacking in the previous status" (Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 326). Helms believed that some kind of emotional catharsis or release was necessary in order to reclaim the feelings and emotions that were denied or distorted by White supremacy (Helms, 1995). Winter (1977) stated, "Let me explain this healing process in more detail… most whites begin with a good deal of amnesia. Eventually the memories crowd in, especially when several people pool recollections. Emotional release is a vital part of

the process. Experiencing feelings seems to allow further recollections to come" (p. 3).

Autonomy status. Increasing awareness of one's own Whiteness, an acknowledgment of one's own role in perpetuating racist dynamics, and a decreased use of defensive maneuvers are indicators of autonomy status. In this state the person is both knowledgeable about racism and privilege *and* can connect to and be informed by their feeling states. Rather than participating superficially, the person engages in substantive self-examination and works to remain connected to themselves and others around the topic of race (Kiselica, 1998).

Information-processing strategies. According to Sue & Sue (2013), Helms' model is the most researched, cited, and applied of all the White identity development theories. Part of its value is its identification of particular defensive maneuvers or what Helms refers to as *information-processing strategies* (1995) that correspond with the tasks and characteristics of each status. White people use these strategies to avoid or soothe their anxiety and discomfort around the topic of race. What is notable about the statuses and the strategies is their trajectory. They indicate a progression from ignorance and obliviousness through cognition and intellectualization to self-awareness and feeling (Helms, 1995). Sue & Sue (2013) added that a person in the last phases is developing an "inner sense of security and strength that… is needed to function in a society that is only marginally accepting" of racially aware White people (p. 335). This sturdiness supports the White person to persist in their development and to actively work to dismantle and disrupt systems of oppression. The development of such internal durability involves the return to

embodied experience that Berila sees as the precursor to meaningful social change (2016).

Dance/Movement Therapy

Dance/movement therapy (DMT) is classically defined by the American Dance Therapy Association as "the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual, for the purpose of improving health and well-being" (1974). This definition rests upon the understanding that the mind and body do not exist separately from one another as Western ideology might claim, but instead, are deeply intertwined. Through this connection, states of mind find physical expression and representation in the body, and conditions of the body find cognitive representation through thoughts and ideas (Levy, 1988). Because dance/movement therapy emphasizes the interrelatedness of body and mind, the feeling and expression of emotions, and the relationship between self and other, its theories and approaches have the potential to address some of the fundamental characteristics of White privilege. To summarize what has been described so far, these characteristics are: a disconnection from the body demonstrated by a lack of awareness of somatic sensation and feeling states; a limited ability to tolerate discomfort, particularly racial discomfort; difficulty experiencing and managing feeling while staying in relationship to others, particularly across difference; and a tendency toward polarization resulting in a rigid, one-dimensional worldview. The following sections explore the theories and approaches that might be useful in working with these aspects of privilege.

Foundational theories in DMT. Because the belief in body-mind unity is at the core of DMT theory and practice, it is useful to begin by briefly reviewing the work of some of the field's founding theorists.

Marian Chace. Chace is considered the "Grande Dame" of dance/movement therapy (Levy, 1988) because her groundbreaking work, published as early as 1945, provided the foundation for many of the methodologies that characterize the practice of dance/movement therapy. Chace acknowledged the connection between mind and body and emphasized the importance of their integrated functioning (Chaiklin, 1975). Her work also focused on reunification with others by helping her patients to communicate and share their experiences through dance (Chaiklin, 1975; Levy, 1998). Using circular formations, group rhythmic activity, and mirroring, Chace supported the development of relationship and cohesion among participants in her dance/movement therapy groups (Chaiklin, 1975).

Blanche Evan. Like Chace, Evan's work emphasized the necessity of reunifying the body and mind. Evan firmly believed that the result of living in Western culture was a detrimental split between body and mind in which the body was trained from childhood to repress or restrain expression (Evan, 1945; Levy, 1998). She also believed that this early pressure and the ongoing exertion of external forces caused the urban adult to lose contact with the rhythms of nature (Levy, 1998). The result was a "[loss] of contact with [the] inner emotional and physical self" making one "less able to cope with [the] world" (Levy, 1998, p. 48). Evan's goal, therefore, was to use dance as a means "to re-educate individuals to the natural unification and identification with organic bodily responses and needs

which, she believed, existed prior to the repressive influences of family and society" (Levy, 1998, p. 37). Evan used structured exercises and improvisation to help her clients feel and express their repressed thoughts and emotions (Levy, 1998).

Trudi Schoop. Schoop (1974) also believed the lack of harmonious functioning between body and mind created pain and suffering in her patients. She attributed the lack of harmony to "the stresses and tensions indicative of internal conflicts stemming from opposing and repressed drives" (Levy, 1998, p. 76). Her purpose, then, was to help individuals "experience, in a harmonious way, their conflicting emotions" (Levy, 1998, p. 78) making it possible for them to connect with themselves and "the reality that goes beyond the daily – an experience of the universality and uniformity of all living things, past, present, and future" (Levy, 1998, p. 78). Schoop's approach included the use of humor and mime as way to help patients see and become more aware of themselves (Levy, 1988).

As demonstrated by the work of Chace, Evan, and Schoop, the theories that form the foundation for the practice of dance/movement therapy are poised to address the polarizing and disembodying effects of racism and privilege by providing a means for reunification with self and other. When the field began in the 1940s, the inclusion of the body and nonverbal expression was a revolutionary addition to Western psychology. The contribution was made all the more radical by the fact that the people at the forefront of the field identified as women.

Despite these progressive and noteworthy beginnings, the field of dance/movement therapy has not continued to push against dominant social norms and narratives. The profession is currently engaged in a self-reflective process with

scholars and leaders in the field urging educators and practitioners to examine themselves and their work in order to create a more inclusive and socially just approach (Anderson, 2017; Caldwell, 2013; Carmichael, 2012; Chang, 2016; Klein, 2016; Thomas, 2015). Part of this self-assessment process will undoubtedly require an examination of the foundational assumptions held by the early theorists. The application of dance/movement therapy is considered with this in mind.

DMT and White privilege. As the field of DMT strives for cultural proficiency, dance/movement therapists are interrogating critical topics such as education (Young, 2018); research (Karcher & Caldwell, 2014); assessment (Caldwell, 2013); and the therapeutic relationship (Anderson, 2017). Recently, several practitioners in the fields of dance/movement therapy and body psychotherapy have focused on the embodied and expressive aspects of oppression and marginalization (Caldwell & Leighton, 2018; Cantrick, Anderson, Leighton, & Warning, 2018; Johnson, 2018), but there is a deficit of literature in these fields about the embodied and expressive aspects of domination and privilege. Johnson (2007) noted, “the role of the body in perpetuating these [oppressive] patterns, and in owning and disowning power and privilege presents a potentially rich and fruitful site for future research” (p. 240).

Because the embodiment of White privilege has not been studied in much depth, it is tempting to try to understand it through comparison to the impact of oppression on the body. However, to do so would be a re-enactment of oppressive dynamics. As previously noted, since Whiteness has been perceived as “neutral” or “normal”, those with White skin privilege often come to understand their Whiteness

through the knowledge and experiences of the racialized other. An identity constructed through comparison in this way continues to rely on patterns of appropriation, external referencing, and denial. As mentioned earlier, these characteristics are part of what enable and perpetuate racism. Johnson's work identified several elements that an embodied approach to anti-oppression must address including "the capacity to tolerate experience," "the ability to witness oneself and others," and "the development of kinesthetic empathy" (2007, p. 243). These elements offered a starting point for the exploration of the application of dance/movement therapy approaches. Furthermore, data on some of the possible somatic manifestations and indicators of privilege will be gathered through this study so that it can be understood through direct experience rather than through the distance comparison provides.

Addressing the body-mind split: Embodiment and attention. As an embodied approach to psychotherapy, dance/movement therapy strives to increase awareness of the experiences in the body and facilitate nonverbal expression. The word *embodiment* is frequently used to refer to self-awareness; the centralization of the body, its functions, actions, and processes; the body's inherent intelligence; and its participation in cognition (Caldwell, 2014; Cohen, 1993; Johnson, 2018; Kossak, 2015). Peter Levine (2010) explained that

> *Embodiment is about gaining, through the vehicle of awareness, the capacity to feel the ambient physical sensations of unfettered energy and aliveness as they pulse through our bodies.* It is here that mind and body,

> thought and feeling, psyche and spirit, are held together, welded in an undifferentiated unity of experience. (2010, p. 279, italics in original)

The layers of sensation and feeling that exist in the body are often at the automatic or unconscious level (Berila, 2016; Caldwell, 2018). This is not just the result of the separation of mind and body. In many instances people become desensitized to the workings of the body so that their attention is available for perceiving other things. For instance, a person may only become aware of their internal organs when there is a pain or something unfamiliar occurring. Similarly, one may stop noticing the sensation of their clothing on their skin shortly after they dress. Selective attention is logical in these circumstances because it would be overwhelming to notice every sensation (Caldwell, 1997). However selectivity also occurs as a product of socialization. This selectivity is often unconscious, shaped by dominant social norms, personal history, sociocultural factors, and current circumstances/context. These influences often train attention to notice some things while ignoring or disregarding other things (Berila, 2016; Caldwell, 1997).

As discussed earlier, a marker of White privilege is ignorance or the act of ignoring certain aspects of experience. History and socio-cultural location has taught White people to ignore racism and stop paying attention to the felt-sense experience of the body. The conditional awareness that follows enables them to continue to perpetuate White supremacy and enact privilege. It is possible that the development of unconditional embodied self-awareness could address this issue.

Fogel defined embodied self-awareness as "the ability to pay attention to ourselves, to feel our sensations, emotions, and movements in the present moment,

without the mediating influence of judgmental thoughts" (2009, p.1). Whitehouse used the term "kinesthetic awareness" to refer to this internal sense of oneself (Levy, 1988). Dance/movement therapist and scholar, Christine Caldwell (1996) suggested that embodied self-awareness can be developed and strengthened through the purposeful direction and movement of one's attention. In Caldwell's paradigm attention is viewed as "a muscle that releases and contracts" (2018, p. 59). As this muscle develops one has more control over what is attended to and what is ignored. Many contemplative and mindfulness traditions use meditation as a way to develop this attentional strength and agility. In these practices the process is understood to create a more awakened state (Barton, 2011; Caldwell, 2018; Germer, Siegel, & Fulton, 2005). Similarly, in Caldwell's approach to dance/movement therapy, the purposeful direction of attention leads to an increase in awareness. To explain this in more detail, it is helpful to consider one of the underlying principles of Caldwell's work, the concept of perception as understood in Gestalt therapy.

Gestalt is a term that means "unified whole" (Woldt & Toman, 2005). It refers to theories of visual perception that attempt to explain how people organize and make sense of visual stimuli. The principle that is most relevant to this discussion is that of figure and ground. This principle explains how an object, when differentiated by the eye from its surrounding environment, becomes more figural, or more prominent in the viewer's awareness. Meanwhile, the details of the area around the object recede into the background and are less apparent to the viewer. As one perceives their environment, figure and ground change (Woldt & Toman, 2005). The process of perceiving is dynamic: in one moment, attention makes something

figural, and in the next moment that thing becomes ground and something new is brought forward. Caldwell (1996) referred to this movement of attention as "oscillation" and explains how one's personal history can cause attention to fixate or become stuck on particular things while missing others, thereby disrupting this natural oscillatory flow. She posited that by restoring the oscillation of attention, one becomes aware of things that were not previously perceived. As a result, one might also become more aware of habitual, reactive patterns of perception and the influences that have shaped them (Caldwell, 1996). Within the work of examining White privilege, such an approach to attention could support one to become aware of previously ignored somatic experiences as well as the factors that contributed to that ignorance.

Witnessing. As one becomes more conscious of patterns of attention and intentional about its placement, attention has the potential of becoming more equitable, "evenly hovering" (Freud, 1900) over a variety of stimuli without being influenced by preferences, biases, and judgments. Regular practice of attending in this way develops a witnessing consciousness in which one is able to hold a meta-perspective, viewing not only one's surroundings, but also oneself. It is this awareness of awareness that enables one to make meaning out of sensory experience – *sense making,* Caldwell (2018) called it, instead of interpreting events according to conditioned, out-moded constructs or narratives.

Witnessing and the development of an internal witness appear in the dance/movement therapy literature in relationship to Authentic Movement. Authentic Movement is a form of dance/movement therapy originating in the work

of another early theorist in the field, Mary Starks Whitehouse. Influenced by Carl Jung and his notion of active imagination, Whitehouse created the basis for Authentic Movement, or as she called it "movement-in-depth", by integrating her experiences as a dancer with Jungian theory (Levy, 1988). Authentic Movement has a simple structure: there is a mover who moves, a witness who observes both the mover and themselves, and the relationship between the two people. Whitehouse believed that movement could be used to access unconscious emotions when observed by a strong external witness (Levy, 1998). Dance/movement therapist Janet Adler further developed Whitehouse's work by expanding on the description of the witness. She wrote,

> The witness practices the art of seeing. Seeing clearly is not about knowing what the mover needs or must do. The witness does not "look at" the mover, but, instead… attends to her own experiences of judgment, interpretation, and projection in response to the mover as catalyst. As she acknowledges ownership of her experience, the density of her personal history empties, enabling the witness at times to feel that she can see the mover clearly and, more importantly, that she can see herself clearly. (Adler, 1999, p. 194)

Like meditation, Authentic Movement requires continuous effort "to witness the conscious mind as it habitually interferes with the deep listening" encouraged in both practices (Adler, 1999, p.149). Sustained engagement can bring more awareness of the body and its sensations leading to "experiences of balance, clarity, and wholeness" (Adler, 1999, p.149). In addition, it can support the development of

a "dual consciousness" (Levine, 2010) allowing one to remain present with their current sensate experience while simultaneously recognizing the deeply entrenched patterns of privilege and White supremacy. The ability to witness how one's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors are informed by dominant social narratives enables one to begin to see others and the world more clearly (Tochluk, 2010).

Working with feelings and tolerating discomfort. As one's internal experience becomes more accessible through the development of embodied self-awareness, access to sensations and feeling states increases. The witnessing consciousness mentioned above enables one to make conscious decisions around how these feelings are experienced and expressed. This may be particularly useful in navigating discomfort and mitigating the harmful impact of the strong feelings and defense strategies associated with White privilege discussed earlier. Price and Hooven (2018) explain:

> Emotion regulation involves a coherent relationship with the self, specifically effective communication between body, thoughts, and feelings. It implies tolerance and understanding of signals from the body and the related cognitive attributions. It also implies having the capacity to positively manage challenging sensations and related behavioral responses, such as behaviors or decisions to moderate, suppress, or change signals toward a desired end. From an embodiment perspective, the accurate detection and evaluation of cues related to physiological reactions is accompanied by appropriate regulation strategies that temper and influence the emotional response. (3)

Increased self-awareness enables one to recognize the somatic markers (Damasio, 1994) or "signatures" of particular feeling states. For example, I have noticed that my breathing constricts, my chin juts forward, and I lose contact with the floor when I am around a person of Color and I want their approval. An awareness of these somatic cues allows me to recognize my desire and internally negotiate my behavior so that I can be present with my feelings without enacting them and causing harm. I also have the opportunity to make adjustments in my postures and movements so that I might alter the experience I am having. To continue with the example above, I can direct my attention to the soles of my feet, noting the sensation of my weight sequencing through them to the ground. I can drop my chin and adjust the alignment in my neck, allowing myself to energetically sink back toward the supportive structure of my inner spine. I can consciously take a full breath and soften my ribcage. The feeling of desire I initially noted, was felt, which is how I knew it was there. And as I make the adjustments in my body, a new internal state is created allowing for a different state of mind to emerge. I become less internally agitated and more aware of the details of what the other person is saying to me. As Fosha might say, I am feeling, dealing, and staying in relationship (2009).

This "bottom-up" approach to working with emotional and cognitive states echoes the approaches of early dance therapists and continues to be a central aspect of its practice today (Chaiklin & Wengrower, 2016). As a body moves, proprioceptive input from the muscles and joints travels to the brain and evokes an associated emotional state (Shafir, 2015). By activating particular muscle groups

and joints through adjustments to movement and posture one can intentionally alter one's affective state and adjust the intensity of feeling (Carney et al., 2010; Duclos & Laird, 2001; Koch, 2014). These adjustments can assist one in regulating internal experience thereby increasing the ability to tolerate discomfort and strong feeling without becoming numb or impulsively expressive. Caldwell (2017) suggested that movements in the body, accompanied and supported by breath "can help an emotion feel not only tolerable, but also informative and supportive" (Caldwell, 2017, p. 61). The shift in perspective from feelings as something to avoid to feelings as a source of information is an important contribution to one's ability to navigate White privilege. As particular movements and feelings are recognized as signatures of internalized social norms, one has the opportunity to make choices about how to relate. Johnson (2007) explained,

> Without the ability to tolerate our own experience, we become overly motivated to use our power to relieve our distress by manipulating others, regardless of the impact on them. When we can hold our own pain, anger, and fear (and when we are not so afraid of them that we are compelled to disown and project these emotions) our motive for change can be communication and interaction toward the collective good. (p. 243)

Developing the ability to be with difficult or challenging sensations and feelings also requires the establishment of resources that one can access for support. This idea is used in somatic approaches to trauma therapy, most notably Somatic Experiencing (Levine, 2010) and Sensorimotor Psychotherapy (Ogden &

Fisher, 2015). While I am not suggesting that White privilege is a form of trauma, it is possible that the use of internal resources and a deliberately paced approach to difficult feelings can help a White person to stay engaged with their experience and support the development of the racial stamina they lack. Caldwell (2017) explained this as a process of "entering and relieving" the symptom (p. 60). In this case, the difficult feeling is symptomatic of White privilege and the embedded social norms that support it. Caldwell described an oscillatory pattern in which the person moves between engagement with the difficult feeling and rest. The resting place can be a particular location or feeling in the body that offers some comfort and the opportunity for brief restoration. Following rest, the person moves toward or "enters" the feeling state again, this time with more resources (2017). These oscillations need not disrupt the interaction, but instead, can serve to support the White person to remain present and engaged (Ogden & Minton, 2000). Furthermore, with practice, the process increases tolerance for difficult somatic states permitting longer periods of sustained engagement as well as capacity for experiencing other related feelings (Caldwell, 2017).

Re-establishing flow. As discussed earlier, one of the hallmarks of privilege is the presence of binary thinking and the corresponding polarities that accompany it. A characteristic of polarities is that they tend to be extreme, existing at the edges of an unexplored continuum of experience. Many of the foundational theories of dance/movement therapy emphasized the exploration of polarities as a way to express opposing drives, explore emotions, or expand movement possibilities (Levy, 1988). Alma Hawkins, another early theorist, also worked with polarities but

encouraged clients to explore the continuums as well as their extremes. She believed that experiencing the "shades of polarities [led] to flexibility of range and patterning, which set an optimal mode for perception and experience" (Levy, 1988, p. 92). This supposition is supported by recent research on the influence of body movement on essentialist thought (Slepian, et al., 2014).

In this study the researchers examined the idea that "essentialist thought about social categories seems to be associated with a style of social-information processing that relies on rigid, fixed, and discrete representations of social categories" (Slepian, et al., 2014, p. 112). They proposed that engagement in activities that promoted fluid movement patterns, such as tracing drawings of long, curving lines, would lead to a corresponding fluidity of perception and thought. Using a sample of 40 participants with diverse racial identities, the researchers explored this hypothesis by having participants categorize images of faces according to the social constructs of Black, White, and biracial following engagement in fluid movement. Findings of the study suggested that fluid physical movement "promoted a more fluid social-cognitive processing style" in which perceivers tended not to polarize characteristics as either Black or White (Slepian, et al., 2014). From this study and others like it, the researchers concluded that fluid movement has the potential to reduce the rigidity associated with essentialist thought. Acknowledging that fluid movement can promote fluid cognitive processing they state, "The body can fluidly move in multiple directions, and so can thinking, moving in multiple directions, eschewing rigid categorical boundaries, and allowing for a more fluid social cognition" (p. 118).

The premise that movement can influence thought is foundational to the field of dance/movement therapy and has already been discussed in some detail. In the context of addressing the characteristics of White privilege, fluid movement may be useful in addressing the polarized patterns of thought and “rigid and unyielding ideology” (Collins & Jun, 2017) that are attributed to Whiteness. Caldwell (2018) explained fluid movement in broader terms referring to the fluidity that access to a broad range of expression provides. She explained that the ability “to consciously move along many different arcs, oscillating widely along a continuum of actions and states” supports the development of range and the options for expression (p. 5). The ability to move along these continuums of expression supports one to “navigate adaptively” in relationship to others.

Reestablishing kinesthetic empathy. Kinesthetic empathy is a core concept in dance/movement therapy and refers to the ability to understand another’s experience through somatic means (Gonzalez, 2018). As discussed earlier, the construction of domination and oppression requires a disconnection from felt-sense experience (Berila, 2016) or what Whitehouse referred to as kinesthetic awareness (Levy, 1988). The literature also revealed that a dominant mindset requires the breakdown of empathy, accomplished by creating an image of the other as less than human (Grossman, 2009). Research on the effect of racial bias on empathy supports this idea demonstrating that the presence of racial bias and stereotypes seem to correspond with a lack of empathic reactivity (Avenanti, Sirigu, & Aglioti, 2010). The enormity of the implications of this finding for the field of dance/movement therapy

is beyond the scope of the current inquiry, however, it does suggest that the reconstruction of empathy is necessary for establishing a nonracist White identity.

Kinesthetic empathy is cultivated by what Chace referred to as empathic reflection or mirroring (Levy, 1988). Mirroring, in DMT practice, is following the movements of another with the intention of experiencing and reflecting both the action and its meaning. To do this effectively, one must attend to one's own felt experience while perceiving and relating to the person being mirrored. Research on mirror neurons suggests that one can empathize with another's experience simply by observing their movements, making direct imitation unnecessary (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004; Keysers & Gazzola, 2010). This suggests that by attending to one's own sensations in the presence of another, one might be able to identify with, or empathize with, their experience.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to provide context for this study and identify the characteristics of White privilege that have somatic implications. The chapter began with an explanation of Critical Race Theory and a description of the origins and basic premises of the field of Whiteness studies. The dimensions of White privilege were described with particular emphasis on its somatic manifestations and the defensive maneuvers White people employ to maintain their racial dominance. The need for a somatic approach to working with White privilege was established and Helms' model for White racial identity development provided a structure for considering the somatic aspects of a nonracist White identity. Finally, dance/movement therapy approaches were explored for their potential ability to

address the somatic characteristics of White privilege that can cause harm and hinder the development of a nonracist White identity.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

The research method for this study was a qualitative, body-based approach (Johnson, 2014; Tantia, 2014) rooted in principles of phenomenological inquiry. The research questions for this study grew out of my journey around understanding my Whiteness and were intended to examine how White people experience Whiteness and being part of the dominant racial norm. They therefore addressed both a social experience and the meaning that participants assigned to that experience. As Critical Race Theorists have argued, race is a social construction (Bennett, 2004; Betancourt & Lopez, 1993; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009), and because qualitative research is process-oriented "stress[ing] the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situation constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10), its approach aligns with the position that one's experiences and perspectives of the world are shaped by one's sociocultural identities and locations. Furthermore, because the research questions guiding this study are somatic in nature and race is constructed in relationship to designated bodily traits, the research methods allowed for the centralization of somatic experience. A brief description and further rationale for the methods is offered to provide context for the research design and data analysis.

Qualitative Research

The intention of qualitative research is to increase understanding of a topic by exploring how two or more experiences may be connected. It "can be categorized

into those [research methods] focusing on (a) individual lived experience, (b) society and culture, and (c) language and communication" (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 55). This study addressed each of these three categories: I studied the individual White person's experience of racial privilege; examined culture and society by considering the way racism is embedded in and perpetuated by institutional systems and structures; and evaluated language and non-verbal communication through analysis of transcripts and interview videos.

Phenomenology and Embodied Inquiry

By seeking to "describe the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 57) this study was phenomenological in nature. Van Manen (1997) defines phenomenology as the study of "lived experience or existential meanings" (p. 11). This method was rooted in the recognition of the relevance and significance of subjective knowledge.

When Husserl, who is generally recognized as the founder of phenomenology (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997), first introduced the importance of subjective knowledge, scientific study only valued objectivity. This is because researchers "failed to take into account the experiencing person and the connections between human consciousness and the objects that exist in the material world" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 43). In contrast, phenomenology moved away from the polarity of subject-object to focus on the subject's experience of things (van Manen, 1997). It follows then, that the purpose of phenomenology is to study or research the multiple realities of a phenomenon with the goal of uncovering the essence of the experience.

The values and purpose of phenomenology are important to emphasize in relationship to this study because they directly address some of the oppressive traits of White privilege discussed in the literature review. Specifically, the tendency to polarize experience is addressed through the acknowledgment of subjective reality and the differences in people's experiences. Understanding is achieved through a process that is inclusive of multiple perspectives. Furthermore, an exploration of subjective experience creates the possibility for the sensate and expressive experience of the body to be included. Embodied inquiry is a recent addition to the literature on phenomenological approaches to research (Ellingson, 2012; Caldwell, 2014; Tantia, 2014; Tantia & Kawano, 2019). It calls for "for a shift in paradigm from a nomenclature that 'talks about' a phenomenon, to the inclusion of the sensations and feelings that arise during an action or while describing an experience" (Tantia & Kawano, 2019, p. 261). The inclusion of the body and its sensations is in direct opposition to the elevation of cognitive knowing that is characteristic of the Cartesian split. Because the valuation of experiential knowing that includes multiple perspectives contradicts significant traits of the dominant social narrative on race, the presence of them in an approach to research is important to note. These guiding principles establishes the methodological approach as part of this study's intentional disruption of dominant racial norms.

Phenomenological research is described as a dynamic interplay among several principles. These are: (1) maintaining curiosity about the phenomenon; (2) exploration of the lived experience rather than the concept of the phenomenon; (3) reflection on the essential characteristics; (4) description; and (5) maintaining the

context by considering individual aspects in relationship to the larger whole (Creswell, 2007). Both the research design and the data analysis in this study used these principles as procedural guides.

Research Questions

This study focused on the somatic experiences of White people who were cognitively aware of their privilege and were working to understand, deconstruct, and dismantle it. Specifically, the research questions were:

1. How do White people experience skin privilege?
2. What is the impact of sociocultural and institutional norms around race on the self-image, body language, and interoception of those who hold racial privilege?
3. What are the somatic markers of privilege?

Data Collection

Information about the somatic experience of White privilege was gathered through an in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interview conducted with each participant. Each interview lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. The interviews incorporated both verbal and non-verbal components that focused on how participants somatically experience the social construct of Whiteness and how they recognize White privilege through sensation and movement. The experiential or non-verbal components of the interviews were based in dance/movement therapy approaches that solicit direct knowing through sensory feedback during symbolic action. The interviews included the following questions and prompts:

1) Tell me a story about when were you first aware of being White. How do you remember feeling?
2) How do you identify the ways in which you experience being racially privileged?
3) What are you aware of in your body as you answer these questions?
4) Please use your body to show me the shape of and/or movements of "Whiteness".
5) Please use your body to show me "White privilege".
6) Please recall a time when your White privilege was brought to your attention. What do you notice happening in our body as you recall this moment?
7) Please recall a time when you recognized the expression or enactment of your White privilege. What do you notice happening in your body as you recall this moment?
8) Imagine your Whiteness sitting across from you. What might you say to it?

Prior to the start of each interview, the purpose of the study and the interviewee's rights were reviewed and clarified. Written informed consent was obtained from all the interviewees. The research was approved by the Lesley University Institutional Review Board. Interviews were audio and videotaped and were transcribed verbatim.

Research Design

Participants were recruited for the study through flyers and referrals. Interviews were set up via phone and email and were scheduled to last up to two

hours. Audio and video recording were used to record the interviews. Following the interviews, I reviewed the data for overarching themes. Details of this process and the approaches used to address potential researcher bias are provided in the following sections.

Interviews

Although the same set of prepared questions was used for each meeting, follow-up questions and dialogues were more idiosyncratic in nature. In her Body-focused Interviewing procedure, Tantia (2014) suggests that such follow-up questions can help to elicit the embodied layer of experience. By noting significant moments in verbal and non-verbal expression and encouraging the participant to experience and explore them more consciously, the interviewer can glean more information about the participant's experience through their own descriptions and meanings (Tantia, 2014). Schostak (2006) described this approach when he reframed the interview as an "inter-view". He explains, "the Inter-View [sic] is the condition under which people can enter into dialogue and mutually explore each others' way of seeing and constructing the world" (p. 2).

Through this process each interview seemed to become an organic discussion, one that flowed from the participant and myself as we came together to create a deeper understanding of our individual experiences and the larger concept of White privilege. Initially I was cautious about engaging in this way, concerned that I would too strongly influence the content of the interview. However, through the process of interviewing, I came to understand the exchanges as both developing rapport and supporting the development of a shared curiosity that deepened the

depth and breadth of the inquiry. This is in keeping with the concept of deep curiosity and exploration of lived experience written about by both van Manen (1997) and Creswell (2007).

At the conclusion of each interview, I took notes describing observations I made of the participant, the quality of the dynamics in our exchange, the environment, and my feelings. These notes were sometimes illuminated through engagement in my own movement which helped me to crystallize my thoughts and impressions. This “bottom-up” way of working with my experience of the interviews is in alignment with embodied approaches to research and was intended to aid me in noting the overall tone of the interview and in comparing my initial feelings and sensations to those that I experienced following the interview (Tantia & Kawano, 2019).

Participants

Because this study sought to understand the experience of White privilege, participants for this study were White people or people who have White skin privilege. Since I was seeking participation by members of a pre-defined group, participants in the study were chosen through a purposive sampling technique based on the following criteria:

- Participants expressed an interest in exploring and understanding more about their sensate experiences and expressions with regard to their racial privilege.
- They were aware of their racial privilege and were able to reflect on personal experiences during racial dialogues and racialized interactions.

- They were interested in developing a Nonracist White Identity.
- They claimed to have enough stamina in exploring this topic that an experiential approach to investigating it was not likely to be harmful.
- They had access to supportive resources to help them in processing their experiences post-interview if needed.

Due to the anticipated difficulty of finding participants who were aware of their White privilege and were willing to talk to me about their experiences, I intended to approach individuals who had already identified an interest in this work through their involvement in local anti-oppression and White affinity groups. These groups existed in different contexts and had memberships representing people from various socioeconomic, religious, ethnic, educational, and regional locations. Members of these groups included counselors, students, administrative personnel, business professionals, social workers, and educators. Participants in the groups came on a voluntary basis.

While membership in one of these groups implied interest in the topic and a capacity for engaging with potentially challenging content, potential participants were further screened through a questionnaire designed to assess emotional sturdiness and stamina as well as awareness of and access to supportive resources. Participants were asked the following screening questions:

- Do you participate in any kind of group (affinity, therapeutic, community-based, psychoeduational, support, etc) that focuses on White privilege?
- If so, what drew you to this group?

- Have you had an experience of talking about your own White privilege? How did it go?
- Have you had experience talking about internal sensations or feelings that you weren't previously aware of? How did that go?
- How do you tend to respond to stress?
- What kinds of internal and external resources do you have?
- What do you hope to gain from your participation in this study?

As this study was intended to locate distinct themes across narratives as well as locate the distinct voice within each narrative, I planned to recruit up to 8 participants. This number was imagined to allow for potential data saturation and provide enough information to replicate the study, while supporting the emergence of the subtlety and nuance of each narrative (Walker, 2012; Guest et al., 2006; Chase, 2011).

Recruitment. I initially attempted to recruit participants from three different anti-oppression and affinity groups. I established a contact in each group, either through professional connections or through referral. Each contact agreed to post a flyer about the study at the location where the group met and announce it in their meetings. This process yielded three interested people. They were emailed and given more specific information about the study, including the screening questions and the time commitment it would involve. All of these people completed the screening questionnaire, were assessed as appropriate for the study, and signed the

consent form. Prior to scheduling their interviews, two of the people dropped out due to other time commitments. They each offered referrals to other people that they believed would be interested. These people were emailed and two of them expressed willingness to participate. As before, both dropped out as a date for the interview was being determined.

At this point I reached out to five organizations dedicated to social action in the Boulder/Denver area. Through email I introduced myself and my work, requesting a conversation with the appropriate person to explain my research and identify a way I might recruit participants. Only two of these organizations responded and although there was initial interest in my work, the contacts did not yield any willing participants. Rather than continuing to approach people and organizations I had no relationship to, I began to use social networking and word-of-mouth to gather referrals. This proved to be the most successful method of recruitment. Five people expressed interest in participating and requested more information about the study. After receiving the screening questions, two people stopped responding with one contacting me many months later, explaining that a personal matter had come up and offering to participate at that time. At this point a review of the data had already begun and there was not enough time for an additional interview. Three of the initial five completed the screening questions, were assessed to be appropriate, and were invited to join the study. All three confirmed, with one dropping out during the scheduling process.

The three participants I ended up interviewing were all people I had met at least once before. Two of them I had met only one time. In both cases we were

introduced by a mutual friend who pointed out our shared interest in social justice. I knew the other participant better, as we had worked together in an educational setting many years earlier. It is possible that the addition of a more personal connection contributed to the participants' willingness to join the study.

The difficulty I had obtaining and securing participants and the high attrition rate piqued my curiosity. I spent time reflecting on and adjusting my approach believing that the minimal interest and low participation was due to how I was presenting the study. Because most of the attrition seemed to occur during the scheduling process, I explained the time commitment in a more flexible way, letting participants know that the second meeting to review the video was optional. I also practiced my explanation of the study, making it more concise and confident.

I continue to reflect on and consider the possible reasons for my challenges. While some of it was inevitably caused by my particular approach and presentation, I also suspect that some of it had to do with the nature of my study and what it was requesting of participants. I was not only asking people to look at their Whiteness, but also to use movement and non-verbal expression to convey aspects of their experiences. The research I had done for my literature review taught me that one of the markers of White privilege was the presence of choice: the normalization of Whiteness and racism means that White people can easily choose not to examine or even be conscious of their privilege. Engaging with one's privilege requires persistent and purposeful effort, something that only exists in varying degrees depending on the context and environment the person is in. This information from my review of the literature was confirmed by the answers of those that did

participate in the study. All of them spoke about the conditions and intentions that supported them to stay engaged in the examination of their privilege. The specifics of this will be discussed in more detail in the results of the study. It is important to note that the geographical areas where participants were sought were not very racially diverse. Boulder and the surrounding area is 90.5% White (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). The high concentration of White people meant that there was even less motivation to consider privilege and race. In addition, the political environment during the time of this study encouraged, reinforced, and emboldened not only overt White Supremacists but also the quiet, covert Supremacy that is embedded in White people and institutions across the United States. The result may be a kind of apathy, complacency, or hopelessness in those that might otherwise be more motivated to participate.

Participant profiles. Because this study examined the experience of a particular sociocultural location (Whiteness) through a phenomenological approach, it is relevant to include the larger context of each participant. Such a profile adds to the depth of understanding of both the individual and the shared themes that emerged.

Participant One was a White, able-bodied, heterosexual, cisgender male. He was from a large city in the South and was in his early thirties. He lived in Boulder, Colorado. He had a graduate degree and was self-employed.

Participant Two identified herself as a White, able-bodied, queer female. She grew up at the edge of a Reservation in a rural Plains community. She lived in the

suburbs outside of Boulder. She was in her early thirties, was a professional, and had a graduate degree.

Participant Three identified as a White, able-bodied, queer person who preferred they, them, theirs pronouns. They grew up in a small Midwestern town with several older siblings who frequently traveled to Africa. They had a graduate degree and worked in a local mental health clinic.

These participants were recruited for their level of understanding of their racial privilege, ability to articulate that understanding, and willingness to engage in a lengthy conversation with me. Additionally they shared other characteristics. All had advanced degrees, identified themselves as employed professionals, and were in their 30s. Through the course of our conversations several other similarities emerged. In the next chapter I present the findings of the study organized around the themes that were identified through the process of distillation.

Interview Preparation and Researcher Reflexivity

In qualitative research, the recognition and acknowledgment of researcher positionality is considered relevant to disclose (Lincoln, 1995). As mentioned in the Introduction, I was drawn to this study because of my own journey and the questions that resulted. This positionality presented both benefits and challenges. On the one hand, my personal experience might have supported me to be more curious and open which, in turn, allowed for more engagement and openness on the part of the participants. In fact, I did call on my own perspectives to assist me in building rapport and trust during the interviews. However, this same personal experience could also easily lead to bias in both the interviews and in the analysis of

data. To address these challenges I took several measures to develop my interview questions and reflexive stance.

Prior to beginning the interview process, I asked a dance/movement therapist colleague to interview me using the proposed set of questions. Being the interviewee and experiencing the questions myself helped me to better understand their potential impact. Based on feedback from my peer and my own moments of confusion, reluctance, and genuine curiosity, I made edits to the wording, added some specific somatic prompts, and changed the order of the questions. These adjustments were intended to improve the quality of the data as well as the experience of the interview for the participant. Questions were ordered in a way that supported the development of rapport and provided a natural progression into more personal layers of reflection.

In preparing for the interviews, I took a number of steps to address the presence of my assumptions, biases, and values so that I could compartmentalize them and allow my curiosity to inform the data collection and analysis (van Manen, 1997). The process of researching and writing the literature review for this study in combination with my ongoing personal exploration supported me in becoming more aware of my worldviews and perspectives and the things that have shaped them. While awareness does not eliminate these suppositions, it can assist one in identifying and containing them.

To further hone my awareness and access my curiosity during this study I did several things. First, I spent time with myself or meditated before each interview in order to acknowledge what was present or moving in me prior to meeting the

participant. This was helpful in assessing what I was already feeling and experiencing so that I could account for the way that might influence my perception of the meeting. Second, during the interviews, I tracked my own responses, sensations, and movements by deliberately moving my attention from my own internal experiences to the participant's words and actions. In this way I could note the reactions that I recognized as signifiers of familiar patterns and reconnect to a more curious state (Caldwell, 1996).

The process of oscillating my attention and attending to my own internal experience was intended to allow me to become more immersed in each interview. The immersion was conceptualized to involve an openness and receptivity to the participant's verbal and non-verbal expression that allowed me to be viscerally impacted by the participant's narrative. This attunement to the participant's state guided the progression of each interview (Tantia, 2014) and mirrored the deep listening that I am accustomed to engaging in when working with clients as a dance/movement therapist (Tantia & Kawano, 2019).

In addition to using these personal practices, I sought further feedback from outside sources. I shared drafts of the chapters on methodology and results with an outside expert, notable for their professional experience and education in somatic, social justice counseling. The relationship between myself and the reader was collegial, with neither person inhabiting a role or position that held power or influence in the other person's life. The drafts were shared prior to and following the interviews. The initial review was intended to address and mitigate possible researcher biases in the methodology and interview questions. The second review

was intended to discern the possible presence of an institutionally informed personal lens that could influence the findings and interpretation of data. The purpose of both reviews was to critically examine the study for accuracy in content while guarding against the recapitulation of oppressive dynamics by including feedback and perspectives from a voice in a racially marginalized location.

Feedback was incorporated following further reflection, consideration, and integration through journaling and movement. By revealing personal feelings and reactions to the feedback, these verbal and nonverbal explorations supported the maintenance of curiosity and a growing awareness of researcher bias and its impact on the study. Finally, as acknowledged earlier, notes, personal journaling, and movement exploration also provided additional context for the interview data as well as more opportunities to examine personal reactions to the content of the interviews.

Data Analysis

Guided by the phenomenological principles described at the beginning of this chapter, the analysis and presentation of data used a constant comparative method with Helms' model as a frame of reference for sorting and coding. Data analysis focused on understanding the meaning of participants' movements, descriptions, and experiences through review of interviews for themes in both verbal and nonverbal expression. First, the verbal portion of the interviews were transcribed verbatim noting silences and pauses because attention to silence, pauses, and other patterns of speech contributes to the understanding of the content and the participant's relationship to it. Then each interview transcript was read separately

to get an overall sense of the participant's lived experiences. Following this initial reading, general impressions and a brief summary of each interview were recorded in notes. The next step in data analysis was viewing each interview video and making additional notes on movement and speech patterns. All the interviews were read and watched several times until a sense of immersion in the material had been obtained.

Next, significant statements or quotes that provided an understanding of how the participants described their experiences were noted and then color-coded by content and meaning (Charmaz, 2006). This method generated hypotheses and questions that motivated further review of the transcripts and videos resulting in insights and a deepened understanding of participants' experiences. The questions generated for use in analysis were: What were the processes and meanings conveyed in each response? In what context was each response occurring? Did each participant's responses add to a cohesive profile? If not, what were the discrepancies? Were the accompanying movements and expressions congruent with the verbal responses?

The coding and questioning process continued in a cyclical fashion allowing for comparison between the different interviews. This procedure continued until connections between individual themes became apparent and essential characteristics began to emerge. This process emulated the reflection and distillation process described by Moustakas (1994) earlier. In keeping with phenomenological principles (van Manen, 1997; Creswell, 2007), the overarching themes were then described and explored through writing and movement in a

process that involved further reflection and consideration of context. Recurring movements were repeated by the researcher to assist in describing the action and understanding its corresponding sensations.

Finally, because of the high potential for researcher bias, the inherent cultural and institutional limitations of prevailing systems for movement analysis (Caldwell, 2013), and the implications of power in researcher interpretation, the data were further reviewed and understood through collaborative processes. Participants were provided with the transcripts and invited to review their video with the researcher to add to or alter existing descriptions and derive additional meaning from movements, shapes, postures, and gestures. One of the participants expressed interest in this but did not follow through.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Although each participant's interview was unique, there were many commonalities in their responses. These commonalities are presented through the descriptions of the eight themes that emerged in the participant's verbal and non-verbal responses. These themes are further explicated through references to relevant topics in the literature on Whiteness Studies and White privilege. The themes are: disorientation; self-structuring; polarization; description through contrast; embarrassment and self-consciousness; seeking affirmation; maintaining awareness; and seeking wholeness.

Theme One: Disorientation

A recurring theme throughout the interviews was disorientation. Participants talked about this aspect of their experience in two particular contexts: the memory of how they felt when they first became aware of their race (Interview Question 1) and how they felt when they recognized their privilege or it was pointed out by someone else (Interview Questions 6 and 7). The disorientation was frequently associated with "confusion" and accompanied by particular sensations and feelings.

Participant Two described the first memories as "really pixilated" and "blurry." She continued, saying:

> From what I know about white supremacy and racism and those things…where my brain goes about that is actually that I wasn't supposed to see what was actually going on, that I am not supposed to

> have a clear memory of it…even somatically, there's a kind of a diffuseness and a…almost like a different kind of somatic confusion where my body doesn't feel as integrated.

All of the participants identified a feeling of shock that accompanied the confusion and disorientation. Participant One talked about his first memory and how the incident affected him.

> I was in middle school and a friend I went to school with was from Uganda…I think we were walking down the street and we were gonna go into some place, and he didn't feel comfortable there. I can't remember exactly where we were going, but it was just pretty plain, he's like, I don't wanna go in there. And I'm like, "What's the problem?" And he said, "Maybe for you but for me, I don't think that I'd feel very comfortable." And I was like, "Why would that be?" And he's like, "You're white." And at that point…I felt…shock... tightening. That was the thing my body experienced. I felt tight. I felt nervous and confused… um… I think the reason the memory sticks is because of some dramatic experience to it, and I think this one stuck more because it came as a shock to me. I remember the shock and tightening of my body, and then feeling kind of embarrassed and confused and just going… just continuing to walk because I didn't know what else to say. I still didn't really understand, and I'm like okay, my skin color's different, but I didn't understand.

Explaining the confusion, disorientation, and shock as a challenge to her worldview, Participant Two shared,

> Because I've been taught certain things about who I am and how my family earned what we have and that I'm a good person and that, um, race doesn't matter, all of that… you know… because I've been taught a lot of those things, it's disorienting for me, at least initially, to see that the world is different than the framework that I've learned around it.

The experiences described by the participants are in alignment with the characteristics Helms (1995) attributes to the *Disintegration Status* in her model for White identity development. As described earlier, this phase is often initiated by an experience that causes one to question their perspective. The resulting dissonance can be accompanied by feelings of confusion, discomfort, shame, and guilt (Helms, 1995). Participant Three recounted:

> I remember having a pretty strong response in my body. And then afterwards, talking with my mom about it, and crying and feeling really bad that I had such a strong response knowing that this man did absolutely nothing, but I was very aware that he was black and I was white and very aware of how much, like, being in a small space with a person of color impacted me in a way that logistically didn't make sense.

All the participants named feelings similar to those documented by Helms and detailed their corresponding somatic sensations as being "tight" and "tense", particularly in the torso region around the chest and belly. The word Participant

One used to describe his discomfort was "rigid". Taking time to sense and feel his experience he reported,

> I think in a way I feel more rigid. Um, almost as if I'm not looking around myself, I'm just focused on one thing. I feel rigid. I feel… uh… some tension in my chest… um… the back of my head starts to feel tingly… um... I notice the tension is… even like legs… my legs almost feel disconnected from me.

The other thing that was notable about the participants' reports of confusion was the cyclical quality of it. Participants noted that the discomfort they were associating with the disorientation of confusion tended to resurface each time their Whiteness or privilege became more visible to them. Participant Two recognized that a "wave of shame and disorientation" came each time she became aware of her privilege, either through her own awareness of enacting it or by having it pointed out by someone else. She explained:

> I go back to that initial shock of like, "This is what I thought about the world, this is how the world is." There's all this disorientation, and there's all of the judgment and shame about it from a macular level, but then there's like a personal judgment and shame of like, "I should know better at this point. I have practiced this so much that I should be better." Right? Like that "eeeeh" moment….which for me is generally really nauseating.

The cyclical nature of recognizing privilege corresponds with Helm's explanation for using the term *status* instead of *phase* (1995). Use of the word phase

implies that there is a continuous developmental progression whereas the word status indicates a more dynamic quality with movement happening in various directions depending on the context and situation. As discussed in the literature review, the social normalization of Whiteness means that it can be elusive, slipping in and out of the White person's awareness depending on the circumstances. This aspect of the experience will be discussed in more detail in relationship to the theme of Practice. But it is this elusive quality of Whiteness that makes a dynamic structure for White identity development a necessity.

Theme Two: Self-Structuring

A movement that appeared consistently throughout each interview was participants counting on their fingers. As participants described their confusion and disorientation and the accompanying strong feelings, each of them demonstrated what appeared to be some kind of internal way of structuring or reorganizing themselves internally through lists. Each item in the list was spoken as one hand touched the fingers of the other. The quality of this touch varied among participants from firm and percussive to wringing to gentle stroking. In recognizing their Whiteness, Participant Three shared,

> It's just like really deep grief. I think is really what… is what I'm connecting it with and grief of… grief of what I know of how people of color have been oppressed, specifically in the United States, and so I think it's just like a really big and deep grief around how myself (*right hand lightly touches left index finger)* and my ancestors (*right touches*

> *middle finger)* and how whiteness in general (*touches ring finger)* has… has created such a huge divide.

Participant One listed the strong feelings of "guilt, shame, sadness, and fear" on his fingers. Participant Two explained her initial encounter with her privilege and also used her fingers to list the strong feelings she associated with it.

> That initial process of awakening, there was judgment and shame that came up with that. So there was that first process of addressing my own shame and addressing my own judgment of… how could I? (*left hand strongly taps right pinky finger)* How could we? *(left to right ring finger)* How could… um… *(shaking head and grabbing middle finger with the other two fingers and squeezing them).*

In reflecting on the larger context of the participants' responses, I started to wonder how listing might be related to the confusion the participants described and the prevailing assumption of White expertise and knowledge discussed earlier in the literature review. As Tolchuk (2010) suggested, White people tend to internalize the assumption of knowing and can experience an array of defensive behaviors when their knowledge is challenged or questioned. Because the participants in this study were at a level of identity development that made containment possible, the responses they described to their own confusion tended to be about re-establishing equilibrium or balance. This makes sense when considered in relationship to the way that Whiteness tends to organize and define itself in contrast to "the other." If the "world is not as it seems," the external structures upon which identity is built no longer function. Not only does one's understanding of the world radically shift, one's

understanding and concept of oneself shifts. During one of the interviews I had a strong somatic experience that seemed to be directly related to the disorientation the participant was describing. As they spoke, I had a swirly sensation in my belly and a vivid image of flood waters rushing through the room, upending us both. Afterwards, everything was gone... only rocks and swirls of sand remained. There was a need to rebuild, to reorganize, to construct new structures.

Perhaps these lists of qualities and tasks act as a way to restructure oneself. I was not able to confirm this interpretation with the participants but Helms' (1995) model indicates that in Disintegration Status, the White person is faced with the choice of finding a constructive resolution to the dissonance they experience or reinstating their ignorance. In the later option, one is returning to the structural organization that is known or familiar. In the former, the resolution must literally be constructed anew. It is my hypothesis that the lists the participants marked on their fingers served to soothe them by reintroducing structure in an unfamiliar and unknown landscape. This is an area for further investigation.

Theme Three: Polarization

Polarities showed up consistently throughout the interviews in a variety of ways.

Body/mind. The polarity between body and mind was one of the most pervasive. All of the participants noted a tendency to get "heady" and "theoretical" during the interview, even in response to the questions that were more somatically focused. This cognitive or thinking state was often spoken of in opposition to a more body-based feeling state. Participant Three reflected:

> Oh how easy it is to go into academic theory! "Let's talk about this!" "Let's learn more!" versus "What is actually happening for me?" (*gestures with right hand toward heart)*

Participant One noted that his initial impulse in answering every question was to go toward his ideas, thoughts, and explanations and he made a connection between this experience and what he noticed when he worked as a group facilitator.

> When I work with groups, particularly white-identified groups, I ask people to get out of their heads and most of them are stuck in the thought – this and that and this is how it works… and they never get to the emotion. People just keep wanting to get heady about everything… it seems like [they] don't want to feel.

Interestingly, this was the first part of the participant's response to the question asking him to show the shape of Whiteness. Following this, he shared a few different positions saying, "I think the first one that comes to mind is…" or "I'm trying to think of a movement for ya." These introductions were followed by static shapes or postures that were held for a few moments and then analyzed by the participant. Accordingly, his interview referenced thinking and "headiness" with more frequency than any of the other interviews. This pattern made his interview a strong example of the hierarchical nature of the body-mind split, one of the hallmarks of White western ideology and culture.

Feeling/not feeling. Furthermore, although this participant mentioned that he was "feeling a tearfulness" several times during the interview, he never shed any tears. This may coincide with Tochluk's (2010) idea that Whiteness can be

characterized by emotional restriction. As Cohen (2001) and Johnson (2006) contend, the avoidance of emotional depth and withdrawal from feeling are effective ways of coping with or denying privilege. The portrayal of thinking as a way to avoid feeling was a common theme across interviews. All of the participants referred to the poles of feeling and not feeling. Participant Two reported that she recognized "thinking a lot instead of feeling or relating or experiencing" as a sign of her privilege. Similarly Participant Three described the struggle "to feel [their] body in the space versus [being in] strategy mode all the time" as one of the recognizable characteristics of their privilege.

Another strategy that participants used to avoid feeling was "checking out." In this polarity participants talked about being present or being "gone", "mildly dissociative" "floaty" or "numb." Participant Two shared:

> The diffuseness or lack of integration I was describing in my body… it feels dissociative… like not paying attention and not being able to stay with what's actually happening.

After taking a "Superman" stance to demonstrate White privilege, Participant Three became emotional and mused:

> At first it felt like Superman… and this idea of "I'm here to save the world!" or do whatever I need to do… and like, "What a great job I'm doing!" And then looking at you was when, obviously, it got me in the heart, and just feeling… and then I said, "That's disgusting!"… like the reality of not wanting to own it for myself or feeling for even just a couple of moments, uh… the dirtiness of it, of white privilege, or the…

> um… horrors of it, and that's really a strong word. Mmm. And then feeling the tears… there's still a lot of emotion and a lot of disgust in my system around my own whiteness… And I wonder what would've happened if I pushed through it and didn't actually feel it? My guess is I would have become numb.

All of the participants became quite still as they talked how they avoid the painful feelings associated with identifying privilege. Each of them also acknowledged that part of their privilege was the presence of a choice about how much or how little they wanted to engage with it. Their verbal and non-verbal expression of the dynamic of this choice revealed another polarity: in/out.

In/out. This polarity first became apparent through a consistent pattern of forward and backward movement in the torsos of the participants. Many times this movement was confined to the head and neck and had a reaching then retreating quality to it. Other times it included the shoulders and chest, with the chest pushing out slightly and the shoulders moving back as the participant moved forward, and then collapsing as they moved back. These movements sometimes corresponded exactly with what the participant was describing and at other times seemed to reveal an underlying, unspoken aspect of the experience. They also appeared to accompany a self-evaluation in which participants judged their responses as either good or bad. This corresponds with the binary thinking noted by Applebaum (2016), DiAngelo (2016), and others. These patterns were apparent as Participant Two described the acknowledgment of her privilege as dynamic:

> As far as identifying my privilege, I get to leave that. I get to forget it and not pay attention and find comfort and safety in avoiding that reality… *(head pulls back with chin slightly angled toward the left shoulder)…* so not actually paying attention or not having to think about it, and even if I do the work to integrate it *(head and upper chest lean forward very slightly)*, even if I do the work to pay attention *(head nods once emphatically and pulls chest slightly more forward)*, then I get to leave it again *(head pulls back)*. I have the choice of not having to do something about it… of being able to remove myself a little bit *(shoulders and upper chest retreat)*, being able to step in *(head forward)* and feel really good about myself and then being able to step back *(head back with chin tucked toward neck)*.

Participant Three echoed the idea of voluntary disengagement and the subsequent self-assessment explaining:

> [Privilege] is really hard to look at, and like… a little bit of like…I just want to turn my head *(head turns toward left shoulder and pulls back while left hand pushes out in front of the body along the sagittal plane)*, and I know that's not ideally where I would go, but feeling that too, and then feeling a little bit of judgment in me.

Participant One addressed this in/out experience as he talked about "two versions" or states of White privilege and how he experienced a sense of pride when he was more engaged.

> So the first is just this kind of like, "Oh, everything's great and happy-go-lucky, and life is good *(from leaning back in his seat he sits up and head stretches toward ceiling, heart region presses forward slighty)*. I feel super relaxed *(smiling, sits back)…* blissful, yeah… and then the awareness of that privilege, might feel a little more stern and serious *(sits forward and places elbows on knees, head drops forward, forehead is furrowed)* and um… I feel guilty… and then maybe there's a bit of pride that I was aware of it *(leans back against chair with both feet placed on the floor with a wide space between his knees).*

The sense of pride or feeling good about oneself relates to the concept of the "Good White Person" discussed in much of the literature from the field of Whiteness studies. This concept arose with some frequency in the interviews and will be discussed in more depth in relationship to another theme: Seeking Approval.

The forward and backward movements of the participants' torsos seemed to occur in conjunction with verbal content related to the choice privilege affords to decide whether and to what degree to engage with difficult feedback and whether or not to take ownership for the impact of privilege. Participant Three shared one version of disengaging:

> There's this kind of dismissiveness *(leans back in seat and crosses arms in front of chest, crosses left ankle over right knee)* or kind of not really willing… like taking up space but in such a casual way or in such a relaxed sort of way… I keep coming back to there's no ownership of the actual whiteness or domination or privilege… and it just feels really

> clear, like, "What do you mean?" Yeah… that dismissiveness or like, "What do you want from me?" *(head pulls back)*

Also recalling a time when someone else pointed out his privilege, Participant One reflected,

> I remember how I felt like responding almost like, "Back off! I don't want to deal with you." *(both hands up in front of body, elbows and upper arms close to torso, head and chest pull back away from hands)*

In the situations where the participants were willing to take "ownership" or acknowledge the impact of their privilege, the disengagement seemed to be related to the discomfort and strong feelings that resulted. Both Participants Two and Three experienced strong feelings of disgust that they disengaged from by either brushing off their body or shaking and stepping back from the spot where the feeling came up. Recounting her usual response Participant Two reported:

> Ninety percent of the time my reaction is like… *(pulls head back and slightly left)*… like this sinking into my gut, like pit, nauseated, "oh fuck" moment where I might freeze, and this feels like really shame connected. The initial experience is… "UHHH"… it's nauseating, like "uhhh"… this impulse to protect myself and impulse to like… *(pulls head head further back and withdraws chest, closing shoulders in, hands go up, palms facing out)*… this feels like it's about denial or backtracking… and it takes me a minute. There's like this whole process that needs to happen, that I need to go through internally to show back up *(shoulders soften and torso moves forward slightly).*

Participant Three recalled a time when their privilege had a negative impact and they tried to repair the harm it caused. Although the in/out dynamic was not explicitly referred to, their forward and backward movement as they spoke appeared to demonstrate the navigation of staying engaged despite the uncomfortable feelings that arose.

> I think I said "as white folks" and made a fairly like, blanket statement because every youth except one was white in that space and I said it, and I made eye contact with the youth who was a person of color, and he like, was just like, "Uhhh…" and I was like, "Oh my…" *(head and entire upper body pulls back)*… and I don't even remember if he even said anything and, if he did, I think it was pretty short and succinct, and I… I just remember being like, "Oh my god!" and apologizing *(leaning far forward with head and torso)* and probably apologizing more than I needed to… and [I] just felt really, really uncomfortable for not seeing him… *(sinks back).*

In reviewing the data, I noticed that when participants pulled back, there was a tendency to turn their heads to the left. This aspect of their responses was not explored in much depth but could be a rich area for further inquiry.

Part/whole. All of the participants noted that the polarities created a sense of internal division into parts and pieces, leading to an overall feeling of separation from oneself and others. Participant One alluded to this when he spoke about the parts of his Whiteness - the "happy-go-lucky" part and the more "stern and serious" part. He also talked about the internal "paradoxes" of feeling a lot of emotions and

then compartmentalizing them and not feeling them. Participant Two drew a connection between privilege and marginalization by noting how oppressive systems create "internal divisiveness" for both positions.

> You were commenting about the sorting and, for me, I think that's largely about oppression in my body and how I believe the story that I'm not enough, and that's about how I don't like the stories and about how I don't get to be whole or don't get to be present or that something's wrong with me, right, cuz… for me that's the underlying story of oppression – whether I learned that because I was raised female or whether I learned that because I'm queer or whether I learned that because I was raised not high class, right? Even… even the different areas of privilege in my life. Like I am cognitively privileged. I am linguistically robust, like I'm verbose. I am a good learner, I'm a good student, right, I get a lot of reinforcement for that, but there's an underlying message that if I wasn't a good learner… if I wasn't as smart as I am… if I wasn't as athletic as I am… and I know that's true because in the moments where I'm like confused or in the moments when I'm injured, I question my value. It doesn't really matter… like, either way, there are embedded stories about how I'm only valuable if… only worthy of love if…
>
> And my privilege areas are the ones that like, thank goodness, I can check that off, and I kinda have relief from that, and my areas of oppression are like empty check boxes, and I'm like, "Oh maybe…

> maybe I'm not good enough. Maybe there is something wrong with me." So, in those moments when I'm sorting… where I'm dividing… it's really about checking… like, is more weighing out on this side of the scale because, if it is, then I still get to be here, but if I believe like my badness or my brokenness or my insufficiency outweighs – then I'm gonna check the fuck out.

This participant later went on to connect this fragmentation to the dominant social narrative stating:

> In weird ways I'm told that I'm supposed to feel like I'm whole… or that I'm supposed to feel more whole than them, whoever "they" are. But I don't feel whole because in the back of my mind I know if these are the only ways I'm whole… it's conditional… it's a big fuckin' trap!

Participant Three echoed this idea as they talked about the negative effects of fragmentation from both a systemic perspective and an intra-personal point of view.

> I'm cutting myself off from the rest of myself, in certain spaces at least, and certain locations… it is actually, like, really detrimental to not just like – the movement of more equity and justice for folks of color, but like, to… to my own self.

Participant Two talked about how Whiteness creates relational polarization through its emphasis on individualism and its history of colonization. As she consciously enacted the shape and movements of Whiteness she reached out her limbs to fill and energetically go beyond her kinesphere, simultaneously recognizing how relationally disconnected she became.

I get to have as much space as I want… this is all mine. And if you feel bad because I'm taking up all this space, like that's about you… *(pauses for a bit and feels)…* I think there's something isolating about whiteness… *(turns head away from me toward the right and gazes off)…* and how much more disconnected I am from you after that first territory claim... yeah… so [I'm feeling] some separateness and isolation. It's also really contained at times *(hands come together in lap palms facing up, left on top of right. Left leg crosses over right resulting in a slight shift in the hips away from me). (Pauses for some time)…*This is not a normal hand posture that I would take, right, and I was just… I got so big… and was pushing you out *(pushes into space around her body)* and then acknowledging like the loneliness… and then I did this *(returns to previously described position with hands in lap),* which is so much more lady-like and contained and proper than I usually think of myself. I'm very good at containing myself as a white person, but, um, I was noticing the polarity and like, the pain from the hyperarousal down to this… like this ponging down to hypo and contained and still.

These responses are in alignment with the findings of Tochluk's study on Whiteness (2010). As mentioned earlier, some of Tochluk's participants attributed their sense of separateness or isolation to the avoidance of feeling while others identified a larger sense of disconnection, one that included distance from ancestors, history, and the spiritual and natural realms (Tochluk, 2010). Similarly, Participant

Two talked about the disconnect from her lineage but expressed her experience of it in a more conflicted way.

> There's this incongruence… there's so much pain in my lineage of whiteness. There's so much pain in that… *(touches chest by heart)*… but there's my ancestry here, and there are moments of connectivity and there's beauty, I mean, to connect with my lineage, and I think I do touch that in pieces… and there's the thick tar-like nauseating pain of that history, cuz that's there too.

Participant One talked about how the relational divisiveness of polarization was even apparent in the larger field of ally work. After describing his own perspective on the "Good White Person" he talked about the experience he was having:

> I get fidgety there cuz… the hard, social justice view would say, "No! That's another way of escaping"… and I have frustration with that view. I find that there's these poles, and I find that no matter what your color is, there are people that are so hard-nosed on what something is that it's attacking. And then I find the people over here that are very certain of things… and there's reasons they're there. And so I'm not blaming any of these sides – there's reasons for both of them being where they are, and they're both attacking. So where's the middle? *(hands come to middle and fingers interlace)*

By describing how polarization causes division both internally and externally, the participants illustrated the harmful impact of the binary thinking that

is characteristic of a White worldview. This either or approach is at the root of exclusion and inclusion, of self and other, of privilege and marginalization. The rigid adherence to this perspective simply perpetuates the status quo. Perhaps recognizing this, all of the participants expressed the need for finding "middle ground" or balance. For some this was through finding more integration within themselves and for others it was about finding more connection with others. This search for balance will be discussed in more detail in the theme of Seeking Wholeness.

Theme Four: Description through contrast

As participants talked about their Whiteness, their understanding of it and its expression, they often referred to what racial privilege does *not* require. This can be seen in some of the participants' responses in the previous section. For example, they "did not have to pay attention to" or know about their Whiteness or their privilege. They did not have to stay engaged with difficult or challenging dynamics. They "did not have to worry." They did not have to take ownership. They did not have to feel. This finding is in alignment with existing literature on the social construction of race. As discussed in the literature review, historically Whiteness was constructed and defined by juxtaposing it against the "other". Instead of being identified through its own characteristics, Whiteness was compared to other races and identified by how it was not like them (DiAngelo, 2016). The act of defining what something *is* by identifying what it *is not* is another example of how polarities show up in relationship to Whiteness.

The effect of this social binary seems to exceed the definition of Whiteness. In relationship to privilege, it presented as things the participants didn't have to do. And, in perhaps another example of the perseverance of binary thinking, as the participants talked about how they work with their privilege, they often spoke of what they try *not* to do. Participant Two seemed to do this less frequently than the other two interviewees. Her answers tended to focus on the ways her privilege manifested rather than on the ways she tried to avoid demonstrating it. This pattern was reflected in her comment that:

> I can feel sad about how I reenacted harm, and I can feel sad about how I do that to myself. I can feel sad about where I learned that from in my past, and I can be present enough to know those things aren't running me. I get that they're part of my story, and they always will be and will show up at really inopportune times, but I am not under the illusion that I get to outgrow that.

Participant Two's perspective may indicate that she is in a different status of identity development. Her answers tended to be consistently self-referencing, suggesting that she was solidly in autonomy status (Helms, 1995).

Participants One and Three appeared to be equally aware of how their privilege manifests but rather than talking about the ways it showed up, they referred to behaviors they try to avoid. All the participants were aware of the asymmetrical use of space described by Johnson (2007), however Participants One and Three expressed this awareness as a concern about <u>not</u> taking up too much space. Participant Three stated:

> When I'm in spaces with people of color, I tend to tighten up a little bit and like, go back a little bit and just really try to make sure that I'm not like, physically or energetically taking up too much space.

Participant One was more indirect in referencing space. In his interview this theme showed up in his concern about not talking too much. Noting that he "just rambles sometimes" he frequently abbreviated his answers by saying things like: "I could go on, but I won't" or "I have the desire to share beyond the body, but I'll follow your instructions."

The effort to avoid certain behaviors also showed up in efforts not to: "be overly enthusiastic about a person of color in the room"; "be overly awkward"; "get too much in my mind"; "cry"; "smile too much"; "be overly friendly"; "be stuck in shame"; "forget history"; "be overly apologetic"; and "be a good white person". Participant Three referenced an internal list of what not to do saying, "I shouldn't do this… I shouldn't do this… I shouldn't do this…" accompanied by assigning each unnamed thing to a single finger.

The focus on how not to behave appeared to have two significant effects. First, by polarizing behavior it contributed to the "self-division" discussed earlier. Second, the negative frame of reference participants used revealed the existence of a gap. Participants seemed to know what *not* to do but were less explicit about what *to* do in relationship to their privilege. All of the participants indicated a desire for balance and wholeness, recognizing that these qualities would also support their desire to be a positive force for change in the world. Indicators of how to achieve

this balance were embedded in their answers and will be discussed in the discussion section.

Theme Five: Embarrassment and Self-Consciousness

A surprising behavior that showed up across interviews was laughter. Although it showed up in numerous contexts and was explained by participants in various ways, one trait was consistent – the laughter was not, in any situation, understood by the participants as a response to something funny, but rather as an indication of embarrassment and self-consciousness. It often appeared accompanied by hesitation in relationship to the interview questions that asked participants to move or use their bodies to demonstrate their internal experiences. Laughter was notable in this context because it appeared to indicate a quality of self-consciousness that exemplified the presence of the hierarchical split between body and mind (Tantia, 2014).

Laughter also showed up as participants recounted situations where they became aware of something they had not previously been tracking. In these contexts, participants consistently reported that their laughter was connected to feelings of embarrassment. Participant One laughed as he recounted the embarrassment he felt when he first became conscious of being White. And Participant Three laughed while telling a story about becoming aware of their privilege, saying:

> I was just like, "Oh my fuck!" *(laughing)* Like I felt… I just felt really… embarrassed. I'm like, "Oh, here I am [doing] such a good thing" *(eyes roll, smiling)*… like, "Oh, I'm such a good white person" and then [I]

> realized… ohhh… I didn't actually email our Latinx workers… I was extremely embarrassed! It was bad! *(laughing)*

When asked in follow-up questions about the meaning they made of the laughter, the participants had several explanations. Participant One indicated that it provided some emotional distance from the other feelings that were present. Participant Three suggested that it could be a way to "bypass" feelings or cope with the uncomfortable reality of the harm privilege causes. They reflected:

> I think it's a way to disperse my uncomfortable energy in my system… yeah, because it's not funny, *(smiling)* and I'm like smiling again. I think it's really just this way of… like… possibly stepping over the fact that I really felt like I made a miss-step and that I really like, uh… I really felt like I did something that marginalized folks of color who I work with… and, uh… that the laughter is a way to discharge some of that uncomfortable energy that's happening in my system and also to be like… "Ultimately, it's fine"…to place less value on it and potentially to not fully own it for myself either.

An interesting polarity showed up in relationship to the laughing. Although, as mentioned before and indicated above, the participants did not find Whiteness or their privilege funny, they did, when sharing their memories, frequently refer to the story as "funny" or "fun", "hilarious", or "a good one", or "a favorite". This seemed to be related to "catching oneself" around privilege, which was another way the theme of self-consciousness showed up. In this context the laughter had a slightly self-deprecating quality to it, as though the participants were both amused and

embarrassed by their own short-comings and developmental edges. Participant Two alluded to this as she talked about her process around the interview question prompting her to place Whiteness somewhere.

> Gosh, I'm gonna tell you what… my first impulse was like… well, it's right here. *(gestures to her heart)* Like that shit lives in me all the time… *(smirking, head tilts slightly left)*… and then I got skeptical because I don't get the choice of going away. Like there's something that feels arrogant about… *(smiling, with a small snort)* being like, *(says in a mocking, over-exaggerated tone)* "Oh no… it lives in me and it is integrated…I'm like with it." *(laughs)* That feels suspicious!

Participant Two continued, saying:

> What cued me off to that suspicion… I mean, it was just silly. It was just so silly and arrogant to be like, *(mocking self)* "Oh, my whiteness is right here, Wendy." To think that it's fully inside of my body *(laughing)* like, that's not the feedback I have! That's not accurate of the data I've collected! Right? It's just arrogant and… and it's deflective and it's like, *(smirking, mocking tone of voice)* "Look at how good of a white person I am. It's right here *(dramatically points to heart)*… can't you tell already?!?"

Noting the humor present, Participant Two explained it as part of how she shows up when she catches herself acting from her privilege. Her response also demonstrates characteristics of the Autonomy status in Helms' model.

> If I already know it to some degree and it shows up… that's when I can be like, "Oh, I just caught myself doing that thing." Or "There's that thing we white people do." *(smirks and rolls eyes, shaking head)* There's so much more humor and forgiveness and self-compassion than there used to be.

Participant Three demonstrated a similar type of suspicious humor as they considered where to place their Whiteness. Laughing, they said:

> And the phrase, which is like bringing in the humor again, is like, "Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer." It's like, "Well! Might as well keep it real close then!" *(laughing as they mime bringing Whiteness right under their nose and looking at it closely)*

The presence of laughter and this kind of self-mocking humor sparked curiosity in the participants. There was speculation that humor was a way to bypass the pain that results from the knowledge that privilege causes harm. It was also hypothesized that humor could have a more helpful function, making it possible for a person to cope with the pain and therefore continue to stay present with their privilege. Finally, it was speculated that humor is a marker of the development of self-compassion in relationship to one's privilege. Although the participants ultimately interpreted humor in a way that felt congruent with their own experience during the interviews, their reflections raised interesting questions and indicate an area for further research.

Theme Six: Seeking Affirmation

All of the participants demonstrated awareness of the concept of the "Good White Person" from the literature on Whiteness Studies. Overall, their responses indicated that it was a characterization that held negative connotations for them, however, there were notable differences in how each of them appeared to understand how a good White person was defined.

Participant Two, as indicated in the passage above, associated the "goodness" of the good White person to outward appearances. The White person would therefore presumably do particular things in order to appear less racist. Because the focus is on external perception, there is little internal reflection on the ideology, values, beliefs, feelings, and biases that are at the root of racism. As Participant Two explained it, the intention, therefore, is not to engage in deeper levels of reflection and change but rather to appear a certain way to others. The intention is self-serving.

Participant Three also identified self-serving intentions as a marker of the good White person. However, their descriptions suggested that even when the intention was to be of service, the good White person could appear. This character would either show up seeking praise after "saving the day" (White Savior) or it would take the form of being overly congratulatory to oneself for being genuinely helpful. They shared,

> I recently changed my voicemail at work. It was just in English before, and I don't speak Spanish but I have a co-worker who does, and I finally was just like, "I should have something in Spanish on my message for

> the Spanish speakers who call," and so I changed my voicemail message with her, and I felt so good about it afterwards! I'm like, "I'm doing something great!" blah, blah, blah *(eyes roll)*

Participant One had a very different perspective on the good White person. Following our interview, I journaled about my response to his point of view, noting that I felt very judgmental. After interviewing the rest of the participants, I came back to his transcript and reviewed it again. I reflected through writing and movement on what I was experiencing and began to recognize that I was approaching the topic of the good White person from a very polarized position – I clearly believed the good White person was bad! As I recognized this, I became more open to Participant One's point of view and a more nuanced understanding began to emerge. Somewhere inside the good White person appeared to be a human need for encouragement and reassurance and a sense of pride about doing the right thing. Participant One said it best as he talked about how he felt when a person of Color he viewed as a mentor acknowledged him.

> It felt so good, like I feel like tearing up, it felt so good. I think it felt so good because I felt cared for in the moment and also encouraged. And encouraged to think more… I have a weird look at all this, or maybe different than some… I think of it as, like, there's a part of us who wants to feel proud and seen, and so when I look at this person, I think of someone I thought of as a mentor in my life who I was looking up to… and I don't think it was me wanting to be like a good white kid. Yeah… could it mean that I just wanted to be a good white person because my

> guilt would be given away? I didn't feel any guilt at that point. I felt proud and I wanted someone I cared about to see it.

Participant One's response suggested that wanting acknowledgment for being "good" may stem from more than White guilt and binary thinking. Three things, in particular, set his answer apart from the scenarios described by the other participants. First, he described a relational context. The person he received affirmation from was someone he identified as a mentor with whom he had a long-standing relationship. Second, he had been working on his relationship to race and White privilege with her guidance. Third, he did not go into the interaction with the intention of getting her approval, her reaction "surprised" him.

The participant's answers suggested that the need to be acknowledged as good could possibly serve two kinds of purposes. One purpose, to alleviate discomfort by reinstating the understanding of oneself as good (DiAngelo, 2016), functions to maintain the status quo. The other, to affirm and encourage, functions to support the development of a nonracist White identity. Because, in the case of Whiteness, affirmation could lead to apathy and false pride, the context and timing of this affirmation are important. Given during the first group of Helms' statuses, such an acknowledgment might be misinterpreted as a sign that one has done enough or that nothing is wrong with the way things are. The more effective timing might correspond with the second cluster of statuses. Here, the person is more internally referenced and conscious of the ongoing, institutional nature of racism and privilege. Some encouragement might be well-timed in buoying hope and

supporting ongoing engagement. These hypotheses need more research to determine their accuracy in application.

Theme Seven: Maintaining Awareness

As noted in the discussion about polarization, the participants provided verbal and non-verbal data on engagement. All of the interviewees mentioned how some kind of consistent, sustained engagement with their privilege helped them remain aware and conscious of it. As they talked about this they made reference to a relational aspect, citing a need for external support from others. Participant Two disclosed:

> If I'm in a social justice-loaded context, I'm more likely to stick with [the discomfort from acknowledging my privilege] and to stay present… because of the social reinforcement… whereas, if I'm like with my family back home… I need more resources.

Participant One noted that in Boulder, a predominately White community, it is more difficult for him to recognize and experience his privilege. He continued, saying:

> So when I think of this work, I think of the consciousness of, like, our own identity and I think being in a place that is not racially diverse, it can be harder for me to continue to keep my consciousness more aware.

Of particular note in this participant's response is his use of the words "continue to keep" which alludes to the ongoing nature of anti-racist work. Because of the persistent and embedded nature of institutional and systemic messages about race, it can be very easy "to go back to sleep" and forget one's privilege.

The participants talked about "regular" engagement and "practice" as ways to combat this continuous pull toward ignorance and stay aware of racial dynamics. Participant Two recognized that she did not "feel as grounded" as she thought she would be during the interview. She attributed this to her recent lack of exposure and the corresponding absence of practice.

> I think part of it is that I haven't been in a context where I've been able to engage with this content recently very much. I've been working with other types of privilege and other types of awareness and somatic tracking and um, I haven't been in contexts that ask me to look at my racial privilege lately, so I'm feeling the edge that comes with having been back here *(leans back)* for a little while. And this matters to me, and I wanna be here, and it's like an edge that I haven't been touching very much. It's surprising how quickly that sense of ground or that sense of confidence is lost when I'm not practicing it.

Participant Three alluded to practice as they recognized how continued exposure builds capacity, similar to the way a muscle develops and strengthens with use (Caldwell, 2017), or one's ability to dance improves with regular practice. They began by acknowledging that a lack of strength or ability around dealing with racial difference was a marker of White privilege, something also noted in the literature on White fragility.

> The folks of color in the room are having a shit-ton of feelings and dealing with them, like dealing with them and navigating them… *(pauses for some time)…* there's this piece around resiliency that is

> coming up, and how <u>not</u> resilient I am in regards to owning my whiteness, feeling my privilege, and staying engaged with people who are different – specifically folks of color… *(pauses)* I want to be able to work on my resiliency around that because I haven't had to. It wasn't forced on me. It hasn't been forced on me and I… I think that's the reality… I actually have to choose it versus here's the context and I have to figure it out because I'm in that marginalized place.

According to the participants, the benefits of practice were increased self-awareness and increased ability to feel, be present with, and navigate discomfort in relationship to others. These benefits were realized through the use of a witnessing consciousness that enabled participants to track their inner experiences in relation to the outer context. Although none of the participants specifically used the word *witness*, they all demonstrated its presence through their self-reflective responses, their ability to "catch" themselves, and the internal processes they shared.

Participant Three gave a detailed description of witnessing in response to a follow-up question about how they stay connected to their somatic experience.

> That's a work in progress, for sure. I think right now, it's like catching my thoughts and catching what I feel… like I'm turning from unconscious to conscious. So, being like, "Ok. I'm in a space with a person of color" and noticing the things that I want to happen… "Oh, I want them to like me. Oh, I want them to…" all of these things that I want, and then like, checking myself in that way, and this is all mental, and then "There are my thoughts running again"… and "I'm probably

acting a little weird," *(laughs)* and I try to stay gentle with myself and I try to stay curious, and I also try to be like, "How do you think you're presenting things?" I feel like I keep checking in with myself in that way.

Participant One also demonstrated the presence of an internal witness in his description of talking to himself when he recognized the appearance of his racism.

I was walking to the court, and then I stopped, almost at the court, and started wondering, "Where am I gonna put my keys? Where am I gonna put my phone? They're gonna get stolen." And that was my first reaction, so I started to walk back to my car, and I was thinking about that in my head, and I was like, "P., you're… that's bullshit… you're letting fear take over." And I thought about the emotional responses happening to me, and I was like, "Come on… that's bullshit. Just go back. Go back. You'll be fine." So I walked back over.

Participant Two provided an example of witnessing as she described her internal somatic experience.

So there's some titrating happening in my body. That's the main thing that I'm aware of…. like how I'm on that little edge over here and now I'm back and now I'm on that edge over here, and really paying attention to how eye contact and breath and my own contact with my body are also parts of what is bringing me back.

This inner witness, integral in maintaining awareness, was discussed in the review of literature from the field of dance/movement therapy and will be addressed again as possible applications of this study are considered in the next chapter.

Theme Eight: Seeking Wholeness

Throughout the interviews participants regularly referenced not only the presence of polarities but also the desire for integration. Usually this integration was referenced as a goal or something that the participants were seeking through their ongoing commitment to examining their privilege and Whiteness. Words like "congruence", "integration", and "wholeness" were used to describe this experience which was expressed somatically by all three participants in the same way. Every participant drew their hands together in the space in front of their body, interlaced their fingertips together and gently touched their fingertips to their heart. The heart region was touched or gestured to regularly throughout the interviews and seemed to correspond with staying connected to oneself, being aware, and "feeling whole."

Although participants acknowledged the desire for integration and balance, they did not always appear to know how to achieve it. Participant Three wondered:

> How can I create more congruence between like, my own body-mind connection in order to… come off as a full human being versus like as a good white person? Can I just like, settle in a little bit more to myself in order to actually have like, a true relational action?

And later, talking about the array of strong feelings they associated with Whiteness and privilege:

> How are the grief, the tears, the numbness, and the rage all relating to each other? Can I still have the feelings that I'm feeling and stay engaged? How can I actually be more present in me and be more okay with being uncomfortable?

Participant Two noted that she "can't show up authentically in relationship in a self-divided place." She reported finding that

> If I do some version of sorting, and I'm like trying to bury some things over here or like, not have them… not honestly let them be part of what I'm holding, I think I cause more harm in those moments. Whereas, there can be a noting that takes place that also integrates through me or like, all of me is present – how my oppression lives in my body, how privilege lives in my body, how I self-isolate, how I just isolated, like… everything gets to be here *(gestures with interlaced fingertips toward heart)* without judgment. Everything's together. I feel whole. And that's how I know that I'm not living out of privilege in that moment - I feel whole.

Notable in both participants' responses is their belief or recognition that feeling integrated would have a positive impact on their interactions with others, particularly with those in different racial locations. This notion is supported by research in White identity development that suggests when White people can step out of polarities and binary thinking to embrace a both/and perspective, they tend to be able to relate across difference more easily (Helms, 1995). Ease is relative in this context as theorists agree that working with privilege requires ongoing effort

(DiAngelo, 2016; King, 2018; Sherrell, 2018; Tochluk, 2010). Another way to consider the idea is through ease of movement. Integration would support one's ability to stay fluid internally, and therefore in relationship to others, whereas rigidity would shut down access to responsive options, therefore inhibiting relations with others. This rigid, either in-or-out dynamic, was discussed in the section on polarities. The hypothesized impact of internal integration on relating is an area for further study.

The theme of wholeness and integration was also apparent in the way participants responded to the question about where they would place their Whiteness in relationship to themselves. All of the participants demonstrated a negotiation of far and near space that seemed to be indicative of the internal process around navigating integration. Participant One reported a tendency to want to place Whiteness far away followed by an impulse to bring it closer.

> Maybe I push it as far away as [I can] cuz I don't want to be associated with it. Maybe I put it in a corner. *(points across the room)* And then, I was like, "No. I wanna work on it." So maybe I put it on this couch *(laughs)* and I analyze it… *(pauses)* Or maybe, I think what's actually better, is it just stays with me cuz it is… it's who I am. It's a part of me and I don't want to push it away. It's my identity, and I don't take shame to it, but I do believe what comes with it means I acknowledge it… and how it has an effect on people… I'd have warmth for it, and I'd just keep telling it to keep talking to me… like you would to a partner.

Participant Two also negotiated space as she referred to the dynamic quality of Whiteness. Using a horseshoe as a prop to represent it, she moved Whiteness several times while talking about how to locate or integrate herself within its larger historical context.

> *(After bringing horseshoe toward heart and reporting some suspicion of that)* I think I'm just gonna put it right here. *(sets horseshoe on the floor about a foot away from her and pauses)…* hmmm… I don't know if that feels right. *(pauses, looking around)* I think there's times where I like, set it there *(looks down at the horseshoe on the floor)* – set my whiteness there – so that I can look at it, and I think there's times where I like, *(stoops down and gently picks up horseshoe)* have it on my lap or like, in my hands, and then holding or integrating it in a different way. *(As she moves the horseshoe back out, she holds it at eye-level and begins to move it from arm's length in front of her to arm's length behind her, twisting at the waist and turning her head to look over her shoulder behind her)…* Let me experiment with it… *(long pause)…* It's like these infinite windows where it's like, all of these historical backups, just like, layered. So, even though it's in front of me, there's a really intense aspect of it behind me…

Participant Three also used a prop, a candle, to represent their Whiteness and similarly engaged in a negotiation of near and far.

> *(Sitting, holding the candle in cupped hands which are in front of body by diaphragm. Looks down at candle with a soft gaze, then closes eyes and*

raises head.) (Addressing candle) I don't want to ignore you. I'm not sure what to do with you some of the time *(chuckles)* and you're part of me, so uh, let's do this together cuz you're not going anywhere and neither am I. *(opens eyes and looks down again. Changes position of right hand to wrap it around the candle, squeezing it and pressing it into body) (Talking to the candle)* Discomfort is okay and necessary. Conflict is okay and necessary. We can be gentle with ourselves and still be engaged. *(repeating)* Discomfort is okay and necessary. Conflict is okay and necessary. Let's do this together and stay engaged.

Reflecting on the experience the participant shared:

> It was so interesting just having the prompt and feeling very much like, right away, "I want something close to me"… and it would be so easy to not put it close to me, and I feel like that's what I need to do… to integrate it… in order to show up in ways that I wanna show up in my life and to myself and to like, all of my relationships.

A notable aspect of all the participants' responses was the presence of a gentle, almost nurturing tone of voice and a quality of self-compassion that was demonstrated by the open willingness to relate with their Whiteness. In my journaling I noted how this finding surprised me as I had expected participants to express more judgment and distaste toward their Whiteness. King (2018) and Tochluk (2010) suggest that the presence of this self-compassion is necessary for establishing compassion toward others.

Summary

As participants described their experiences they spoke about their feelings of confusion and disorientation as well as several other strong emotions. Their perspectives and descriptions revealed the presence of polarities and internal divisions that impacted their ability to relate with themselves and others. Participants tended to think of their White privilege in terms of lists of behaviors not to engage in and would often laugh at themselves when they caught themselves behaving in "White ways." Participants acknowledged the construct of the good White person and shared their somatic experiences relating to this idea, noting that some affirmation might be important at times. All the participants spoke of the benefits of support and ongoing engagement with their experiences of Whiteness and expressed the desire to more fully integrate their White identity so that they could be more relational and less harmful in their interactions with people of Color.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The first section of this chapter ties the results of the study to the research questions and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The second section of the chapter discusses the implications these findings have for the fields of dance/movement therapy and Whiteness studies. The final section of this chapter points out the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further research.

Research Questions and Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the somatic experience of White privilege and consider the ways that theories and approaches from the field of dance/movement therapy might support the development of body-based approaches to developing a nonracist White identity. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do White people experience skin privilege?
2. What is the impact of sociocultural and institutional norms around race on the self-image, body language, and interoception of those who hold racial privilege?
3. What are the somatic markers of privilege?

The information gathered in the data analysis process provided answers to these questions and demonstrated consistency with topics and themes presented in the review of literature. In addition, the data provided the basis for the future development of a body-based approach to addressing Whiteness.

Research Question One: The Experience of Skin Privilege

Analysis of data collected from the study suggests that participants experienced privilege through both sensations and feelings. The contexts for these somatic responses seemed to fall into two categories: feelings and sensations experienced as indicators of privilege (such as comfort, isolation, "floatiness," and relaxation) and feelings and sensations experienced as reactions to having privilege (for example, discomfort, confusion, "swirliness," tightness, and embarrassment). Many of the feeling states participants described were documented in the review of literature from the fields of Whiteness Studies and Critical Race Theory (Iyer et al., 2003; Powell et al., 2005; Swim & Miller, 1999). The sensate aspects of their experiences may be an addition to the research on this topic and deserve additional study.

All the participants described an experience of internal divisiveness that made staying present with felt-sense experience difficult in racialized interactions. In these interactions, participants seemed to be watchful of themselves, reporting the presence of a witnessing consciousness that would occasionally "catch" them enacting their privilege. Privilege was described as easy to ignore and participants reported that sustained awareness and engagement required purposeful and continuous effort.

The participants' narratives also indicated that the experience of skin privilege included an outward focus of attention marked by a tendency toward external referencing and seeking (or taking) from others. All the participants reported a longing for integration, seeing it as a way to more fully experience

themselves and their relationships with others. Overall the experience of privilege seemed to be less sensate and more cognitive and externally focused.

Research Question Two: Impact of Racial Norms on Self-Image, Body Language, and Interoception

Self-image. Self-image is, in concise terms, the image one has of oneself. It can include both external characteristics and internal qualities. As discussed in the literature review, the messages of White superiority conveyed through the dominant social narrative on race are deeply embedded in the social fabric of the United States (Applebaum, 2016). This presumed (and manufactured) superiority is all-encompassing, affecting how White people view themselves and others. The result is an image of oneself that is significantly informed by the prevalent racial discourse. Although this White self-image is also shaped by an individual's personal history and experiences, there are some commonalities described in the literature and confirmed by the participants. A White person's unexamined self-image tends to include an embedded sense of superiority identified by the perception of self as: racially good; innocent; normal; knowledgeable; helpful; polite; clean; trustworthy; and responsible (Tochluk, 2010). While this is not an exhaustive list, several of these qualities emerged in the interviews.

The shared memories of confusion reported by participants are evidence of both a challenged worldview and a challenged self-image. Participants' understanding of the world and their place in it could not be reconciled with the growing awareness of the harmful impact of their Whiteness. The participant responses, supported by literature on Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2016, 2018; Johnson,

2006; Tochluk, 2010), suggested that the roles of the "Good White Person" and "White Savior" were efforts to reinstate the status quo and reassure the White person of their innate goodness, innocence, helpfulness, and knowledge. Such reassurance permits the White person's self-image to remain unchanged. Helms (1995) suggested that as White people begin to reconcile the dissonance between their images of themselves and the world with the reality of racism, their self-image begins to include an understanding of themselves as racial beings. As Helm suggested and participants verified, this realization is frequently accompanied by strong feelings that had previously been avoided or ignored (Helms, 1995). The participants' responses indicated that the result of this process was a self-image that was less polarized, with the good/bad binary becoming more of a continuum where good and bad could simultaneously coexist. The capacity to hold the duality of basic goodness and the capacity for harm was demonstrated by the self-compassion that participants exhibited when talking to their Whiteness or "catching" themselves enacting their privilege around others.

Furthermore, participants indicated that they initially understood their Whiteness as something separate and that they were seeking to integrate it into their self-image in a more holistic way. The idea that White racial identity is somehow external and requires effort to become an integrated aspect of self-image could be the result of the normalization of Whiteness and the construction of the racialized other that was discussed in the literature review. All of the participants mentioned their other sociocultural locations including gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, age, ability, and education. Their statements indicated that their

work around constructing a more integrated self-image included addressing these identities and their intersectionality with racial privilege.

Body language. Body language refers to the nonverbal gestures and postures used in communication. These expressions can be both conscious and unconscious. Research discussed in the literature review (Acaron, 2016; Freeman & Henley, 1985; Johnson, 2007; Kornblum, 2002; Sullivan 2006) suggests postural and expressive asymmetries occur in the interactions between White people and people of Color. In these interactions White people may tend to demonstrate body language that uses more space and appears to be less formal (Acaron, 2016; Johnson, 2007). Because body language is culturally bound, contextually dependent, and personally idiosyncratic, it is difficult to identify a specific set of nonverbal expressions that transcend all circumstances and are therefore stable characteristics of "White body language." However, the participants' responses indicated that the asymmetries identified by theorists do tend to appear with regularity.

The participants talked about the use of space in particular. Notable in their interviews was the incongruence between the discussion of space and the actual use of space in their bodies. As they talked about taking up a lot of space somatically, they demonstrated a very still and contained physical posture. Participants tended to exhibit stillness in their torsos with most movement occurring in their heads and limbs. An exception to this was the forward/backward movement of the head and upper body that appeared as participants talked about engagement. This will be discussed further as a potential somatic marker of privilege. Also noteworthy was

that as participants gestured with their hands, they kept their upper arms close to the sides of their bodies with their elbows pulled in toward their waists.

The incongruence between "taking a lot of space and being really contained" was directly referred to by one of the participants who openly wondered if the expansion in space was more energetic than postural. This question led to other questions about how the energetic use of space might be recognized. One answer was that it was visible in the centering of Whiteness and the corresponding focus on White feelings, processes, and experiences. Another answer suggested that it was traceable through impact, hypothesizing that the long, unrecognized historical legacy of domination and corresponding assumptions of superiority carried by White people takes a lot of energetic space in a room. In reflecting on this question, I recalled a colleague of mine who is a person of Color talking about how "there was no air to breathe" in White spaces. I wondered if their feeling might have to do with this energetic use of space that emerged as a topic in the interviews. Furthermore, the question of the energetic use of space seemed to relate to the way Whiteness is invisible to those who have racial privilege but is both seen and felt by those in racially marginalized locations. There are many unanswered questions in this area that could be explored through further study.

Interoception. Interoception is the sense of the internal state of the body. This was referred to through the discussions on sensation, feeling, and embodiment in the literature review. Also present in the review of literature was the argument that Western culture's dualistic understanding of the body and mind as separate entities establishes conditions for the marginalization of somatic experience. As a

result there tends to be a cultural disconnect from the body and a corresponding over-emphasis on cognition (Caldwell, 2018). A recognized trait of Whiteness, therefore, is a disconnection from the body's feeling states (Berila, 2016; King, 2018).

During the interviews, participants explained that, paradoxically, one of the ways they felt their Whiteness was through sensations they related to being less present or connected to their bodies and felt experiences. Feeling "floaty" or "numb" was preceded by uncomfortable feelings identified as "tight" and "swirly." This progression of feelings suggests tolerance for discomfort needs to be developed, a necessity discussed in Whiteness studies literature (Berila, 2016; DiAngelo, 2016, 2018; King, 2018). The approaches suggested by these scholars focus on the potential meditation and mindfulness have to restore awareness and access to feeling. Somatic approaches from the field of dance/movement therapy were discussed as possible contributions to these mindfulness based approaches because of their ability to directly address the embodied aspect of feelings. These approaches, coupled with the responses from participants, revealed more detail about the somatic characteristics of the nonracist White identity described by Helms (1995). In addition, they pointed to the somatically based processes that may support its development. These characteristics and approaches will be explored more later in this chapter.

Research Question Three: The Somatic Markers of Privilege

As participants spoke several somatic patterns emerged that appeared to mark significant feelings or experiences (Damasio, 1994): a forward and backward

movement in the head and upper torso region that was associated with discomfort and degree of engagement; a turn of the head and the gaze toward the left that corresponded with the choice to disengage; and the tendency to smile, smirk, or roll the eyes in relationship to feelings of self-consciousness and "catching" oneself enacting privilege.

Although there was some consensus around the emotions associated with these particular markers, each person's sensate experience of them was unique. The capacity for such markers to be generalized is limited because of their dependence on individual experience, however, the use of them as a means to self-reflect and further examine one's relationship to Whiteness, privilege, racism, and domination holds much potential. These movements could be understood as "tags" (Caldwell, 1996) or indicators of larger internal sensate experiences. Recognition of these movements could, therefore, be an entry point to experiencing and studying one's own somatic experience. Such a somatic exploration has the potential to increase awareness and access to feelings, which, in turn, might assist one in recognizing bias and making deliberate choices about reactions and behaviors (Caldwell, 1996).

The Emergence of White Sturdiness

Sturdiness refers to a quality of internal stability and durability (Caldwell, personal communication, March 16, 2015). Although none of the participants in the study used this word to describe their experiences, their responses revealed all the components of a sturdy White embodiment. As mentioned earlier, White sturdiness is a foil for DiAngelo's concept of White fragility (2016), which focuses on the defensive maneuvers White people employ when triggered by racial stress. While

this term has been useful in communicating how privilege results in a lack of fortitude and tenacity around matters related to race, it raises questions about how one might develop a more robust racial constitution. The term White sturdiness attempts to address how a White person might embody racial stamina. As noted in the review of literature, this term may also be problematic, as it could be understood as an invitation to further solidify the dominant social location of Whiteness. However, as Bartoli (2015) suggests, White people need "a vision of an anti-racist White identity" that is neither aligned with White supremacy nor impeded by color-blindness, ignorance, guilt, and shame (p. 254). Through such a self-image they could "identify both as Whites with unearned privileges and as Whites that can use their privileges to subvert the status quo" (Bartoli et al., 2015, p. 254). Although the term White sturdiness requires further interrogation, it does begin to construct such a vision through its compilation of somatic traits.

The somatic qualities associated with White sturdiness emerged through the interviews conducted for this study. These qualities were relevant to Helms' Autonomy status (1995) and might be useful in providing more detail about its somatic characteristics. Participants' responses included the following traits: non-judgmental awareness; internal flexibility or mobility; stability; and balance.

Furthermore, each of the qualities of racial sturdiness also had the potential for a corresponding skill or action to be associated with it. For example, nonjudgmental awareness could be developed through the witnessing consciousness; flexibility and mobility could be established through developing range and restoring oscillation; stability could be accomplished through the ability

to internally structure or organize oneself using self-regulation skills such as "entering and relieving" (Caldwell, 2017) and resourcing; and balance might be addressed through oscillation and learning to feel, express, and consciously contain emotion. The literature review discussed aspects of DMT theory and practice that could potentially be used to cultivate these skills and qualities. White sturdiness is a topic that could be further researched in order to develop it more thoroughly as a construct as well as discern its usefulness as a term.

Finally, the literature review and participants' responses indicated that the development of racial sturdiness requires external supports. Most notably, participants identified the need for contact with other people who could support them in their work to develop a Nonracist White Identity. They also expressed the need for a separate space (or affinity group) in which they might be able to more fully experience their feelings, notably grief and pride. Although participants identified experiencing these feelings, they were quite clear that because they were feelings related to privilege, they needed to be worked with among other White people so as not to subject people of Color to harmful re-enactments of privilege. Kivel (2002) affirmed this need suggesting that affinity groups provide the peer supervision and accountability White people need to sustain and continue their development toward a nonracist identity. In these settings White tears could be shed and the good White person's pride could be felt so that the underlying experience and feelings could be acknowledged and owned. Both King (2018) and Berila (2016) discussed the necessity of feeling one's feeling in order to move through them. To avoid emotions because they are expressions of privilege is to

reinforce the body-mind split and the White tendency to be removed from feeling. To somatically interrogate emotions by experiencing them is to increase one's tolerance for feeling as well as one's capacity for conscious containment. White affinity groups and other groups addressing race and racial dynamics are not new, however, the inclusion of a somatic focus in them may be less common. Such an environment could offer the opportunity to develop the tone and strength sturdiness requires.

Limitations

This section critically examines the study, acknowledging the factors that might negatively affect its trustworthiness. Trustworthiness, a framework for assessing qualitative research developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is considered the premier approach for determining rigor (Billups, 2014). The four elements of trustworthiness are: credibility; dependability; transferability; and confirmability.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the believability of the study's findings from the perspective of the reader or the participant. Billups (2014) explains that peer debriefing and member checking are activities that increase the credibility of a study.

Peer debriefing. Continuous and unavoidable exposure to the ongoing dominant social narrative on race inevitably impacted and influenced my interactions with the participants and my understanding of the data. To offset the effects of this I sought feedback from a peer who was accomplished in the fields of somatic psychology and diversity. Her feedback was intended to address questions

of bias in the construction of the research design and interpretation of the findings. Her feedback did indicate that the research questions were worded in a way that revealed the influence of the body-mind split and this may have led to an over-emphasis on the separation between the two in participants' answers. In future research these questions would be examined and re-worded.

Member-checking. Member-checking occurred through the sharing of transcripts with participants and the incorporation of their edits. The suggested edits were related to words that were misheard during transcription. Although each participant was invited to review the video of their interview, none of the participants did so. Their review of the video may have added further meaning and context to the study's findings. However, member-checking is considered by some to be controversial because it has the potential to corrupt the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). From that perspective, it is possible that the findings were more credible because the participants did not see themselves on video.

Dependability

Dependability refers to stability and consistency of the findings over time and across conditions (Billups, 2014). In qualitative research dependability requires description of the particular context and circumstances of the study. This information could be used to determine whether a replication of the study would yield similar results (Billups, 2014; Johnson, 2014). Dependability was addressed through thorough descriptions of the research design and methods but could have been improved by the inclusion of more detail about the participants' socio-cultural locations beyond race.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of the study. It addresses the question of whether the results of the study are applicable to other similar settings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain that a detailed description of the research context and assumptions is necessary for determining the extent to which the conclusions are transferrable. In this study transferability was supported through thorough documentation of the interviewing process and measures taken to address potential researcher bias. However, because this study had a low number of participants from the same geographical region and a data saturation point was not fully realized, the degree of transferability is uncertain.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be corroborated by others. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the implementation of an audit trail as a means by which additional researchers might confirm the study's findings. Audit trails are accomplished through detailed documentation of all research decisions and activities occurring throughout the study (Koch, 2006). Journaling and note-taking recorded the "decision trail" (Sandelowski, 1986) and researcher perspective in this study. Furthermore, the descriptions of procedures for data collection and analysis further contribute to the documentation supporting confirmability of this study.

Prior Understanding

A final limitation of this study is the degree of knowledge about or exposure to the topic of racial privilege the participants had prior to being interviewed. As

indicated, the screening for participation in the study included awareness of racial privilege and interest in developing a nonracist White identity. These characteristics were apparent in the participants' responses. Furthermore, because the responses included some of the ideology from the literature on White privilege, it is possible that the participants' had done some reading on the topic. Therefore, the study's findings and potential implications for application may only be relevant for those with similar levels of exposure and interest.

Implications

The main aims of this study were to address the lack of research about the somatic experience of White privilege and to provide suggestions for how this information could support the development of a nonracist White identity. The findings suggest that there is significant potential for body-based approaches to support the disruption of oppressive actions thereby contributing to larger efforts aimed at social transformation. While the possible applications of a somatic understanding of White privilege are broad, this section will focus on the implications this research has for the fields of dance/movement therapy and Whiteness studies.

The field of Whiteness studies strives to make the invisible structures that perpetuate White supremacy and White privilege apparent (Applebaum, 2016). It stresses the importance of "vigilance among White people" (p. 1) in examining the meanings and manifestations of White privilege and how one may be unintentionally complicit in sustaining racism and social injustice. Until recently with the addition of literature suggesting somatic applications for meditation and

mindfulness practices (Berila, 2016; King, 2018; Tochluk, 2010), the role of the body in dismantling systems of oppression was discussed mostly from the perspective of marginalization (Johnson, 2007; Caldwell, 2018). These perspectives are essential as they represent voices that often go unrecognized and unheard. However, attending to these narratives without a corresponding examination of the states and actions that contribute to them allows well-meaning White people to continue to remain unconscious to how they perpetuate racial oppression. A more complete picture of the physical manifestations of White privilege has the potential to assist White people in becoming more aware of how power and privilege influences their perspectives and actions. Furthermore, the inclusion of the body also establishes a means for the disruption of racism. Because the somatic layer of power and privilege has remained unexamined, it has been part of the invisible structure the field of Whiteness studies endeavors to reveal. It's inclusion, therefore, contributes to the purpose and goal of this field.

The field of dance/movement therapy has the potential to contribute to the efforts to dismantle racism through the application of its methods and approaches. Although the theoretical foundations of this field reflect dominant racial norms that need rigorous interrogation, some of the approaches still appear to have relevance to the findings of this study. Dance/movement therapy has existing approaches that could support White people in developing: racial self-awareness and the ability to witness oneself; tolerance for sensate experience including strong or uncomfortable feelings; access to a range of thoughts, movements, and responses; and empathy in racialized interactions. These were explored in the literature review and include

oscillating one's attention, resourcing and self-regulation techniques that include the use of somatic markers, purposeful adjustments in posture and movement, and mirroring.

Finally, the findings of this study have implications for the training and education of students in dance/movement therapy programs. Recently, the American Dance Therapy Association revised its educational standards as part of its efforts toward establishing a more inclusive and socially just profession. As the new standards initiate important changes in dance/movement therapy pedagogy, White educators will be called to more closely examine their assumptions and biases about the field and their work. By challenging long held beliefs about the field and its practice, such reflection has the potential to cause both discomfort and disorientation. It is my hope that DMT educators will access this study and use it to support their future work.

Further Research

This study generated data that indicate several directions for additional research. First, it would be useful to conduct the study again with a larger and more geographically diverse group of participants. The results of a larger study might suggest additional themes and different implications for the fields of dance/movement therapy and Whiteness studies. I would also make changes to the wording of the interview questions so that they do not establish such a clear distinction between verbal and non-verbal responses. This change could result in the emergence of different themes around the body-mind relationship, possibly revealing the presence of more integration than the data from this study suggested.

This study also revealed particular concepts and topics that deserve closer examination. An example is the notion of the good White person. The use of the phrase by participants in this study seemed to indicate a variety of different understandings. For one participant the purpose of the good White person was to alleviate racial guilt, for another it referred to wanting to appear less racist, and for another it had to do with the desire for acknowledgment from others. More information on how White people operationalize this phrase could provide further understanding of the experience of White privilege.

Another subject that has potential for further inquiry is the White use of space. All of the participants in this study exhibited some consciousness of how they were using space. The literature addresses this topic through examination of asymmetrical interactions (Johnson, 2017); and the centering of Whiteness (DiAngelo, 2018; Tochluk, 2010; Wise, 2008). In the literature and in participants' responses there appears to be reference to a physical occupation of space as well as an energetic occupation of space. Further research into the somatic aspects of this phenomenon would provide a more nuanced understanding.

Humor was another theme that emerged. The role of humor in the development of a nonracist White identity appears to be a topic that has not received much attention. Research examining how humor contributes to learning, its function as a defense mechanism, and its use in dance/movement therapy approaches could provide further context for its relevance to White privilege.

Finally, further development of the concept of White sturdiness might be useful in establishing specific somatic qualities and skills that support White people

in acknowledging and addressing their White privilege. Research designed to confirm the qualities could be followed by research exploring how these skills might be developed through somatic approaches. Methods and approaches from the field of dance/movement therapy could be explored for their potential application. In this area, a more in-depth inquiry into the effect of racial bias on mirroring would be necessary.

Summary

This study proposed to explore the phenomenon of White privilege as it is experienced through the body. Understanding the somatic aspects of racial privilege may assist efforts to deconstruct or dismantle oppressive systems. Through a thorough review of the literature and an inquiry into the lived experiences of White people, I identified ways that dance/movement therapy might address the somatic impact of racism on Whites thereby supporting White people to take ownership of their unconscious biases and racism, recognize the corresponding somatic reactions, and cope with the resulting feelings so that their actions do not perpetuate harmful oppressive dynamics. King (2018) refers to racism as a heart disease. She contends that it affects everyone and it is curable. My hope is that by addressing privilege, racism, and internalized domination, White people can heal their hearts so that individual acts of harm and the institutional and systemic structures that normalize them can be dismantled.

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