

**White Euro-Canadian Women in
Transracial/cultural Families: Lived Experiences
of Race and Difference**

by

Willow Allen

M.P.P.A. Concordia University, 2008
B.A. McGill University, 2003

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Approval

Name: Willow Allen
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Title: *White Euro-Canadian Women in Transracial/cultural Families: Lived Experiences of Race and Difference.*

Examining Committee: **Chair: Kumari Beck**
Associate Professor

Dr. Dolores van der Wey, PhD
Senior Supervisor
Assistant Professor

Dr. Roumiana Ilieva
Supervisor
Associate Professor

Dr. Özlem Sensoy
Supervisor
Assistant Professor

Dr. Elise Chenier
Internal Examiner
Professor
Department of History

Dr. Katerina Deliovsky
External Examiner
Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology
Brock University

Date Defended/Approved: December 14, 2016

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Abstract

How do we come to *know* difference? How do we *transform* our conceptualizations of difference? This qualitative research study explores the experiences and practices of white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families with black African new immigrant partners in the Canadian socio-political context. Drawing on critical race feminisms, critical whiteness studies, and antiracism theory, I analyze the interlocking subjectivities of these women in relation to histories of colonialism and nation-building (Carter, 1997; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2010; Ware, 1992). I examine how the women conceptualize, negotiate, reproduce, and resist dominant ideologies of difference in their lives. I complicate the construct of white femininity, and posit that white women have a distinct responsibility to resist and disrupt white supremacy, and that they can play a key role in doing so (Deliovsky, 2003; Moon, 1999; Najmi & Srikanth, 2002). I consider how white women in transracial/cultural families can be imagined as agentive actors, who can be part of broader social and political change through literacy practices they perform in the everyday learning spaces of their lives (Collins, 2000; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1990, 1992; Twine, 2010).

Throughout the study, I problematize the nature of multiculturalism, the notion of 'culture,' the construct of whiteness, and dominant conceptions of 'Africa' and 'Africans' in Canadian and postcolonial African contexts (Dei, 1996; Fleras, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; Mayer, 2002; Walcott, 1997). I posit that through their transgressions across multiple forms of difference, transracial/cultural families come to occupy spaces of 'inbetweenness,' in which new ways of knowing and being in the world are possible (Brah, 1996; Luke & Luke, 1998). I assess how these women and their families can help us reimagine constructions of difference, which I argue is imperative for the future of diverse western societies, as tensions increase regarding how to "manage diversity" (Essed, 2007; Steyn, 2015; Vertovec, 2015). I seek to contribute to the limited scholarship on white women in multiracial families, and to add to antiracism theory and critical whiteness studies by shedding light on issues of race and antiracism in the home and community.

Keywords: Transracial families; multiracial families; white women; white femininity; antiracism; antiracism parenting

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the disruptive moments of possibility that can take place in the everyday spaces of our lives: in kitchens, in living rooms, in parks, in community centres. It is in moments of disruptive possibility that our current frames of reference can be challenged and we can be pushed to recognize that what we do not know is more important than what we think we do know.

This work is dedicated to those who are willing to face themselves, and to name their limits of knowing while remaining committed to learning/*un*learning.

This work is dedicated to women's labour-to women who wake up early, who stay up late, and everywhere in between, to resist in whatever way they can. Their labour matters, their labour is political, and it is the labour that will make or break a nation.

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I thank my committee members for their critical feedback on my work and for pushing my thinking forward.

For my partner, who lives racialized difference in ways I never will, and who understandably does not want to intellectualize issues of difference everyday, all day. Thank you for hearing, supporting and encouraging me, even when it has been challenging to do so. Thank you for sharing the understanding that passion and purpose must be pursued, and that grateful happiness is living a life in which one's labour has both. Most of all, thank you for struggling with me through layers of internal colonization, through lives of difference, and through different epistemologies and ontologies. Finally, thank you for calling me out, for naming colonization, privilege and whiteness, and for forcing me to reflect and (continue to) figure it out myself.

I gratefully thank my sister, as well as my mother, who have passionately loved and cared for my daughter and who have taken care of me while I wrote this thesis. They ensured that even at seemingly impossible moments, this work would be completed and I could negotiate the competing forms of labour in my life.

I thank the participants in this study, or co-creators of knowledge, for investing in this collaborative research process with me; and for sharing their experiential knowledge and personal experiences with me, through the most intimate of mediums-the personal narrative. I thank them for introducing me, and the readers of this text, to rich pieces of their social worlds in an effort to create greater understanding and expanded conceptualizations of transracial/cultural families in Canada.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

How do we come to *know* difference? How do we come to conceptualize certain bodies as separate from ourselves, as “Others”? For the purpose of my research study, I explore the relationship between ideologies of race and difference, and white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families with first-generation African immigrant partners in Vancouver, British Columbia and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. I analyze how these women are constructed as white feminine subjects within ideologies of difference, and how they negotiate, reproduce, and resist these discourses in their everyday lives. Drawing on critical whiteness studies, critical race feminisms, and antiracism theory, I suggest that white Euro-Canadian women and their transracial/cultural families cannot be categorized and essentialized within traditional binary constructions of difference; instead, through their transgressions across multiple forms of difference, these women and their families come to occupy a space of ‘inbetweenness,’ in which new practices, identities, and ways of being and knowing the world are possible (Luke & Luke, 1998). Informed by decolonizing methodologies and antiracism methods, this study involves qualitative methods of semi-structured interviews and participant workshops to privilege narrative/storytelling and embodied knowledge (DeVault & Gross, 2012; Dunbar, 2008; Madison, 2005; Okolie, 2005). In this introductory chapter, I discuss my impetus for the study, and I define central concepts that shape how I conceptualize this work, including how I define transracial/cultural families, and how I contextualize ideologies of difference. I then provide a study overview of the key research questions that guide this work and a brief description of the thesis chapters to follow.

Situating the self: Impetus and embodied knowledge

Antiracist feminist scholar, Himani Bannerji (1993) writes,

There is no better point of entry into a critique or a reflection than one's own experience. It is not the end point, but the beginning of an exploration of the relationship between the personal and the social and therefore the political. And this connecting process, which is also a discovery, is the real pedagogic process, the 'science' of social sciences. (p.55)

I come to this research topic as what would be traditionally understood as an 'insider,' for I share experiential and embodied knowledge of this research subject. Such embodied knowledge exists when the researcher has shared similar experiences with the participants based on their own subjectivity and life history. I am a self-identified white woman of Ashkenazi Jewish Euro-Canadian descent in a transracial/cultural family with a first-generation African immigrant partner from Zimbabwe. Informed by antiracism and decolonizing methodologies, I posit that it is my subjectivity, which has enabled me to conduct this research in an open and vulnerable way, and to participate in a study that is intended to be a learning process for both the researcher and research participants (see chapter four). To illustrate my impetus for this study, I share the following three brief narratives:

1. **“Did you steal that baby?”** I was asked this dead serious question while standing at a bus stop in the early morning rain with my very young multiracial daughter. Through that encounter, and many others I have had in my relatively short time as a white woman of Euro-Canadian descent in a transracial/cultural family, it has become clear to me that my daughter/my family and I cannot be of *sameness* within dominant ideologies of race and difference; instead, we must remain of *difference*, or we threaten to complicate and disrupt the fixity of the self/other binary (Bhabha, 1994). It is in these moments of *unbelonging* that I realized my existing conceptual frameworks and language of *difference*, largely cultivated through my education, training and experience in social justice issues, could not sufficiently equip me to contend with, or stop me from perpetuating these ideologies. Over time, I have witnessed how very unconsciously and insidiously these ideologies permeate our societies and our lives, to the point that we cannot even recognize their incessant reproduction in our everyday thoughts, experiences, and relationships.
2. **“I feel like you are reproducing colonial dynamics in our relationship.”** My partner made this statement to me during an intensive discussion. At the time I

was working for the federal government in First Nations health and education and I often told him about how oppressive I found the government's neo-colonial policies and practices. I was disturbed that I could be behaving in what he considered to be such oppressive ways, and at the same time I was grateful he felt he could be so honest and real with me. I understood that I could respond to this profound assertion in several ways: I could shut it down; I could get stuck in guilt; or I could stop, listen and try to challenge myself and all that I have been socialized to become (something I continue to do). It was then I was forced to witness the fact that the ideologies and the asymmetrical power relations of white supremacy poison, manifest and linger in the most intimate spaces and relationships of our lives. These colonial ideologies live and breathe within us—they are in our glands (Smith, 1961). I premise this study on shared vulnerability, and for this reason I recounted this story to my participants during the participant workshops (see chapter 4). hooks (1990) writes, “one change in direction that would be real cool would be the production of a discourse on race that interrogates whiteness” (p.54). To even imagine producing such a discourse, there must be willingness and a desire to be vulnerable, to *unlearn* and to critically reflect on the self in relation to ‘others’ (Hall, 1996).

3. **“Why doesn’t this feel empowering?”** (Ellsworth, 1989). In my long journey through academia, particularly my study of critical literacies, and anti-oppressive and antiracism pedagogies, I have witnessed numerous moments when there were pedagogical opportunities to become critically aware of and challenge ideologies of difference, but we ended up reproducing the very same oppressive dynamics we sought to disrupt. This is a frustration shared by many anti-oppressive and antiracism educators (Dlamini, 2002; Ellsworth, 1989; Howard, 2006). We can discuss the notion of racism and ‘otherness’ in a graduate seminar, we can antagonize the ignorance of others when they make racist comments or jokes, and we can laugh at the stupidity of popular cultural depictions of racial stereotypes, yet this can reproduce a new form of dominant discourse, one which polices what is appropriate through a “critical” lens. In other words, when we focus on using the “appropriate,” “politically correct,” and “rational” language of critical engagement, we may not be allowing necessary disruptive dialogue to take place. These dialogues may uncomfortably and

necessarily involve how we are complicit in reproducing the “ideology of whiteness” (Dlamini, p.58-59). For whether or not we claim to be progressive, and/or antiracism educators, the inequitable power relationships embedded in white supremacy will not be automatically disrupted even in spaces committed to the principles of antiracism and anti-oppression (Ellsworth, 1989). As hooks (1990) asserts,

Everyone seems to be clamoring for ‘difference,’ only too few seem to want any difference that is about changing policy or that supports active engagement and struggle...too often, it seems, the point is to promote the *appearance* of difference within intellectual discourse, a ‘celebration’ that fails to ask who is sponsoring the party and who is extending the invitations. (p.54)

These experiences and many others have led me to believe that there is something missing by way of a necessary engagement and investment in imagining a new relationship to the concept of *difference* (Essed, 2007; Armstrong & Ng, 2005). I come to this research study premised on the notion that there is much to learn about other ways of conceiving and engaging with difference. I argue that “we” – as researchers, educators, and caregivers-especially white ones-require new ways to imagine, embody and live difference, as well as a new awareness of and relationship to whiteness. In order to fundamentally reconceptualize and change, we need to understand how whiteness is constituted, and how white supremacy functions (Nakayama & Martin, 1999). I contend that one way to explore this is to examine the lived experiences of people, who are negotiating complex and multiple forms of difference on a daily basis in the most intimate capacities: as women, as mothers, and family members.

As I explore throughout this study, white women are uniquely positioned within histories and ideologies of colonialism and white supremacy. Ware (1992) writes, “...to be white and female is to occupy a social category that is inescapably racialized as well as gendered. It is not about *being* a white woman, it is about *being thought* of as a white woman” (p.xii). As subjects who face gender oppression and racial privilege, white women have played a unique role in *history*, and have a distinct responsibility to a different future. To address my guiding research questions and to analyze the

articulations of my participants, I had to gain deeper insight into these women as socially and ideologically constructed historical subjects. How do they represent white femininity? How are their articulations echoes of the past, and how might they resonate into the future? Responsible for the reproduction of the empire, their bodies have been central to the economic, social and ideological processes of colonialism, and colonial ideologies of race, gender and sexuality remain foundational to how we currently understand the positionality of white women in western states (Knapman, 1986; Ware, 1992). As women in kinship relationships with family members who are negatively racialized, I posit that white women in transracial/cultural partnerships have a responsibility to challenge their own whiteness and are in a unique position to do so. As I illuminate in this study, by examining white women who permanently transgress 'colourlines,' we can learn a lot about how white supremacy functions and possibilities for its disruption (Wilson, 2012).

Transracial/cultural families

The existence of transracial/cultural families is not new, yet there is an increasing presence of partnerships across difference due to numerous changing historical, economic, and social conditions, including: the destabilization of colonialism, the debunking of miscegenation laws, and the rapid processes of global capitalism. There is also a growing interest in (and some might say fascination with) identity as a subject of popular academic and social discourse (Mahtani, 2014; Weedon, 1999). The growing number of transracial/cultural families in Canada is largely due to the changing nature of the global capitalist system. From the 1980's onward, there has been a surge in global migration for a multitude of reasons, both forced and voluntary (Brah, 1996).¹ The rise of

¹ The concept of globalization became popular in the 1980's, although the economic and political processes driving globalization have been evolving for centuries (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2008; Brah, 1996). Originating in the transatlantic slave trade, and premised on colonial ideologies of difference, this economic system has fueled the industrial revolution, colonialism and imperialism, and continues to maintain neo-colonial conditions, as former imperialist states benefit from cheap labour and production in formal colonies (Wander, Martin, & Nakayama, 1999). Dei (1996b) defines globalization as "a process of increased social, political and economic international integration driven primarily (but not exclusively) by the interests and dictates of modern industrial and transnational capital" (p.250). He writes that "globalization has also accelerated the flow of cultures across geographic, political and cultural borders...with these developments

new migrations creates new spaces of ‘inbetweenness’ or what I refer to herein as “diasporic spaces” (Brah, 1996). It is due to and within these spaces that white Euro-Canadian and black African transracial/cultural families come together, and where negotiations of complex intersecting ideologies of difference take place (see chapter 6). With respect to family formations, the term ‘transracial’ has been popularly employed to identify families in which children are adopted across racial lines; the most prominent example of which is white parents who adopt non-white children (Root, 1996). Although proper discussion of such a complicated phenomenon is beyond the scope of this study, I think it must be recognized that the current use of transracial and the racialized dynamics of adoption are central to popular representations of transracial families more broadly (see chapter 2).²

For the purpose of this study, I wish to shift the notion of transracial, as I consider this term to have significant theoretical explanatory power. While some advocate for the abolition of all racialized language, we may also take existing terms that can be powerful, such as *trans*, and reconceptualise them (Root, 1996). Instead of being synonymous with multiracial or interracial, two terms predominantly used in the literature on multiraciality (see chapter 2), *transracial* pertains to moving beyond binary borders, not just across them. I employ this term as defined by antiracist feminist scholar France Winddance Twine (2010), “...to signal the movement that members of multiracial families make between racialized bodies, social borders, ideological positions, and cultural practices” (p.4). This conception of transracial families implies fluidity, mobility, and most importantly a human agency in its articulation. We can thus imagine that transracial/cultural families have agency in constructing their everyday practices and identities, as well as the possibility to resist and change their relationship to ideologies of difference. I include ‘cultural’ in this definition to announce and make clear that transracial/cultural families are comprised of subjects who hold an indefinite and

have come new definitions of belonging, structured around complex and contradictory notions of exclusion and inclusion” (p.250).

²This involves: contentions regarding the notion of ‘white saviours’ to children of colour, the neocolonial and geopolitical dynamics of “good” white people who adopt “poor” babies from “third world countries,” and the fetishization of children of colour, especially in light of a celebrity trend of African adoption (Bell, 2013; Kapoor, 2013; Repo & Yrjölä, 2011).

complex list of cultural, ethnic, national, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, affiliations and identities. The partners in this study originate from and are brought up in different geographic, cultural and political contexts. It is therefore not assumed that they are socialized into or draw on the same ideologies of difference or racialized histories. This is something that is not necessarily problematized in the literature on multiraciality (see chapter 2).

White Euro-Canadian women

I originally conceived of and initiated this study by identifying my proposed participants as “white Canadian birth mothers.” I did this based on terminology used in existing literature, yet something did not “feel right” to me about its usage. Although I had questioned what seemed to be the ‘naturalized’ employment of traditional fixed categories of racial identification, still prominent in much scholarship on multiracial families and white women in multiracial families, I also relate to the argument that such racial constructs cannot be completely abandoned or erased (see chapter two). As researchers conducting antiracism research, we may participate in active resistance against the reification of race³ and difference, but we also remain highly at risk of re-centering and re-inscribing naturalized colonial ideologies. With respect to the term “white Canadian birth mothers,” I did not want to essentialize or fix the women’s identities, especially because I sought to trouble their ascribed biological and reproductive roles as mothers, and imagine them as agentic subjects. I recognize the socially and ideologically constructed nature of “whiteness,” which is something I problematize throughout this study. I also understand that the term “birth mothers” can be problematic for it alienates women who did not “give birth” to their children, but who have profound kinship relationships with them.

³ Please note I do not place race in quotation marks, although I recognize the ideologically and socially constructed nature of this term. I concur with Mahtani (2014), who notes that while quotation marks around the word race signify its constructed nature, they can also deny the very real consequences and realities of race and racism. I also agree that while the concept of race remains highly debated and contested, we do not use such quotation marks around other contentious ideological constructions such as gender and nation (Mahtani, 2014).

In her work, Deliofsky (2010) chose the identifications of 'African' and 'European' rather than 'white' and 'black' to name cultural and geographic markers, as opposed to racial ones. She argues that "these terms [black and white] are laden with such ideological heaviness they cannot be used without reinscribing their concomitant ideology" (p.7). While I agree with Deliofsky and her thoughtful approach to the power of identification, the terms 'African' and 'European' are social constructs as well. For instance, does 'African' signify someone born in Africa? Someone who identifies as African? The use of this term can also reproduce dominant ideas of Africa as a construct and a pan-identity in the imagination of 'European-Canadians' (Creese, 2011; Mayer, 2002) (see chapter 6). Moreover, being a European of British descent compared to a European of Portuguese or Spanish descent brings into question issues of racial identification, which Deliofsky does address; for instance, are Portuguese people white or non-white? It is not my intention to "split hairs," but to highlight the possible risk of reification, essentialization,⁴ and reinscription of the ideologies we seek to challenge; at the same time, part of antiracism research and pedagogy is to find language that will allow us to disrupt these ideologies.

Frankenberg (1993) writes that, "whiteness needs to be examined and historicized...whiteness needs to be delimited and 'localized'" (p.231). Part of this process is to situate whiteness by employing identifications such as 'European-Canadian'; at the same time, we evade issues of race if we use these terms and ignore existing racial hierarchies. Frankenberg further argues that "there is a sense...in which 'European-American,' when it replaces 'white,' rather than being used alongside it, evades the racial dominance of European American in the present historical moment" (p.231). I ultimately chose to use the identifications 'white women of Euro-Canadian descent' and 'white Euro-Canadian women' as terms broad enough to encompass all of my participants of various ethnic backgrounds, and to situate them in relation to place.

⁴ I use May's (2005) definition of essentialism:

the process by which particular groups come to be described in terms of fundamental, immutable characteristics...in so doing, the relational and fluid aspects of identity formation are ignored and the group itself comes to be seen as autonomous, separate, and *static*, as impervious to context, time, and historical processes of change, as well as to ongoing processes of internal and external differentiation. (p.340-41)

By naming the European descent of these women, I announce their histories of migration and settlement; I do not naturalize their belonging, and I remember that settlement at any point in history involves disruption, unbelonging and displacement. Moreover, I use the term 'women' to signify their gendered identities and to maintain their personhood beyond their relational identities as mothers and partners.

Colonial ideologies of difference

The development of the natural sciences in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the classification of the natural world, in which reliance on "rationalized" vision allowed natural historians, anthropologists and zoologists to name and compare the world around them (Wander et al., 1999; Wiegman, 1995). The act of classification and comparison established what Foucault argued is a binary thought process, wherein "identity and difference" were rigidly dichotomized under the "objective" observational gaze of the natural historian (in Wiegman, p.25-26). Through a "set of conceptual dichotomies" the world was observed through categorical separations between: the mind and body; objectivity and subjectivity; rationality and emotionality; and self and other (Ware, 1992, p.237). When scientific focus turned to the study of man, and biology was instituted as a formal discipline, skin colour became one of the key signifiers of difference. With the rise of racial science, race was established as a biological category, moving racial difference beyond skin colour and furthering the idea that different human classifications could be categorized into an evolutionary and hierarchical structure based on specific biological characteristics (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Wiegman, 1995). "Classification fever" took over the natural sciences and western scientists began to classify human beings based on racial categories, primarily concerned with the body: skin colour, skull size and shape, hair, and eye colour (Goldberg, 1993; Weedon, 1999; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Wiegman, 1995). The other key signifier of difference became gender for according to scientific discourses of race, women and men of colour (in other words everyone except white males) had small brains (Knapman, 1986; Weedon, 1999). Similar to the notion that people of colour are inferior to whites, "the assumption that women are naturally different from men is fundamental to the history of Western civilization" (Weedon, p.5). The ideological movement towards an 'objective' science of race, "extrapolated in both broader and more distinct terms the parameters of white

supremacy, giving it a logic lodged fully in the body” (Weigman, 1995, p.31). It is imperative to note that black women, as both racialized and gendered subjects, were barely addressed in these discourses.

Colonial discourses of race and gender thus placed difference in the body, and the knowing and naming of difference in the visual observer. The development and sustainability of racialized and gendered colonial discourses were (and remain) dependent on the observer who gazes at an object of difference (the body of colour, the body of sexualized difference). It is necessary to remember that the rise of racial science is not a natural or unavoidable outcome of biology; it is an ideologically informed discourse that continues to justify systems of oppression around the world (Ware, 1992).

Goldberg (1993) argues that race and racism developed as part of modernity, and it is through the conditions of modernity that racial ideologies are “normalized and naturalized” (p.1). Modernity begins with the rise of capitalism in the sixteenth century and is preoccupied with order and linear progress; this is evident in: the dominant emphasis on individual rational choice, the categorization of the natural and human worlds, and the structuring of political, social, and economic life through the establishment of bureaucratic institutions to govern modern existence (e.g. executive, legislative and judicial levels of government; and a market system). Within liberalist modernist thought, the individual is “an abstracted, universal subject,” who is “abstract and atomistic, general and universal, divorced from the contingencies of historicity as it is from the particularities of social and political relations and identities” (p.4). Race served a central function in modernist thought by establishing cohesive and bounded categories of subjects. By the early twentieth century, European powers occupied the majority of the globe; and “...race theory helped to explain and justify the expansion and colonizing by white peoples, their subjugation of nonwhite peoples in Africa, Asia, and the Orient, and the continuing domination of nonwhite peoples—slaves, peasants, aborigines, and the poor at home” (Wander et al., 1999, p.16). Imperial populations moving to the colonies “...depended on the prospect of someone (native labour) or something (native land) to exploit; a pursuit in which a belief in racial differentiation (superiority/inferiority) was central” (Knapman, 1986, p.116). Colonial ideologies were (and continue to be) reproduced through scientific, theoretical and popular texts, and

these ideologies are also passed down through generations of people in early socialization and identity-making processes. Through reproduction of colonial ideologies, a European “collective self” was (and is) created (Deliovsky, 2010; Knapman, 1986).

In order to create and control the colonial subject, colonial ideologies of difference are characterized by their reliance on the notion of fixity to imagine ‘the Other.’ This fixity is most clearly evident in the major colonial discursive strategy of the stereotype, in which fixity is “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be *anxiously repeated* [emphasis added]” (Bhabha, 1994, p.66). In addition to fixity, colonial ideologies of difference are characterized by a deep sense of ambivalence, in which simultaneous mixed emotions of desire and repulsion frame the conception of the colonial subject/the Other. This sense of profound ambivalence ensures the survival and perpetuation of such ideologies, by allowing the ideological premise of difference to change, and to be recontextualized across diverse historical, social and discursive contexts (Bhabha, 1994). While the conditions of colonialism do not exist in precisely the same way they used to, the ideas about race, continue to persist in present-day “common-sense” understandings of the world (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Regardless of the historical origins of race or the multiple competing definitions of the concept, “it is now an intrinsic part and fundamental principal of social organization and identity formation” (Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004, p.29).

In my work I conceptualize race as an ideological construction and process, which are in constant reproduction through ideological discourses (Dei et al., 2004; Essed, 1991; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Essed (1991) writes that, “‘race’ is an *ideological construction*, and not just a social construction, because the idea of ‘race’ has never existed outside of a framework of group interest” (p.43). Further to this, Miles argues ideas about race develop into ideologies that, “become collectively shared and disseminated as popular ideologies partly because of the long history within Western cultures of the elaboration, articulation and application of these ideas” (in Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p.18). Ideologies of race represent a form of ‘false consciousness’ for they perpetuate ideas and structural conditions based on false claims of biological and fundamental differences between peoples. These ideologies are pervasive and

authoritative, “when they come to constitute the conditions of existence for economic and political relations....and make these relations seem reasonable, acceptable and quite normal” (Wetherell & Potter, p.31-32). When inequitable social and economic conditions are naturalized, it directly benefits dominant groups invested in maintaining these relations. Through racial ideologies, certain racialized and gendered bodies are attributed particular behaviours and characteristics, which are associated with specific forms of labour. Colonial ideologies have perpetuated the notion that black bodies are meant for physical labour or *are* the means of production, while white bodies, particularly those of white males, should control the means of production (Deliofsky, 2010).

Of central importance here is that racial ideologies not only naturalize inequitable social and economic realities, they are also instrumental in their (re)production (Miles, 1982; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). These ideologies of difference affect social and material practices and relations, and reside within individuals and societal institutions. They are part of “practical action,” reproduced through forms of political, official and everyday communication and discourse; and ultimately we see that “discourse and ideological practice are inseparable from other social practices” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p.61). To focus on the “practical action” of public, official, and everyday practices and discourses is central to the examination of racial ideologies. Essed (1991) defines racism as a social process, “because structures and ideologies do not exist outside of the everyday practices through which they are created and confirmed. These practices both adapt to and themselves contribute to changing social, economic, and political conditions in society” (p.44). As I attempt to do in this study, we need to consider the processes of reproduction and disruption of racial ideologies, rather than focus on individual articulations. According to Essed’s concept of “everyday racism,” “racism is more than structure and ideology. As a process it is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices” (p.2). Racism-or practices of racialization, racial discrimination, and racial oppression-is imbedded in daily discursive, material and spatial routines, rituals and discourses. Through normalized repetition and social acceptance, “racism into everyday practices becomes part of the expected, of the unquestionable and of what is seen as normal by the dominant group” (p.50). This conceptualization of racism interconnects the ideological nature of race to everyday views and perspectives of individuals and groups; thus, “structures of racism do not exist external to agents-they

are made by agents-but specific practices are by definition racist only when they activate structural racial inequalities in the system” (p.39). When we acknowledge that racism is part of the existing social and economic order, and that racism can exist and insidiously/invisibly manifest within any social practice or interaction, we can truly reveal and critically examine the nature of racial ideologies (Essed, 1991).

It is imperative to frame my discussion of white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families within colonial ideologies of difference for these ideological discourses continue to shape how we understand and construct the racialized and gendered white and non-white bodies of families who cross “colourlines.” As I examine in this work, colonial ideologies inform how white women and black men are popularly imagined in specific gendered, sexualized, and racialized ways, which have contributed to a long history of formal and informal anti-miscegenation and “anti-mixing” discourses, practices and laws (Backhouse, 1999; Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Ware, 1992). Moreover, these ideologies shape the historical and inform the current socio-political Canadian context in which the women and their transracial/cultural families live. Ideologies of race and difference have been employed throughout Canadian nation-building: to rationalize the oppression of ‘racialized others’ evident in the forced occupation and “seizure” of First Nations territories; to enact discriminatory laws against Asian immigrants during the nineteenth century; and to distinguish between so-called ‘superior’ (northern and western European) and ‘inferior’ (southern and eastern European) ‘whites’ (Backhouse, 1999; Deliovsky, 2010). It is also necessary to explore colonial ideologies in relation to antiracism theory and pedagogy to analyze how they manifest in all social relations (individual and institutional), and to envision how to create new ways of knowing *difference*.

Study overview

Foregrounded in the context provided above, my study was guided by **three key research questions**:

1. How do white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families conceive of discourses of race and difference, and how do they see themselves constructed within these discourses?
2. How can and do white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families contend with and challenge discourses of race and difference in their lives?
3. How can white Euro-Canadian women and their families inform antiracism pedagogies?

This study aims to contribute to the limited body of scholarship on white women in multiracial families by exploring the participants' early and ongoing socialization into whiteness and difference within the specific histories and discourses of Canadian society, and by examining how ideologies of difference are negotiated within transracial/cultural families. I wish to add to critical whiteness studies and antiracism theory and pedagogy by shedding light on whiteness, race, and antiracism in the informal and influential learning spaces of the family, home, and community. I hope to enrich the notions of activism and "antiracist parenting" by considering the encounters that individuals, such as the women in this study, have with structural and everyday forms of racism and discrimination. I consider these encounters as potential points of critical reproduction and/or resistance against oppressive discourses, as well as opportunities to develop counter-discourses and practices (Baez, 2000; Fuentes, 2013; Martin et al., 2007). These women can be imagined as potential political actors, who can be part of broader social and political change through their mothering practices and other forms of labour they perform in their lives (Comeau, 2007; Moon, 1999; Twine, 2010).

By situating the women and their families within the socio-political Canadian context, and the broader global historical conditions of imperialism and global capitalism, I make linkages between the micro conditions of the family, and the macro conditions of the state and global systems to analyze how transracial/cultural families are shaped by these conditions. I problematize the nature of multiculturalism, the notion of 'culture,' the construction of whiteness, and dominant conceptions of 'Africa' and 'Africans' in Canada and postcolonial African contexts. I employ the notion of *transracial/cultural* families and imagine that these families reside in diasporic spaces of belonging and unbelonging to

assess how white Euro-Canadian women and transracial/cultural families can help us reimagine constructions of difference beyond present individualistic liberal multicultural frameworks. I posit that reimagining ideologies of difference is imperative to consider for the future of diverse western societies, as tensions and conflicts increase regarding how to “manage diversity” in these states (Essed, 2007).

This thesis is divided into nine chapters. In the second chapter, I synthesize the existing literature on multiracial families and white women in multiracial families. I detail the current dominant themes and critically review the central ideas in these bodies of work. I note the significant gaps where this study can contribute in important ways to present conceptualizations of white women as racialized, gendered and classed subjects; and I assert that we need to examine transracial/cultural families outside of traditionally limited notions of multiraciality to embrace more positive and expansive theoretical framings. For chapter three, I provide a comprehensive discussion of the theoretical frameworks that guide me in this study: critical whiteness studies, critical race feminisms, and antiracism theory. I highlight how these areas of scholarship challenge me, and the main theoretical ideas and concepts that enrich my analysis of white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families. In chapter four, I chronicle my research study process or what I imagine as a co-learning journey with my participants. I situate myself within my ontological and epistemological frameworks, influenced by critical, decolonizing methodologies, and antiracism methods. Grounded in my embodied knowledge as a ‘knowing subject’ in this study, I report the insights and realizations I made throughout the research process, as well as how I approached data collection and analysis. In chapters five, six, seven and eight, I respond to my guiding research questions. These four chapters are structured to reflect the order of my research process (detailed in chapter four), and to unpack each question in a linear manner. In chapters five and six, I respond to the first research question in two parts: how do white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families conceive of discourses of race and difference, and how do they see themselves constructed within these discourses? Through individual interviews and the group workshops, I investigate the white Euro-Canadian women’s early and ongoing socialization processes and learning spaces. Together, the participants and I unpack their worlds; we explore where and how they first learned to conceptualize difference, how they came to understand themselves as

gendered, racialized, and classed women in relation to “others,” and how the racialized relationships and landscapes of their lives transformed as they grew up. In chapter seven, I take up the second research question: how can and do white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families contend with and challenge discourses of race and difference in their lives? In this chapter I examine the diasporic spaces that women and their transracial/cultural families occupy; I analyze the nature of these spaces, and how they can challenge and reshape national boundaries of belonging. I also address the everyday critical literacy practices women perform in response and resistance to ideologies of difference. For the final research findings chapter, I analyze my third guiding question: how can white Euro-Canadian women and their families inform antiracism pedagogies? I analyze the notions of gendered labour, political activism, and antiracist parenting. I consider the specific ways that this study, as a pedagogical process, and the women’s experiences and practices, can inform antiracism pedagogies.

This study is an act of passionate political, intellectual, and emotional commitment, and represents an intense contemplation about the nature of difference, the possibilities of critical pedagogies, and the power of women’s labour. Sherene Razack (1999) poignantly asks, “*when the official story of white respectability and Black degeneracy is disrupted, who can we each know ourselves to be [emphasis added]?*” (p.162). I contend that this question, and the pervasive colonial ideologies it speaks to, can be explored within the context of the transracial/cultural family. Through the creation of intimate relationships between the self and others, these families can potentially threaten colonial reproduction, but their existence alone will not fracture it. We need to interrogate not only how whiteness and race structure our lives in ways we take for granted, but to reimagine and reconceive what somewhere outside of colonial difference could look like, and who we could be outside of binaries. I suggest that we can do just this by exploring the lives and practices of increasingly prevalent transracial/cultural families, as I do in this study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the dominant themes and considerations in the existing literature on multiracial families, and the limited, yet growing research on white women of European descent in multiracial/cultural families.⁵ As I will illustrate, although there is substantial scholarship on multiracial identity development and classification, there are significant gaps in research pertaining to how multiracial families, and white women in multiracial families, negotiate and resist racial ideologies in daily life, and how their experiences are situated within broader social, economic, and political histories. In this study, I aim to fill in some of these gaps and to further research on white women in multiracial families. To this effect, I address the unique contributions this study aims to make to these existing bodies of work; principally as a Canadian study that explores white women as agentive actors in their relationship to ideologies of difference, and that analyzes how these ideologies interlock with discourses of immigration, multiculturalism, and nationalism in the women's lives.

Multiracial families

Canadian census data (2006) confirms that mixed unions⁶ have been steadily increasing over time from 2.6% in 1991 to 3.9% in 2006 (Milan, Maheux, & Chui, 2010, p.71). Milan et al. (2010) attribute the rise of mixed unions to the growth of visible

⁵ Please note, I shall use the predominant term 'multiracial' in reference to the existing literature.

⁶ Statistics Canada defines a mixed union as, "a couple in which one spouse or partner belongs to a visible minority group and the other does not, as well as a couple in which the two spouses or partners belong to different visible minority groups" (Maheux, 2014).

minority⁷ immigrant populations in Canada, which have gone from 4.7% of the overall population in 1981 to 16% (5.1 million) in 2006 (p.71).⁸ The most recent data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS)⁹ indicates that approximately 4.6% or 360,045 of married or common-law partners are in mixed unions, and that the majority of mixed unions are between a “visible minority person” and a “non-visible minority person.” Canadian statistical data reveals that persons in mixed unions are generally younger (the majority between the ages of 35-44), and have higher levels of education relative to the larger Canadian population (Maheux, 2014; Milan et al., 2010). Mixed couples are mainly represented in three provinces: British Columbia (5.9%), Ontario (4.6%), and Alberta (4.2%), and most reside in large urban centres. While there are no specific statistics on mixed unions between black Africans and white Canadians of European descent, within the broad category of ‘black,’ Milan et al. (2010) note that self-identified black individuals represent the second largest group to have mixed partnerships at 41% (p.72). According to Statistics Canada almost half of the black population is Canadian-born (44.3%), reflecting long histories of settlement in this country, and 52.5% were born outside of Canada. Of the black populations born outside of Canada, the majority of African immigrants come from Somalia (4.5%), Ghana (2.9%), Ethiopia (2.8%), and Nigeria (2.4%) (Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2008). As I discuss in chapter 6, although the “black population” in Canada is extremely heterogeneous, this is not reflected in official Statistics Canada data since Statistics Canada only collects limited data information on racial, ethnic and national origins and identifications. Hamplova & Le Bourdais (2010)

⁷ Further to the Canadian Employment Equity Act, visible minorities are defined as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour” (Maheux, 2014, p.3).

⁸ According to the 2001 census, seven in ten persons who are considered visible minorities were not born in Canada (Milan & Hamm, 2004). Statistics Canada projects that by 2017 visible minority populations could make up approximately one fifth of the overall population (Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2008).

⁹ Please note that the National Household Survey (NHS) constitutes a voluntary survey as compared to the 2006 mandatory long-form census, which has now been reinstated as of 2016. Results from the NHS are “subject to potentially higher non-response error than those derived from the 2006 census long form” (Maheux, 2014, p.9). The reinstatement of the mandatory long-form census in 2016 will provide the benefit of up-to-date statistical data on visible minority populations and mixed unions in Canada.

argue part of the deficiency in data on multiracial partnerships can also be attributed to the limited demographic information that Statistics Canada collects on race.¹⁰

According to the figures above, it is clear there is a slow and steady increase in mixed unions in Canada, and that many of these partnerships include individuals who were born and socialized in different geographic, cultural, social and political conditions. Although these relationships represent an emerging segment of the Canadian population, accurate and comprehensive data about mixed unions and academic inquiry into them is quite limited. This gap in knowledge is significant considering mixed unions are attributed to immigration patterns, and there is much to learn about demographic, and in turn social, economic and political change in the society by considering such unions; specifically how these demographic changes can impact and shape government policy-making (Hamplova & Le Bourdais, 2010). At the same time, we cannot solely focus on statistical data to examine the lives of multiracial partnerships, a distinct trend we see in the existing literature. By limiting our analysis to data such as: the racial identity development of multiracial children, official racial classification, and interracial marriage rates, our understanding of the ways people come together and live across constructions of difference will remain narrow. I shall now turn to my review of the literature on multiracial individuals and families to highlight what I consider to be the dominant themes and key considerations in this work.

¹⁰ Normative global shifts during the latter part of the twentieth century, including the United Nations Statistical Commission's official endorsement of self-identification of race and ethnicity over state imposed identifications, resulted in changes to how governments, including the Canadian government, collected identification data. One such change was the ability to identify more than one racial group on the 1996 Canadian census. As some argue, this shift "made multicultural sense" and reflected "the ideal of Canadian multiculturalism" (Thompson, 2012, p.1421). Still we see that the census largely does not use the language of race, which some argue reflects a predominant Canadian reticence to have "meaningful discussions about the pervasiveness of racism in Canada" (p.1423). We must remember that far from being neutral, the official census is a highly politicized document that historically has been strategically used to maintain rigid colour lines, white dominance, and inequitable power relations.

Multiracial individuals and families: Key themes in the literature

Studies on multiracial individuals and families range across disciplines, particularly in areas pertaining to social and public services: psychology, marriage and counselling, family studies, nursing and health, social work, and education. At the same time, multiracial families continue to be neglected in key areas of critical scholarship including: feminist, critical race, postcolonial, and antiracist studies (Burton, Bonilla-Silva, Ray, Buckelew, & Freeman; Luke, 1994; Luke & Luke, 1998; Twine, 2010). Across disciplines, there appear to be noted similarities in the literature. **First, of various studies conducted, there are calls across disciplines to provide parents, educators, and other professionals with the tools to engage and support the “specific” needs of the growing populations of mixed race families, especially mixed race children** (Brown, 2009; Burton et al., 2010; Byrd & Gardwick, 2006; Morrison & Bordere, 2001; Root, 2003). For instance, in their study of eight white females and black males in heterosexual marriages with school-aged “biracial” children in the United States, Byrd and Gardwick (2006) examine mixed race family identity and family conceptions of race. From a public health perspective, they assert that health care providers should understand the needs of increasing multiracial populations, “...to ensure that biracial children and their families receive the anticipatory guidance and culturally appropriate care they need to thrive” (p.23). Similarly, in their work on the identity development of “biracial children,” Morrison and Bordere (2001) note that a key objective of children’s early learning programs is to foster positive identity development, which they state “proves to be particularly challenging for those who are of dual heritage parentage”; and yet, “*the challenge* [emphasis added] must be met” because mixed families are increasing (p.134). Morrison and Bordere contend that early childhood educators “might face certain challenges when *dealing with diversity* [emphasis added]” (p.135), and “may not always feel comfortable with, or may not understand the need for dealing with, diversity in the classroom” (p.137). The notion that teachers are not equipped to “deal with” the unique needs of “biracial” children is echoed in the words of Brown (2009) who writes, “there is confusion and debate on the part of educators regarding how best to serve these children and their families...the current educational literature has not adequately addressed effective educational and family interaction practices for these *non-traditional families* [emphasis added]” (p.124). In a similar

ideological framing of diversity as a challenge, mixed race scholar Maria Root (2003) reiterates the significance of the school as an important learning site for children outside of the home that will influence “biracial” children’s identity development. She writes, “the educator who is sensitive to the reform that is needed to accommodate the growing number of multiracial students, many more of whom will assert mixed race identity may embrace a *forthcoming challenge* [emphasis added]” (p.122). These examples illustrate a trend in the existing scholarship, in which multiracial/cultural children and families are constructed as “non-traditional,” and a “challenge” for professionals, especially those in traditional ‘helping’ professions such as: public health workers, educators, and counsellors.

What we also see in existing scholarship is the employment of individualistic liberal multicultural discourses through appeals to educators and other professionals, to gain “cultural competence” to support multiracial children and families, and to celebrate “diversity” through exposure to various ‘surface’ cultural practices (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). For example, Lynch and Hanson (2004) recommend that educators support multiracial children and their families by incorporating resources from their family’s cultural backgrounds, building open communication with family members, learning family languages, and participating in community-based cultural activities. Brown (2009) proposes that educators “provide parents and children with tools (i.e. the right words) to defend and protect themselves from those who *may not appreciate differences* [emphasis added]” (p.129). Morrison and Bordere (2001) suggest that diversity should be celebrated in the classroom; they write, “...you can expose children to various cultural dances, fiestas, parades, and other events” (p.137). These assertions adhere to the predominant liberal multicultural notion that ethno-cultural groups are distinct, contained, and “knowable” communities that can be celebrated for their “cultural differences;” in circumstances where people “may not appreciate differences,” multicultural families and communities should learn how to “defend and protect themselves” (Deliovsky, 2010; Dei, 1996a; Fleras, 2014; Luke & Luke, 1998; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Statements such as those cited above, illuminate a liberal multicultural approach to “managing” differences, rendering absent systemic racism and inequity, and ignoring whiteness. This approach constructs “non-traditional” individuals and families as the “problem,” and

places the sole responsibility on them, while erasing the responsibility of the school and other societal institutions to change their cultural norms and practices (Dei, 1996a).

Second, scholarship on multiracial individuals and families has traditionally focused on the relationship between biological constructs of race and identity development, particularly of multiracial children and youth (Britton, 2013; Luke, 1994; Murad, 2005; O'Donoghue, 2004, 2005; Root, 1996). In studies on multiracial individuals, **multiple identities can appear as a deficiency or a disability with which one needs to struggle** (Brown, 2009; Luke, 1994; Luke & Luke, 1998; Morrison & Bordere, 2001; Rockquemore, Brunsma, & Delgado, 2009; Udry, Li, & Hendrickson-Smith, 2003). Various studies examine the healthy development and “adjustment” of “biracial” children and youth relative to their monoracial counterparts. Traditionally in such studies, multiracial individuals have been considered degenerate, ambiguous subjects who suffer from a lack of healthy and positive identity and belonging. They have trouble “fitting in” with peers and finding a place in the larger society (Mahtani, 2014; Udry, Li, & Hendrickson-Smith, 2003; Root, 2003). In contrast, such analyses presume that to have a singular “racially pure” identity means that one is stable, healthy and well-adjusted (Brown, 2009; Dalmage, 2000; Mahtani, 2014; Root, 2003; Tizard & Phoenix, 1993). For instance, in their study of mixed race adolescents, Udry, Li, and Hendrickson-Smith (2003) argue that biracial youth are at a higher risk of health and behavioural issues, such as smoking and drinking, than youth who identify with only one race. They conclude that mixed race identity can be a source of stress leading to such issues. In her work, Brown (2009) observed that while not all multiracial people suffer from marginality and conflict from negotiating multiple identities, “there is evidence that people with multiracial backgrounds may experience poor mental health and social maladjustment” (p.125). She further asserts that, “many multiracial children may struggle to find a label that fits them, and often disequilibrium occurs when they feel they are being forced to choose between labels that do not represent who they believe themselves to be” (p.25).

We see the pathologization of multiracial individuals and families, who must struggle through the “disequilibrium” of multiple, and therefore presumably conflictual identities. We see a “problem approach” which emphasizes the challenges that mixed

race people (many presumed to be 'white and black') experience (Rockquemore, Brunson, & Delgado, 2009). This is reminiscent of early work rooted in the racial sciences, such as Stonequist's (1961) "marginal man theory" and the subsequent work built on it. This early scholarship put forth the notion that mixed race peoples experience an internal, interminable conflict over their identification with black and white groups, neither of which they will ever belong to. Although more recent American literature on multiracial individuals now suggests that children can have "healthy" and "positive" identity development as "mixed" or "biracial" persons, studies indicate that many individuals grow up to identify as black, or are encouraged to see themselves as black in a society where hypodescent/one drop rule has historically governed racial logics (Rockquemore, Brunson, & Delgado, 2009). To negotiate racial identity in a white supremacist society, some multiracial individuals may also identify as black publically and as mixed privately, or even adopt completely different identifications (O'Donoghue, 2005). For instance, in O'Donoghue's (2005) study of white women in multiracial families, she observed that several of her participants' daughters chose to identify as Latina, even though they were of white American European and African American descent (Dalmage, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2005; Roquemore et al., 2009). Perhaps one of the questions we really need to ask is: **"how do we understand what constitutes healthy adaptation in a racist and otherwise oppressive context?"** (Orti, Bibb, & Mahboubi, 1996, p.574). When attention remains fixated on individual racial identifications, we do not investigate the structural and historical conditions that shape individual lives and dictate identity options in the first place (Thompson, 2012). What about power and privilege? What about histories of colonialism, slavery, genocide, and the ongoing inequity of white supremacist societies, such as the United States and Canada? When multiracial individuals are forced to negotiate and self-identify within the rigid racial logics of western thought, how can they develop in healthy and positive ways in what can be considered dysfunctional and violent systems? (Johal, 2005; hooks, 1995). Perhaps it is the ideological and structural conditions in which individuals are socialized that are truly pathological, not the individuals themselves.

Third, we see that much of the existing literature on multiracial individuals and families comes out of the United States and to a lesser extent, the United Kingdom (as well as some from Latin America and the Caribbean) (Mahtani, 2014;

Small & King-O'Brien, 2014). Within the American literature and British literature on multiracial families, we see a disproportionately large representation of white-black partnerships as the site of inquiry (even though there are more unions between other groups) (Britton, 2013; Root, 2003; Rockquemore, Brunson, & Delgado, 2009). In part, this reflects the prevailing belief that multiraciality still requires whiteness, and that to be mixed is to be mixed with white. For instance, Morrison and Bordere (2001) define 'biracial' as "a person with a white parent and a parent of another race" (p.134). This is common in other studies as well (Blount & Young, 2015; Root, 2003). Within the American literature, there appears to be assumed 'black' and 'white' identities, which are not necessarily complicated or challenged. We see that in mixed race families, one partner is considered to have the 'black' identity and one the 'white' identity. They are represented as contained, essentialized and inferred with fixed meaning as to how each racial identity is constituted and performed. For instance, Byrd and Gardwick (2006) refer to a "black viewpoint" and a "white viewpoint" in their study of "interracial couples" (p.26). They contend that these couples live a "dual reality" in which their mixed race family constitutes a "blending of the very diverse Black and White cultures..." (p.23). These statements beg questions regarding what constitutes a "black viewpoint" and what constitutes "white culture"? Here, the ideological construction of race presumes a specific, yet universal, "viewpoint" and "culture"-race is at once presumed to be individual and collective. I suggest that such unqualified terms, prevalent in much of the literature on multiracial partnerships, illustrates the assumption of a shared understanding and situatedness in the specific socioeconomic, ideological, and historical conditions of race relations and racism in the United States. We see that in the American literature on mixed families, race is explicitly examined and emphasized, yet relationships exist across many forms of difference. We need more literature that unpacks how ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural differences, in addition to racial differences, shape experiences (Murad, 2005; Song, 2009).

As this study illustrates, individuals are not necessarily socialized in the same conditions or within the same ideologies of difference, particularly if they grow up in different societies. In the specific context of this study, members of transracial/cultural families are socialized into what can be extremely divergent discourses of difference; for instance in Canada, racial ideologies are situated within a history of genocide and the

ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and their lands, as well as the marginalization and oppression of non-white peoples (particularly non-white immigrants). In African states such as, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa, where the women's partners originate, discourses of difference may be based on tribal, ethnic, clan, and linguistic lines. Although many countries share histories of colonization and imperialism, the historical and present day social and political trajectories can differ. For instance, in her autoethnographic account of her transracial/cultural/national family, Murad (2005) reflects that for her husband, a Palestinian Muslim who grew up in Palestine and is now living in America, and for her, a Jewish American woman who grew up and is living in America, their very ways of conceptualizing, embodying, and living difference profoundly differ. Murad, like the women in this study, demonstrates there is no singular experience of difference, and individual experiences and viewpoints are mediated through the complex and situated interlocking of constructions, including: class, gender, race, ethnicity, country of origin, legal status, religion, education, sexual orientation, and much more (Luke & Luke, 1998). We limit our understanding of transracial/cultural families when we only consider their racial identifications, particularly as "intermarriage" involves the blending of multiple forms of difference and the potential emergence of new ways of being (Song, 2009).

Fourth, in scholarship across disciplines, it appears that **race is still largely treated as a monolithic, fixed categorical identity, with more emphasis on official racial classifications than the agency and trajectories of individuals, families and communities in processes of identity construction** (Brunsma, Delgado, & Rockquemore, 2013; Burton et al., 2010; Luke, 1994; Luke & Luke, 1998; Root, 2003). Studies on multiraciality continue to draw on racial identification models to examine the racial identification choices of mixed race individuals (Brunsma, Delgado, & Rockquemore, 2013; O'Donoghue, 2004, 2005; Root, 2003). We see that emphasis remains on skin colour and phenotypical characteristics in particular, and that attention is on the relationship between skin colour and racial identity. To this effect, numerous studies, as well as social and political initiatives, revolve around racial classifications for official purposes. For instance, in the existing scholarship we continue to see frequent usage of essentialist binary terms such as: black, white, interracial, biracial, and "hybrid." Even in critical mixed race studies, scholarship remains focused on racial and ethnic

classifications and categories (although this field of critical inquiry is expanding) (King-O'Riain, Small, Mahtani, Song, & Spickard, 2014; Mahtani, 2014).¹¹

There is also concern about creating an essentialized “mixed-race” identity; for instance, does the notion of “mixed-race” presume that biological races do exist, and in effect does this create a new essentialized racial category? We must recognize that people who identify as “multiracial” or “mixed-race” do not have the same experiences, contrary to what a lot of the scholarship on mixed-race peoples appears to presume. We need to move beyond the notion of a singular and essentialized multiracial identity, and explore multiracial identities in the plural form. Scholarship on mixed race peoples must examine the “cartographies of multiraciality,” moving from “what are you?”-in which focus is on individual racial and social identification to the “complex diasporic life histories that inform the process of identifying as mixed race” (Mahtani, p.4). In her work, *Mixed Race Amnesia: Resisting the Romanticization of Multiraciality*, critical mixed race scholar, Minelle Mahtani (2014), addresses what she calls the problem of the “present-tense”: the tendency to focus on individually based identities and experiences, which overemphasize and isolate the present moment, rather than examine the complex trajectories that led individuals (and families) to where they are, and the broader situated conditions that inform their positionalities. She advises that we should not “...relegate our telling of multiracial histories to individualized, romanticized tales of interracial intimacies of our parents...these stories do not take us anywhere new. They do not contribute to fighting social justice struggles in a colonized and racist world” (p.256). Literature on multiraciality and multiracial identity do not attend to histories of migration, immigration, and the transnational nature of changing multicultural societies, nor how new diasporic spaces and communities shape and mediate notions of identity and belonging (Luke & Luke, 1998; Mahtani, 2014). We need to shift our analyses to focus more on familial relationships, practices, and histories in our exploration of multiraciality (Mahtani, 2014).

¹¹ The emphasis on official racial classifications is grounded in a long history of state control over racial identities to exploit bodies of colour for profit, including the infamous one drop rule/hypodescent in the United States, which ensured the enslavement of mixed populations under the slavery system. As such, in the American context changing the census to include identification of more than one race became a key political and social point of mobilization for “multiracial populations” (Mahtani, 2014).

Fifth, we see many studies on marital patterns and divorce rates of interracial couples relative to monoracial couples (Bratter & King, 2008; Burton et al., 2010; Tory, Lewis-Smith & Laurenceau, 2006). There is much scholarship testing the more recent popular notion in western states that interracial marriages reflect higher levels of acceptance and integration, by examining marital patterns and divorce rates amongst interracial couples versus monoracial pairings. Bratter and King (2008) write that, “a growing literature describing the challenges faced by interracial couples suggests that crossing racial lines still violates enduring norms of who should and should not marry” (p.160). They contend that black-white romantic partnerships are still imagined as “an inherently dysfunctional relationship, motivated by racial stereotypes of sexual virility or even psychological pathology” (p.161). Tory, Lewis-Smith and Laurenceau (2006) argue that without substantial empirical basis, much of the literature on interracial relationships takes a condemning approach, viewing individuals themselves who enter into such relationships as degenerate. Multiracial partnerships are considered less stable than monoracial marriages, and it is presumed that there is more marital conflict based on the partners’ differences. For instance, Blount and Young (2005) write, “multiple-heritage couples are likely to have more struggles, challenges, and misunderstandings due to the external disapproval of their relationship and the internal dissimilarities within their relationship” (p.140-41). Many studies conclude that divorce rates are higher amongst interracial couples and highlight the differences (e.g., race), rather than any similarities (e.g., education, employment, religion, language, citizenship, culture) that may characterize these partnerships.

Several studies found that marriages between white women and African-American men are particularly “vulnerable” to failure, as well as partnerships between white women and Asian-American men. For instance, Bratter and King (2008) report, “our data show that these marriages, specifically those involving black men and white women, have the highest likelihood of disruption of any white/non-white marriages” (p.169). Some argue that higher divorce rates amongst white women and black men may be attributed to the greater levels of scrutiny and overt racism that those in white-black unions face (Yancey, 2007). In interracial marriages between white women and black men, Bratter and King (2008) also hypothesize that marital disruption or dissolution may be attributed to “the stigma of being perceived as unqualified to raise and nurture”

their mixed children, which they contend can create an “unwelcoming context” for white women in mixed partnerships (p.170) (see discussion of maternal (in)competence below).

Several more recent studies contradict such negative findings, suggesting that interracial couples can in fact have similar issues as monoracial couples, and that the quality of their marriages can be comparable or higher. Some couples even report greater “satisfaction” in their relationships (Blount & Young, 2015; Hohmann-Marriott, & Amato, 2008; Qian, Blair, & Ruf, 2001; Troy, Lewis-Smith, & Laurenceau, 2006). In their two comparative studies of heterosexual interracial and monoracial couples of multiple origins (one with 118 couples and one with 109 couples), Troy, Lewis-Smith, and Laurenceau (2006) found that many couples were together for commonalities they experienced in other parts of their lives. In both studies they found no differences in relationship satisfaction or quality between the interracial and intraracial partnerships, and they reported no significant differences in conflict and attachment. Based on their findings they advocate for new conceptual frameworks to examine interracial partnerships.

Such scholarship makes clear that gender and racial power dynamics play an influential role in marital outcomes, though such dynamics have not been explored in much of the literature (Bratter & King, 2008; Burton et al., 2010). Instead of assuming that interracial relationships signal integration, Burton et al., (2010) ask, “how are race, ethnicity, and colorism negotiated in interracial relationships? What implications do those dynamics have for the biracial and multiracial children produced in these unions?” (p.450). To this effect, Song (2009) argues we need to acknowledge that mixed marriages does not mean that individuals necessarily feel integrated into or a sense of belonging in their partner’s family and communities, or that non-white partners do not face racism and discrimination in their relationships. More studies are required that examine how partners address such interpersonal dynamics and how these interactions are part of broader power relations in racialized societies. In my study, I contribute to this literature by considering intimate racialized power dynamics in relation to the ideologies and conditions which inform them, particularly as such interpersonal dynamics pertain to systems of immigration and notions of citizenship and belonging (see chapter 6).

Beyond the conflicting findings on the relative “success” or “failure” of interracial partnerships, the prominent research focus on relationship quality and marital stability indicates that the racial logics of anti-mixing discourses (Frankenberg, 1993) continue to permeate scholarship on multiracial relationships, perpetuating a fundamentally negative conceptualization of difference. The inference is that interracial relationships are fraught with conflict and struggle, which we see is a similar framing to how multiracial individuals are perceived with respect to their identity development. There is also a significant absence in the literature on the ideological and social conditions in which these unions are formed. What is the larger population meant to draw from these studies? Such studies could appear quite negative and daunting for people in mixed partnerships, whose voices may not be heard in positive and agentive ways. For instance, in this study I found that the participants problematized the ways in which mixed partnerships have been historically and popularly imagined, and demonstrated multiple ways in which they actively resist and challenge these discourses in their lives (see chapters 6 and 7). The majority of the women consistently referred to many values, principles, and practices they shared with their partners, and addressed the differences in their transracial/cultural families as positive and enriching to their lives. Dalmage (2000) had a similar finding in her study of multiracial families, who reported that they were “well grounded” and “having matured” because of their experiences together. Positive interpretations of differences within multiracial/cultural families were also reported by other women in various studies (e.g., Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010). There are clearly many more stories to tell outside of the traditional research paradigms discussed above. We should partake in new lines of inquiry premised on an interest in and commitment to reconceptualising partnerships across differences in our changing societies.

Sixth, white privilege and dominant power relationships that govern discourses of race are generally not addressed in the literature, including how whiteness and power shape and mediate familial relationships and interactions with the larger society. Burton et al. (2010) ask, “How do parents socialize their biracial and multiracial children about racism and colorism?” (p.452). In their extensive review of literature on racial and ethnic minority and immigrant families in the United States over a ten-year period, Burton et al., (2010) argue that research on families of colour that

incorporate critical race theories have best addressed how racially inequitable systems influence the lives and organization of families. Yet the use of critical race approaches has not been significantly utilized in research on families. For studies involving the growing numbers of mixed race families, critical race theoretical approaches can illuminate ways that partners negotiate differing experiences of race and racism, how processes of racial socialization take place, and how whiteness is reproduced intergenerationally within families (Burton et al., 2010).

Scholars should take up whiteness not only with respect to white identities and identity-making in mixed families, but with respect to whiteness more comprehensively understood as social practice, ideology, performance, and power within familial relationships (Deliofsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993) (see chapter 3). For instance, how are white supremacist ideologies reproduced in multiracial families? How are they disrupted or challenged in daily life? Twine (2010) notes that studies of multiracial individuals illuminate the ways in which racial identities are negotiated, but there are no studies which propose “a conceptual frame for understanding how white parents respond to racial hierarchies” (p.749). Britton (2013) argues that “by uncovering what happens to whiteness in families...we are arguably in a better position to understand the meaning and role of race and racism in the lives of all members of mixed parentage families” (p.1320). She writes that mixed race studies and whiteness studies can enrich one another when we examine whiteness in mixed families. In this study, I contribute to the existing literature, by drawing on critical race feminisms, critical whiteness studies, and antiracism scholarship to analyse whiteness and the racial socialization processes of white women in transracial/cultural families.

Finally, in more recent literature we see the presumption that multiraciality represents the embodiment of successful multiculturalism. Scholarship on multiraciality reflects the prevailing liberal multicultural notion that because people are “mixing,” multiculturalism has been successful. We see this perception reproduced in popular and official discourses. For instance, in their Statistics Canada report on mixed unions, Milan and Hamm (2004) state that such partnerships can be imagined as, “an outcome of multiculturalism, which emphasizes the acceptance and interactions of all persons in a society,” that drives change by “fostering positive attitudes toward visible

minority groups, and linking the social and family networks of the two partners” (p.2). If we accept the notion that intermarriage equals social and racial integration, then it follows that racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination will be eliminated, which has certainly not been the case (Fleras, 2014; Mahtani, 2014; Song, 2009). Instead, as Mahtani argues, Canadian colonial and racial histories have directly shaped current understandings of mixed race in Canada, and “...the motif of mixing plays a complicit role in ensuring ongoing white supremacist practices that allow for the systemic racism that structures the lives of both blacks and Indigenous peoples” (p.7). In fact, the multicultural mixing myth can work against the objectives of multiculturalism by creating “a troubling, conventional, and colonial form of social hope” (Mahtani, p.92) in which a future “beyond race” is considered possible.

Further to this “mixing myth,” we see that the mixed race subject is meant to embody the tolerance and benevolence of multiculturalism. Part of this embodiment in a consumer capitalist society, is the commodification and commercialization of mixed race bodies, which we witness in media, popular discourse, and consumer culture (Dalmage, 2000; Rockquemore et al., 2009). We see that in the global capitalist economy, “the allure of mixed race has become chic and the marketing of ‘*Generation E.A.: Ethnically Ambiguous*’ has become big money” (Small & King-O’Riain, 2014, p.xii). This places a particular kind of responsibility and burden on multiracial peoples to perform “multicultural diversity” to fulfill the desires of others. In the Canadian context, the mixed race subject and mixed race families, become incorporated into Canadian narratives of nationhood, and “can be seen as establishing the moral legitimacy of Canadian global leadership and are embodied as *symbols of progress*” (Mahtani, 2014, p.136). In this way, multiracial individuals and families are central actors in the Canadian national identity, and yet like other non-white bodies they continue to be situated *outside* of the imagined white settler state (Mahtani, Kwan-Lafond, Taylor, 2014).¹² In this study, I

¹² Mahtani (2014) urges critical race scholars in Canada to expand beyond the American black-white binary to include other situated histories and experiences of multiraciality, including Asian and Indigenous experiences. We see for instance that the mixed race experiences of the Métis have not been explored much in critical mixed race scholarship (Mahtani, Kwan-Lafond, & Taylor, 2014).

address this by considering the belonging and unbelonging of transracial/cultural families in diasporic spaces.

Summary

We continue to see the pathologizing of multiracial individuals and families and an ongoing “problem approach” to the study of multiraciality, illustrative in the thematic subjects of inquiry themselves, such as: marriage and divorce rates of interracial partners, how professionals “deal with” growing multiracial populations, and how multiracial individuals “struggle” with identification and “healthy adjustment.” At the same time, we see an increasing body of work that “celebrates” multiracial populations as the embodiment of racial and ethnic diversity, presumably reflecting the success of multiculturalism in western states. The assumption that multiraciality means cohesive social integration is not only false, but also dangerous as we do not address the real and pervasive racial ideologies that continue to frame and inform ongoing systems of oppression and inequity (Mahtani, 2014; Song, 2009; Thompson, 2012). Mahtani argues that existing literature on “mixed race people” is quite polarizing; either they are pathologized as representatives of deviant transgression across colour lines, or celebrated as the successful embodiment of multicultural diversity. This polarization is apparent in what Mahtani suggests are two distinct periods of study on mixed race peoples: “the age of pathology” and the “age of celebration” (p.88). I propose that instead of imagining two separate ages, the literature on multiracial individuals and families constitutes an age of ‘pathological mixed race multicultural celebration,’ wherein “mixed” peoples and families are scrutinized within “old” and “new” ideologies of race and difference. In the literature, we see that traditional constructions of race are mixed and tangled up with current dominant discourses of multiculturalism to reveal how profoundly contradictory and ambivalent they truly are. It is clear that multicultural celebration is fun, and diversity is great, as long as it does not challenge existing power structures, address whiteness, or inconvenience the dominant white population (who continue to make up the majority of professionals in “helping” professions, such as: teachers, social workers, and psychotherapists (Thobani, 2007)). We continue to see usage of the terms “challenge,” “challenging,” and “non-traditional” in reference to multiracial children and families. What makes “them” “non-traditional”? What makes

“them” “challenging”? We must consider the implications of the negative and deficient language used to conceptualize multiracial individuals and families, and how such language shapes the experiences of multiracial peoples. We must reassess the very ideological frameworks within which we investigate multiraciality, and embrace the challenge of expanding our conceptual and linguistic boundaries.

While conclusions drawn from studies on multiracial families may be insightful and informative, there are significant gaps in how race as an ideological construct, and whiteness as a social practice, ideology, “culture,” and set of power relations are conceptualized and experienced within multiracial families (Deliofsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993). I contend that it is time to cease gazing at multiracial families (and children in particular), and examine how these individuals and families can be agentive in their relationship to ideologies of difference, and what we can learn from them. This is precisely what can be done when we begin to unpack the subjectivities and experiences of individuals in relationships across differences. In this study, I move beyond the literature consumed by identity classification and the biological embodiment of race, to consider how white women and their transracial/cultural families conceptualize, address, and negotiate the complex interplay of power relationships, ideologies of difference, and societal institutions in their everyday lives. We cannot simply look at census and survey data to understand how multiracial individuals and families articulate and negotiate ideologies of difference; we need to examine the everyday to understand how negotiations of identity and belonging take place.

I now turn to the small body of work on white women in multiracial families. We see similar trends in this work, but we also see that the exploration of the unique positionalities and experiences of white women in transracial families opens up critical opportunities to shift discussions from essentialized racial identities to new ways of conceiving how racial logics are reproduced and resisted in the important learning spaces of public and private worlds.

White women of European-descent in mixed-race families: Overview and key themes

Overview

To date, there has been limited inquiry into the experiences of white women of European descent in multiracial/cultural families. The majority of existing studies examine white mothers who are raising multiracial children. Similar to studies on multiraciality, studies on white mothers have largely been conducted in the United States (Dalmage, 2000; Frankenberg, 1993; Karis, 2003; O'Donoghue, 2004, 2005), and in the United Kingdom (Britton, 2013; Harman, 2010, 2013; McKenzie, 2010; Twine, 1999, 2010;). In this case, we see more studies from Britain than America. There have also been small studies in New Zealand (Robinson, 2001) and Australia (Luke, 1994; Luke & Luke, 1998). Very few studies have been conducted in Canada (Deliovsky, 2010; Wilson, 2012; Verbian, 2006, 2013); most notable is Katerina Deliovsky's (2010) study of twenty-four white women of European descent, which included nine women in multiracial partnerships with men of African descent in southwestern Ontario. Like other scholars, her inquiry is informed by her embodied knowledge as a European woman in a multiracial family. We see two more studies, also in southwestern Ontario by Verbian (2006, 2013) and Wilson (2012). In Verbian's study, she explores the racial experiences of two white Jewish-Canadian women, and compares them with the published literary narratives of three white Jewish-American women in transracial/religious families. In her work, she reflects on her own personal experience as a white Jewish mother, and how Jewish identities are complicated in relation to whiteness. For her study, Wilson conducted interviews with five white women in "white-black families" in a small, primarily white city in southwestern Ontario. As far as I am aware, the above mentioned are all the Canadian studies pertaining to white women in multiracial families (Deliovsky, 2010; Wilson, 2012 and Verbian, 2006; 2013).

Existing studies on white women of European descent range in size: from two participants in Verbian's (2013) study to Twine's (2010) longitudinal ethnographic study of forty-two transracial families (which included four white male and black female partnerships). The make-up of participants varies in many respects within and across existing studies pertaining to: geographic location, age, education, socioeconomic

status, marital status, ethnicity, employment, religion, and social and political involvement. Some studies predominantly reflect the experiences of middle-class women, while others, especially in the British context, examine women who are single mothers of low socioeconomic status.¹³ We also see that the majority of studies involve women who were or have been in heterosexual partnerships, with the exception of Frankenberg (1993) and Deliovsky (2010).

Theoretical frameworks that inform existing studies include: critical race feminisms (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Luke, 1994; Twine, 2001, 2010), critical race theory (Deliovsky, 2010; Twine, 2010, 2010; Wilson, 2012), postcolonial theory (Luke, 1994, Luke & Luke, 1998), identity development scholarship (Hill & Thomas, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2004, 2005; Robinson, 2001), and spatial theory (Wilson, 2012). Studies on white women largely employ qualitative methods and are mainly composed of semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Other methods employed include: participant surveys (Luke & Luke, 1998), participant observation (Twine, 2010; Twine & Steinbugler, 2006), autoethnography (Murad, 2005), literary analysis (Verbian, 2006, 2013), and focus groups (Hill & Thomas, 2000). There are no studies I am aware of that utilize all of the qualitative methods I employed in this study: participant survey, one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and participant workshops. Although Hill & Thomas's (2000) study included a participant focus group, the participant workshops in my study uniquely involved participant engagement with written and visual texts. I seek to contribute to this growing body of scholarship by illuminating ways in which my research process itself, informed by critical methodologies (antiracist, feminist and decolonizing), allowed for an in-depth exploration and unpacking of the women's lives and experiences (see chapters 4 and 7).

A significant amount of scholarly work on white women in multiracial families is written by women who self-identify as white women of European descent in multiracial relationships (Dalmage, 2000; Deliovsky, 2010; Luke, 1994, 2003; Murad, 2005;

¹³ According to Harman (2013) just over half of mixed white and Caribbean children in England live in single mother households, which may contribute to the British focus on "lone white mothers" (Harman, 2010, 2013).

O'Donoghue, 2004, 2005; Verbian, 2010, 2013). There is also one woman who self-identifies as the child of a Polish-Canadian and African-Canadian multiracial/cultural family (Wilson, 2012). Many of these self-identified women state that their own embodied knowledge informed their interest in this subject and gave them insight into women's positionalities. It is interesting to note as well that many of these women "write themselves into" their work to varying extents by relating their own experiences. Similar to my study in which I too have embodied knowledge as a white Jewish woman of European descent in a transracial/cultural family, it appears that when scholars conduct studies with embodied knowledge, they provide insight and perspective that may otherwise not be shared (Dunbar, 2008; Gallagher, 2000) (see chapter 4). Of note in the scholars' various reflections is the notion that their intimate relationships have forced them to disrupt their perceived ideas of whiteness and race, much like many women in existing studies have thematically reported (see below).

Comparable to the literature on multiracial individuals and families, the literature on white women in multiracial families also reflects traditional racial logics, reproduced in part through the continued usage of language such as "biracial," and assumptions regarding fixed white and black racial identities. Overall, there is a similar focus on 'black and white' unions, especially in American and British studies, and emphasis on issues of identity-making and the racial socialization of mixed race children (Verbian, 2006). The thematic rationale for the study of white women in multiracial families is the contestable role they play as mothers to multiracial children. Robinson (2001) writes, "...women typically play a monumental role in providing care to their children...[her] culture and its associated values, biases, and assumptions are transmitted. *Are there implications for biracial children's racial socialization and identity development when their mothers are White* [emphasis added]?" (p.171). The question Robinson poses seems to be the preoccupation of much of the literature on white women of multiracial families, yet this is an emerging area of inquiry and some scholars are expanding beyond this focus. Although in some studies we continue to see the normalization and naturalization of whiteness, scholars such as: Frankenberg (1993), Twine (2010), and Deliovsky (2010) all analyse and interrogate whiteness and white supremacy to varying degrees through critical feminist and critical race theoretical frameworks. They also address antiracism and political activism, and they each consider how white women are agentive and

engaged subjects, who navigate, reproduce, and resist ideologies of difference, because of and also beyond, their reproductive roles as mothers. These scholars have most inspired and informed my own work, and in this study I seek to build on their scholarship. I do this by drawing on antiracism theory and methods, critical whiteness studies scholarship, and critical race feminisms to explore *with* the participants, through dialogue and engagement with texts, how white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families live in diasporic spaces. Situating the women within two distinct locations in the Canadian socio-political context, I examine how they navigate the situated ideologies of race and difference and intersecting discourses of immigration, nationalism, and multiculturalism.

White British-American feminist Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, remains an influential ground-breaking study of white women and race, as the first feminist study to explore how race structures white women's lives. In her work, Frankenberg "begins exploring, mapping and examining the terrain of whiteness" (p. 1-2). Situated in California, Frankenberg conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews focused on racial life histories. Her study included thirty women of diverse backgrounds and statuses, with respect to age (20-93 years old), education, income, region, sexual and political orientation, marital status, and so forth. One of many unique aspects of Frankenberg's study is that all the participants shared interest and engagement in social and political activism (feminism and/or antiracism), and Frankenberg sought to explore the different ways they embody and live whiteness.

American critical race feminist sociologist France Winddance Twine (2010)'s work, *A White Side of Britain: Interracial Intimacy and Racial Literacy*, is also ground-breaking in that it is the most comprehensive study of white women in multiracial/cultural families. In her book, Twine draws on her longitudinal ethnographic study of white women and their family members in Leicester and London, England from 1995-2000. She resided in both locations for various periods of time over the course of the study and employed various qualitative methods: participant observation, archival and media research, semi-structured interviews, and photo-solicitation. Like Frankenberg, the women in her study were diverse in age (19-60), background, education, income,

socioeconomic class, and marital status. Her study is unique in that she repeated interviews with participants over the five-year period, which allowed her to analyze how ideas and positions on race and interracial relationships changed over time for the women and their family members. Her study is also distinct because she included multiple family members: the women's partners or former partners, black mothers and sisters-in law, and two maternal grandparents. She also interviewed a minority of transracial couples composed of white men of European descent and black women of Caribbean or African descent.

In her book, *White Femininity: Race, Gender & Power*, Canadian critical race feminist scholar Katerina Deliovsky (2010) explores what she calls the "habitus" of whiteness and white femininity within the Canadian historical context. She conducted semi-structured interviews with white women of northern and southern European descent. Her work is unique in that she interrogates the multiple, situated and complex meanings of white femininity within Canadian histories of colonialism and racism. She also explores how white women can employ agency and resistance in their relationships to colonial constructions of race and whiteness.

While Frankenberg (1993), Twine (2010), and Deliovsky (2010) examine significant themes in their work that have shaped my own study, there are no existing studies I am aware of that examine how Canadian political and social discourses of multiculturalism, nationalism, and immigration shape the lives of white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families consisting of first generation, non-white immigrant partners. Moreover, to the best of my knowledge there are no other Canadian studies of white women in transracial/cultural families that have been conducted outside of the province of Ontario, or that include a comparative analysis of two Canadian locations.¹⁴ I turn now to the key themes and issues I found in the literature on white women in multiracial/cultural families.

¹⁴ This may be attributed to the fact that 60.4% of the total national "black" populations reside in the province of Ontario (Chui, Tran, & Maheux, 2008).

Key themes and issues in the literature

First, existing studies illuminate **the unique positionality that white women of European descent occupy in transracial/cultural families with non-white partners**. In her article on white mothers, hybrid identities, and racial socialization, Carmen Luke (1994) refers to white women in multiracial families as “outsiders within,” who are “...socially coded by racial markers they do not embody and subject to racially inflected identity politics” (p.51). They remain marked as white, yet they are intimately connected to non-white bodies; their experiences and relationships with others are distinct from white mothers in monoracial relationships, but they do not experience racism in the same way that non-white women do. The “outsider within” status of a white woman in a multiracial family “characterizes the white woman’s everyday life, her ontological, social, and cultural orientation” (p.60), and informs her experience within her own natal family, community and culture, as well as that of her partner’s. In her work on white women in transracial families of African/Caribbean descent in the British context, Twine (2010) identifies white women in multiracial families as “transracial mothers”: “mothers who are socially classified as belonging to a racial group considered distinct from that of their birth children, [and] may be subjected to forms of surveillance, discipline, and moral censure usually restricted to women of color” (p.61). Twine draws on critical race theory to assert that white transracial mothers are in fact *transgressive* because they “challenge gender hierarchies and notions of racial difference that threaten to transform the racial status of their natal family” (p.61-62).

As the majority of studies highlight, a woman’s natal family is where she can experience the most overt forms of discrimination. **Disapproval and/or rejection by family members and friends is a predominant theme across studies** (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Luke, 1994; O’Donoghue, 2004, 2005; Twine, 2010; Verbian, 2013; Wilson, 2012). Forms of disapproval or rejection vary and exist on a continuum; the most commonly reported include: being kicked out of the family home, cut off from communication with the natal family, racist behaviours towards the woman’s partner and children, and absence of natal family members at ceremonies, such as weddings and births. Excommunication from the natal family was most prominent for women born prior to the 1970s. For instance, one of Twine’s (2010) participants who had her first child in 1970 was expelled from her natal home to later find out her father told people she was

killed in a car accident. Frankenberg (1993) writes that, “disowning attempts to resolve a perceived contradiction or impossibility—the tying together of two groups seen as utterly separate—by rejecting and symbolically ‘unwhitening’ the white family member” (p.104). A common notion across studies is that by entering into multiracial partnerships, especially with black men, white women are embarrassing, shaming, and staining the ‘purity’ of the white natal family (Deliovsky, 2010; Harman, 2010; Moon, 1999; Twine, 2010). In several studies (Deliovsky, 2010; Twine, 2010) these forms of rejection were consistent for women across family class backgrounds and education levels.

Studies consistently demonstrate that a woman’s father is the most likely individual from whom she and her children are estranged; and in some cases brothers also participate in white patriarchal rejection (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Gardwick & Byrd, 2006; Harman, 2010; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012). In several studies, participants report the threat or actualization of physical violence against women by male family members when women use “a sexual freedom of choice usually reserved for European men” (Deliovsky, 2010, p.66; Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012). The scrutiny placed on white women in multiracial relationships is not experienced in the same way by white men in multiracial partnerships. In her study, Twine (2010) found that white men did not face the same social punishment or familial rejection that white women experienced. This was a similar finding for Dalmage (2000), whose study also included white male and non-white female partners. She reported that white women were more policed than white men in their transgressions across colour lines, and while white women were highly influenced by and subjected to the penalties of anti-mixing discourses, white men used their white patriarchal power to “override” these penalties.

When racism and rejection are experienced by women and their multiracial families, this can lead to dissolution of familial (as well as friendship) relationships, and in turn what could have been significant social support networks (Britton, 2013; Dalmage, 2000; Harman, 2010; Luke, 1994). At the same time, an interesting theme across studies, including this one, is many participants’ hesitation to identify their natal family responses as “racist”; instead we see the thematic characterization of family disapproval and rejection as “ignorant” (Deliovsky, 2010; Garwick & Byrd, 2006; O’Donoghue, 2005). For instance, O’Donoghue (2005) found that with the exception of

one participant, all of the women in her study asserted their maternal parents were “not racist or prejudiced on the basis of verbal pronouncements of racial equality, which were, however never tested experientially, because there was no contact with other racial groups” (p.76). This thematic finding demonstrates the contradictions evident in liberal multicultural discourses of “tolerance” when women’s family members, who appeared to adhere to liberal multicultural “acceptance,” are now expressing overt forms of racism (Luke, 1994) (see chapter 6).

In many studies, women report that although natal families initially reject women’s pregnancies, the birth of a child can be a “turning point” in which familial relationships are reconciled (Dalmage, 2000; Deliovsky, 2010; Gardwick & Byrd, 2006; Harman, 2010; Twine, 2010). At the same time, Harman (2010) and Karis (2006) found that for couples who were accepted (or eventually accepted) by extended family, racialized dynamics persisted within their natal families (e.g., racial inferences, social alienation, and concern regarding public perception of the woman and her family). The ongoing negotiation of racial logics and discourses with natal family members is evident in this study with respect to dominant ideas about “Africa,” “Africans,” and racialized immigrants of colour (see chapters 6 and 7).

For white women in multiracial families, their new relationships to “difference” and to “otherness” have real implications on their lives and relationships with the white world; in fact, as some scholars argue, white mothers in multiracial families can no longer exist in the white world as they did before. In her autoethnography as a mother in a white American Jewish and Palestinian Muslim mixed family, Murad (2005) states that moving from imagining her daughters as mixed to imagining her family as mixed, which includes her as a mixed subject, was a profound conceptual shift for her. She posits that for white women in multiracial/cultural families, “her sense of self, her family, work, community relationships, and the politics of everyday life are circumscribed by discourse of culture, race, and racism, which are not always congruent with how she is visually perceived in the world” (p.490).

A central theme in existing studies is the disrupted notion of assumed, shared “white discourse” or “white speak” (Gallagher, 2000; Moon, 1999) (see chapter four). For

instance, in Dalmage's (2000) study of white women in multiracial families in the American context, she found that the negotiation of "white speak" became a central concern for her participants, who articulated a changing relationship to whiteness after becoming part of their multiracial/cultural families. One of Dalmage's participants reflected, "So you feel like you almost have to wear a button that says, 'I am not white.' I mean, obviously I know I'm white, but I'm not white" (p.120). This statement expresses a dis-identification with whiteness as an ideology, discourse, and public and social performance within the "white world" that participants in many studies problematize (Dalmage, 2000; Deliovsky, 2010; Luke, 1994; Murad, 2005; Twine, 2010).

In Luke's (1994) interviews with white mothers in multiracial families in Australia, Luke's participants asserted that white women with non-white partners were perceived by other white people as "less than white" (p.60). Luke also noted that some women reported feeling a greater association with their partner's culture than with their own culture, even though this association was based on a short-term connection versus their long-term socialization into "dominant white culture" (p.61). She argues that this can be easily explained by the fact that 'white culture' subjects a woman's partner and child(ren) to racism, and therefore does not represent a positive affiliation for her anymore. Luke posits that a white woman in a multiracial family's new positionality, based on her disassociation/alienation from white culture, and affiliation with her partner and children, "positions her as both 'not white' and 'not of color'" (p.61). This finding is also evident in Frankenberg's (1993) study, in which many women reported feeling more welcome and accepted by their partner's family of colour than by their white natal family. Similarly in their study of twenty multiracial/cultural families composed of "Caucasian 'white' Australian" and Indo-Asian partners in the Australian context, Luke and Luke (1998) argue that through their relationships with partners and family, participants in their study began to identify with 'them' instead of 'us.' They write that, "in this process these women reconstructed their identities and identifications from within the social locality of a cultural other ('them') which, in turn, resituated their own dominant Australian culture ('us') as the 'other of the other'" (p.748). We thus see that across studies women articulate a changed relationship to and identification with whiteness and blackness.

The scholarship on white women in multiracial families exemplifies the challenge that white women in multiracial/cultural families can pose to fixed constructions of race and difference. While white women may never have considered themselves as implicated in racial dynamics or questioned their whiteness and white privilege, we see that some, though certainly not all, women can go through new racial socialization processes, in light of their relational experiences with family members and other significant relationships. O'Donoghue (2004) writes, "in many ways, they seem to have become biracial themselves, members of Black and the White worlds, as defined by a rigidly defined and constructed society" (p.81). As women who "tiptoe around the edges of both existences" (p.81), white women in multiracial/cultural families can pose a threat to white supremacy by disrupting the separation between whiteness and blackness; they do so in part by challenging the very notion that whiteness has no colour (Luke, 1994). They also beg us to consider how we conceptualize what lies in between the binary separation of blackness and whiteness. Amongst many other things, these studies illuminate the complex, relational and fluid nature of identity, and the negotiation between individual and collective identifications (Dalmage, 2000; Karis, 2006, Luke & Luke, 1998). This scholarship makes clear the absence of a conceptual framework and vocabulary to understand the distinct subject positions that white women in transracial/cultural relationships occupy, and the need to examine how their "borderland" identities can be conceptualized within and beyond binaries of whiteness and blackness. If we are to resist and to move beyond racial ideologies, we require new language to do so (Dalmage, 2000; O'Donoghue, 2004, 2005).

A second theme in the limited literature is the unique experience white women of European descent in transracial families have with race and racism. Frankenberg (1993) argues that racism "rebounds" on white women in multiracial relationships, wherein it does not have the same level of impact as on her family of colour, yet has a distinctly different one. She writes, "it is safe to say both that the racism that rebounds on white women has spent some of its force in the original impact it made on their non-white partners *and* that white women nonetheless feel its impact" (p.112). Deliovsky (2002) refers to "stigma transference" in which the identities of white women in multiracial partnerships become "spoiled" due to the women's affiliation with partners of colour. White women in multiracial/cultural families thus experience racism

relationally; her movements between whiteness and blackness are framed in relational, emotional, and psychological conditions, which are determined by who she is with and where. Luke (1994) writes that when a white woman in a multiracial family is out by herself in the social world, she is seen as traditionally white, and her intimate relationship to non-whiteness is hidden/invisible; alternatively, when she is out in the social world with her family, she is associated with colour. She witnesses racism first-hand directed at those with whom she is in relationship, and she experiences it second-hand through the encounters of her partner and child(ren). Thematic across studies are the diverging experiences women have when they are alone versus when they are with their family members. Across studies, women report similar manifestations of racism, which include behaviours such as: staring, racial inferences, and the refusal of service in public and commercial spaces, and in interactions with societal institutions (see chapter 6 and 7) (Dalmage, 2000; Deliovsky, 2010; Essed, 1991; Luke, 1994; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012). 'Rebound racism' extends beyond women being empathetic to their husbands and families, for while the women's understanding and experiences of racism are relational, the material, psychological, financial, and psychical impacts of racism directly impact her also; for instance, if she and her partner are denied housing, turned down for a loan, or her partner is denied employment (Dalmage, 2000; Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993). As this study illuminates, the implications of racism are also mediated and exacerbated by dominant constructions of 'Africa' and 'Africans,' immigration, legal status, and country of origin, particularly for racialized non-citizens (see below and chapter 7).

Through their unique (and for many women, new) experiences of racism, white women in multiracial families can gain insight into the racialized society in which they live, though this is not automatic. A predominant theme in the literature, including this study, is that women gained greater racial consciousness after entering into multiracial relationships and families, especially after witnessing and experiencing racism first and second hand. In addition to "seeing" racism, Deliovsky (2010), like others (Dalmage, 2000; Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010), argues that for some participants in her study who experienced a significant shift in their racial consciousness, this would likely not have been possible without key individuals in their lives making their whiteness "visible" to them. This can include their partners, as well as other relationships across

differences; for instance, in several studies including Frankenberg (1993), some participants gained increased racial consciousness through their involvement in non-white communities prior to their multiracial relationships. Twine (2010) found that some women in her study developed racial consciousness through their political and social justice work as they began to better understand systems of oppression and cultivate relationships with people of colour. What is quite consistent across studies is that greater racial consciousness is linked to significant interpersonal relationships across racial differences. Across studies, women report experiencing the world in new ways, seeing through the eyes of their partner, and associating more strongly with their children's experiences as mixed than their own as monoracial (Dalmage, 2000; Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012).

Third, thematic across studies is the agentive role that white women in multiracial/cultural families *can* learn to play in negotiating and resisting racial ideologies (though once again this is not an inevitable result of being in a multiracial family). Through regular racialized interactions, white women in multiracial families can learn to navigate and negotiate “everyday racism” (Essed, 1991). In their qualitative study of black and white women in interracial white-black partnerships in the United States, Hill and Thomas (2000) discuss how women employed multiple approaches to resist racial inferences, such as staring and negative comments by strangers (see chapter 7). They report that women drew on counter-discursive strategies to reject racism, and assumed an educative role to disrupt racist discourses articulated by family, friends and strangers. For Luke (1994) as a white Canadian woman of European descent in a transracial/cultural family, navigating racialized dynamics has meant looking for places to live without her partner or with a ‘white decoy,’ and dealing with the educational system by herself. These kinds of negotiations are thematic across studies with educational (as well as health) systems identified as central sites of contention (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Harman, 2010; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012).

In Luke's (1994) study, she found that schools were key institutions in which women and their children negotiate racial dynamics. She found that the women in her study navigate a lot of “perception management” in their interactions with teachers and

school personnel, and that like her, women reported they strategically became “the public face of the family” because of their whiteness. Similarly, Twine and Steinbugler (2006) found that some women used their understanding of white privilege in strategic ways to access resources and forms of capital (social and otherwise) for their children and families. As Luke writes, these strategies can exclude the partner of colour from important social and public engagement and make them feel alienated and marginalized. In Harman’s (2010) study, the education system was also a central theme in her participant interviews. Many women were concerned about how teachers handled racism, which led some women to switch schools or homeschool their children, if they felt racism was not properly addressed by teachers and staff.¹⁵ Further, participants in multiple studies stated that they incorporate their own educational resources and practices, to address gaps in standard school curriculum, as well as send their children to supplementary schools to learn cultural knowledge and language skills; these schools include, “Saturday school” in Britain for children of Afro-Caribbean ancestry, and Maori schools for children in New Zealand (Harman, 2010; Robinson, 2001; Twine, 2010).

Fourth, existing scholarship illustrates **the need to examine competing and interlocking constructions of gender, sexuality, race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, marital status, and place** to conceptualize the subjectivities and experiences of white women in multiracial families. Many scholars note that when white women enter into relationships with non-white people (especially in the white female-black male relationship deeply rooted in the anti-miscegenation discourses of white supremacy), their sexuality, morality and rationality are questioned (Britton, 2013; Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Harman, 2010; Luke, 1994; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012). This takes place through overt statements, but often occurs through “innuendo, explicit questions, jokes” and insidiously through the ways women are treated, and the “feeling” they get from others (Luke, 1994, p.61). Through the process of transgressing fixed racial

¹⁵ It must be noted that such decisions are mediated by socioeconomic status and access to resources (e.g., employment flexibility, transportation, support people), which for single mothers of low socioeconomic status are particularly significant.

boundaries, white women become “unwhitened” (Frankenberg, 1993), as “the stigma of blackness that African men embody is symbolically transferred onto European women” (Deliovsky, 2010, p.65). As a result of this process, they become fixed with the meanings assigned to people of colour through processes of racialization (Dei, 2007; Deliovsky, 2010). Dalmage (2000) writes that white women in multiracial relationships are considered “aberrant, misguided white trash who are in this relationship solely for sex or rebellion” (p. 47). We see that language is strategically employed to surveil and control women, and that similar appellations of white women who transgress racial lines are thematic across studies, including: “white slut,” “n-lover,” and “whore” (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012) (see chapter 6).

We see that negative characterizations of white women in multiracial families are even more exacerbated when a woman has a child and is not legally married to the father (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Harman, 2010; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012). In Harman’s (2010) study of “lone white mothers” in the British context, one of her main findings is that in addition to racial discrimination against their children, women deal with their own stigmatization based on assumptions about their sexuality, morality and socioeconomic class, and their capacity as mothers of black multiracial children. Although these experiences of racialization may be relational and short-term, Harman found that they had a significant impact on the women. She suggests that the women’s white privilege is a “before factor,” wherein the benefits of whiteness they took for granted and that were invisible to them in their childhood and youth, are now “juxtaposed” to the racial discrimination and marginalization she and her family live with. Particularly in studies on “lone white mothers,” we see how discourses and experiences of racialization and racism are deeply mediated by socioeconomic class, social and geographic locations and marital status for white women in multiracial/cultural families. We also see how the surveillance and censorship women face is racialized, gendered and classed (Britton, 2013; Harman, 2013; Twine, 2010). For “lone white mothers” living in housing estates in England, many reported incidents of overt racism directed at themselves and their children (Britton, 2013; Harman, 2010; Twine, 2010). This included verbal harassment, and abusive physical, verbal and emotional behaviours. Britton (2013) writes that these new experiences of racism for white women, who may never have been aware of racism before, can create the opportunity for what she calls,

“moments of questioning” that can make whiteness visible (often in extreme and hostile ways) in the everyday spaces of women’s lives.

Fifth, perceptions of maternal (in)competence is a central theme in the existing scholarship. For white women in multiracial families, discourses of gender, race, class and sexuality become most acutely intertwined with constructions of motherhood when women become pregnant, as well as when they attempt to protect their children against racism (particularly contentious if coming from one’s own maternal family). Thematic in many studies is women’s control over their sexual and reproductive bodies (Deliovsky, 2010; Harman, 2013; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Across studies, participants report their parents, and sometimes friends, ‘suggesting’ or urging women to have an abortion when they became pregnant with a multiracial child. In Deliovsky’s (2010) study, the majority of her participants in multiracial relationships with men of African descent, were advised by their parents to terminate their pregnancies. In Twine’s (2010) study, she found that the dominant themes in participants’ narratives were struggles to have control over their bodies, reproductive rights and parenting rights to keep their children.

Hospitals (and also schools) are reported as key sites where white women in multiracial families experience dominant conceptions about their maternal (in)competence. In several studies, participants report the negative characterizations and assumptions that hospital staff made about them because they had children of mixed African descent, which include: assumptions that they were unmarried mothers, of low socioeconomic status, on welfare, sexually promiscuous, a threat to other married women, not breastfeeding, and/or abusive towards their children (Deliovsky, 2002; Harman, 2013; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Women across studies report being questioned about the maternal status of their child(ren), evidenced in questions such as: “where did you get her,” or “is he adopted?” In Dalmage’s (2000) study, she notes that several women were often asked if their children were adopted, which appeared to be a way to make sense of her maternal status as the mother of multiracial children. She contends that if middle-class women adopt their children, they could be seen as maintaining their “good white girl” status (p.115). She compares this to monoracial white couples who adopt interracially, noting that in this latter situation the colour line has not

been challenged, and as such a white woman can continue to be a “good white woman’ who hasn’t been polluted by interracial sex. *Within this context the adoption question becomes a racist comment [emphasis added]*” (p.116). In her study, Twine (2010) also reports the prevailing assumption that only working-class women would engage in interracial sexual intimacy with black men, and not “respectable” middle-class white women. This notion is based on racial ideologies and colonial constructions of white femininity, which “...position attractive and mentally stable, middle-class women as unlikely or unwilling to voluntarily engage in sexual activity that would have led to pregnancy by a black man” (Twine & Steinbugler, 2006, p.354).

When white women become part of multiracial families, they become responsible for the racial socialization of their children, although they have likely never built the experiential skills and embodied knowledge to address issues of race and racism in a white supremacist society (Bratter & King, 2008; Murad, 2005; Robinson, 2001). As I have stated, in existing literature on multiracial families and white women in multiracial families, there is a tendency to focus on the maternal (in)competence of white women, almost pathologizing their (in)ability to properly raise their mixed children. For instance, Robinson (2001) writes, “white women, who are not aware of themselves as racial beings within a ‘racialized’ world, may be compromised in their ability to provide their non-White children with important racial socialization skills and messages...” (p.172). While several scholars challenge this assumption (Deliovsky, 2010; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012), it is important to note that thematic across studies is concern by many women, including those who demonstrate racial consciousness, that they do not have the skills required to address racism that their children did or would encounter (Byrd & Gardwick, 2000; O’Donoghue, 2004; Robinson, 2001; Verbian, 2013).

At the same time, some studies illustrate that despite women’s concerns regarding their capacity to facilitate the racial socialization of their children, and prepare them with the skills required to live as multiracial individuals in a racist society, women can actively employ strategies and practices to support their children. Thematic across several studies is women’s active promotion of their children’s identification with blackness for fear that their children will face racism in white peer groups and communities, and to cultivate their skills to resist racism (Dalmage, 2000; O’Donoghue,

2005; Wilson, 2012; Twine, 2010). Twine (2006) writes that having their children identify politically and socially with black communities, can be imagined as an “anti-racist resource” to resist white supremacy, that transracial parents are using against the forms of alienation their children may feel. We also see that particularly for women with higher levels of racial consciousness, they report having regular and ongoing discussions about race with their children, so children can cultivate the language to understand and respond to racism (Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012) (see chapter 8). In her study, Wilson (2012) reported that all of her participants utilized the homeplace as a learning site for their children to understand and resist racism, and that building an “anti-racist vocabulary” (p.100) was a central way women supported the “equity training” of their children (p.98). Moreover, in numerous studies women state the significance of black-centric artifacts and resources to develop children’s positive self-identification and self-confidence (Dalmage, 2000; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2010). These few studies demonstrate the need to further examine white women in multiracial families as multifaceted subjects, who should not be narrowly defined as “heritage markers” of their children, but as potential political actors, who can shape and inform broader social change (Collins, 2000; Luke, 1994; Martin et al., 2007, Twine, 2010) (see chapter 8). This study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by exploring white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families as agentic subjects in their ongoing negotiation of intersecting discourses within the Canadian context, and in the creation of their own lives and practices within the diasporic spaces they can create with their families.

Sixth, existing studies exemplify the importance of geographic and social location on how white women in multiracial families navigate ideologies of race and difference. A predominant theme in the literature on white women in multiracial families is the importance women place on geographically locating their families in multiracial/cultural communities, and situating themselves in supportive multiracial/cultural social networks (Frankenberg, 1993; O’Donoghue, 2005; Twine, 2010). For example, participants in Twine’s (2010) study consistently identified living in inclusive and safe communities as a key priority for their transracial families. Similar to other studies, women also expressed the need for their families to be in communities with people of colour, as well as fear that their children would be vulnerable in mainly white communities (Dalmage, 2000; Harman, 2013; Luke, 1994; O’Donoghue, 2005).

Across studies, women report that they strategically avoid certain neighbourhoods due to racial discrimination or the threat thereof (Dalmage, 2013; Harman, 2013; Twine, 2010). These findings suggest that whiteness becomes visible to these women through space, as they no longer feel a sense of safety in “sameness” within monoracial white areas. In her study of multiracial families in the American context, Dalmage (2000) found that black neighbourhoods were relatively more accepting than white communities for multiracial families. Dalmage also found that children in multiracial families reported they faced higher levels of discrimination in white neighbourhoods and schools, than black and multiracial ones. For this reason, they urged parents in multiracial families to raise their children in racially mixed neighbourhoods.

Forming social support networks that include women of colour appears to be a consistent priority for women, especially single parents. This is exemplified in Harman’s (2013) study, in which she examines the diverse social support networks that “lone white mothers” form and their significance. She found that women’s female friends provided them with the most emotional and “practical” support. Participants noted the influential mentorship role that black female friends of Caribbean-descent provided them with respect to learning Caribbean culture and history, so the women could cultivate the racial and ethnic identity development of their children. Many children saw their father’s family, which the participants felt supported their children’s identity development and cultural affiliation, as well as their capacity to deal with racism.¹⁶ These kinds of social supports cannot be provided by women’s natal family members, and in fact women stated that, on the contrary, they had to negotiate racism within their natal families. Studies of “lone white mothers” indicate that although these women are considered single parents, they have comparatively larger and more diverse social support networks than middle-class women, which include women of colour and other white women with multiracial children. For some women, social networks dramatically change after they have their children, and they may strategically distance themselves from white

¹⁶ Harman cautions against the perpetuation of racial stereotypes regarding the status or the relationship of the father to the family, as she found a diverse range of relationships and engagement levels similar to any separated family.

communities, and end relationships due to racism (Harman, 2013; Twine, 2010; Twine & Steinbuglar, 2006).

We also see across studies that women participate in support groups and multiracial organizations (Britton, 2013; Dalmage, 2000; Harman, 2013; O'Donoghue, 2005). Harman (2013) found that the majority of her participants attend formal support groups for single parents of mixed families, which women report create opportunities for them to discuss relevant issues, build relationships, access resources, and improve their self-confidence. For other women who do not live in racially and ethnically diverse geographic locations, there was access to online forums of the same nature. Across studies, we see women creating supportive environments and relationships for them and their families (see chapters 7 & 8).

Seventh, existing studies demonstrate the significant influence that white women's partners of colour, and women of colour play in how white women in multiracial families conceptualize ideologies of difference, and how they "perform" cultural, ethnic, and linguistic practices. In O'Donoghue's (2005) study, all of her participants articulated the significant role their African American partner played in teaching them about their respective culture and ethnicity, and how to address issues of race and difference with their children. Similarly, Byrd and Gardwick (2006) found that women's partners of colour acted as a "teacher of race" in the home (p.30). We also see the influential role that black friends, sisters and mothers-in-law play as "othermothers" and role models, for the women's children and mentors for themselves. In particular, sisters and mothers-in-law appear to play a principal role in women's understandings of race and difference, and especially in their informal learning of cultural, ethnic, and linguistic practices (Luke, 1994; O'Donoghue, 2004, 2005; Twine, 2010). For instance, Twine notes that one quarter of her participants looked to black female role models and sought to parallel the practices of their sisters-in-law.¹⁷ We see that across studies, the

¹⁷ In Twine's (2010) interviews with black female family members of colour, she noted that the "ethnic conversion" of white female sisters-in-law was positively seen by women who accepted the relationship, and negatively valued by women who did not. The interpersonal dynamics between white women in multiracial families, and female and male family members of colour through marriage, is definitely an area that requires further inquiry.

partner's culture is dominant in the home (Luke, 1994; Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012) and women seek to acquire and perform various forms of what Twine (2010) terms, "ethnic capital." A new variation of cultural capital, ethnic capital includes, "cultural knowledge of a group's history, fluency in one's native language (e.g., the ability to speak patois), music, and cooking skills" (p. 149). These skills are appreciated within racial and ethnic minority groups, but considered "to be irrelevant, evidence of a refusal to assimilate, or even a liability or barrier to achievement" to the dominant group (p.148-49).

Luke's (1994) and Luke & Luke (1998)'s studies are distinct in the ways they address white women in multiracial/cultural families within diasporic immigrant communities in the Australian context. Both studies explore how women's gendered and cultural identities and affiliations can change if a partnership involves a first or second-generation immigrant. Luke (1994) writes that, women "undergo apprenticeships into the culture of their partners: learning new sets of values and cultural practices (dress, cooking, eating or holiday rituals), idioms, and often a new language" (p.61). Similar to other studies (Twine, 2010; Wilson, 2012), Luke found that women learned where and how to purchase cultural goods, and cook and prepare cultural foods, which were lessons informally taught by family members. Twine also found that women learned to cook cultural foods, as well as to perform cultural customs, which resulted in their navigation and interaction with the social world in new ways; including, their exploration into new commercial and social spaces (e.g., ethnic food shops to purchase specific goods for food preparation and hair care). She reports that participants, who identified most with their partner's ethnic and cultural community, dedicated themselves more to preparing authentic foods. This was a measure of their "ethnic capital" within their partner's family, and how they gained "respectability and acceptance." By mastering these practices, women can "position themselves as the cultural equivalents or 'clones' of black women in their extended families" (p.158).¹⁸ Luke & Luke (1998) found that some women in Vietnamese multiracial/cultural families learned to speak Vietnamese

¹⁸ It must be recognized that these are highly gendered forms of female labour, and as Luke (1994) and Luke & Luke (1998) discuss, gender norms and discourses vary culturally, and also transform in the relational spaces of multiracial/cultural families. Some women may find that the gender-based norms and practices of their partner's cultural world, and/or family, are in conflict with the values and norms of their cultural worlds (see chapter 8).

fluently, and began to take on new roles in the Vietnamese community, including acting as “public negotiators.”¹⁹ As these examples illustrate, women play a central role in the production of their children’s ethnic and cultural identities, which as I have mentioned, is a key concern both in literature on multiracial families and literature on white women in multiracial families. Just as significantly, the practices discussed above can also create opportunities for changes in the women’s own ethnic and cultural identities.

Summary

As illustrated, existing studies on white women in multiracial/cultural families provide insight into how women construct and negotiate ideologies of race and difference, the unique ways they are positioned and experience racism, and how their relationship to “whiteness” and “blackness” can be imagined. Findings from these studies urge us to further investigate these women and their families, and their relationships to race, difference, and whiteness, as situated in and shaped by specific social, economic, and political histories and spaces. Moreover, the present scholarship makes clear that we need to explicitly analyze how the experiences of these women, as mothers and beyond, can teach us as parents and educators, about how people come to learn difference, and how they can possibly transform their understandings in efforts for broader social and political change. In this research study, I aim to address gaps in the limited literature on white women in multiracial families. I now turn to a discussion regarding how my study will contribute to this emerging body of literature.

¹⁹ It is significant to note here that the presence of immediate and extended family members, as well as the proximity of cultural and ethnic diasporic communities, in which forms of “acculturation” take place, do not exist for all women, including women in this study. As such, it can be more challenging for women to gain “ethnic capital” when their partner’s family lives “back home”; instead, we see that women without distinct cultural communities build their own diverse social networks as discussed above (see chapter 7).

My contribution to the literature

First, this study is situated within the **Canadian context**, where there is still very limited scholarship on multiraciality, multiracial families, and especially white women in multiracial families (Deliovsky, 2010; Mahtani, 2014). As Canadian scholars note, we particularly require more work that explores the experiences and lives of white women of European descent in the Canadian context (Deliovsky, 2010; Verbian, 2006; Wilson, 2012). Although there is critical theoretical work related to race, gender and Canadian nationalism (e.g., Deliovsky, 2010; Dua, 1999; Razack, 1999; Razack, Smith, & Thobani, 2010; Thobani, 2007; Wane, Deliovsky, & Lawson, 2002), there are only a few studies that take up these issues in relation to white women in multiracial families (Deliovsky, 2010; and to a lesser extent: Verbian, 2013; Wilson; 2012). As each country has its own distinct race history and relations, I seek to contribute to the literature by providing a study in the Canadian context that directly explores the unique historical conditions of Canada's colonial history, and the ongoing political and social systems and processes that perpetuate race, class and gender-based inequities. As noted, the scholarship on white women in multiracial families is primarily concerned with the gendered role of women as primary caregivers for their children, and emphasis is placed on the mother-child relationship. While this is very significant, white women's subjectivities need to be unpacked further, to include how they are racialized, gendered, sexualized and classed within ideologies of difference, and how their subjectivities are constituted in relation to place. In this study, I analyze the distinct position of white women in multiracial families, principally informed by critical race feminisms (Collins, 2000; Dua, 1999, hooks, 1981, 1984, 1990; Wane, Deliovsky, & Lawson, 2002) (see chapter 3). I specifically examine how constructions of white femininity inform the situated subject positions of white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families, and implicate their bodies-symbolically, psychologically, materially and socially-within histories and processes of empire and nation-building (Carter, 1997; Thobani, 2007; Wane, Deliovsky, & Lawson, 2002; Ware, 1992). I also analyze the experiences of white women and their families in relation to Canadian political discourses of multiculturalism and nationalism, as well as political and popular discourses and bureaucratic processes of settlement and immigration. While we see scholars critically investigate various aspects of these discourses in relation to white women's experiences in multiracial/cultural families (e.g., Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg,

1993; Luke, 1994, 2003; Twine, 2010), we do not see issues of colonialism, nationalism, immigration and citizenship comprehensively unpacked within the lives of transracial/cultural families.

During my comprehensive literature reviews, I found that all of the existing Canadian studies are situated in the province of Ontario (Deliovsky, 2010; Wilson, 2003; Verbian, 2006); this limits our understanding of racialized space, and how location-geographic, social, cognitive-can shape women's conceptualizations and lived experiences of difference. In this study, I engage in a comparative analysis of two cities, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and Vancouver, British Columbia, divergent in: size, geographic location, demographic makeup, economic conditions, and political and social traditions. In these two distinct research sites, I further a spatial analysis or a "mapping" of the historical landscapes in which women were (and continue to be) socialized into *difference* (Goldberg, 1993; Razack, 1999). Throughout the study, I examine the similarities and distinctions of these spaces outside of Ontario, where significant demographic changes are taking place that need to be examined (see chapter 4).

Second, I explore white women in relationships with **new African immigrants** to Canada. Based on the literature reviews I conducted, I found no other study of white women in multiracial/cultural families, who are in relationships with first-generation immigrant partners (with the limited exception of Hamplova & Le Bourdais, 2010).²⁰ As I articulated above, much of the existing literature on multiracial families and white women in multiracial families assumes shared and fixed racial identities, representations and "cultures," and yet individuals are shaped by their own racial socialization processes and informed by the ideologies of difference in their respective countries and communities of origin. For example, South Africa, Rwanda, and Congo all have distinct colonial histories

²⁰ In their comparative statistical analysis of mixed unions in Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto, Hamplova and Le Bourdais (2010) examine couples in "white/non-white unions" using the 2001 Canadian census data. Although they chose persons born outside of Canada, they did not consider individuals who immigrated to Canada as adults, just those who immigrated before the age of seventeen. Moreover, their study narrowly addresses official statistical data, such as marriage patterns, and not the experiences and practices of people in mixed unions.

and politics of race and difference, which should not be essentialized. As more families interconnect across forms of difference, it is important to consider how situated ideologies of difference are negotiated within intimate personal relationships (see chapter 7). In this case, it is imperative to explore how immigrants to Canada bring their own “racialized systems and practices,” and how they are constructed within, and implicated in, Canadian histories and ongoing forms of colonialism and racism (Burton et al., 2010, p.445; Walcott, 1997).

There are circumstances faced by immigrants, (particularly immigrants of colour), that may not factor into other multiracial/cultural relationships when partners were born in the same country. Issues such as: obtaining work permits, residency, citizenship and credential recognition, as well as, accessing education, employment, and social services, can profoundly shape the lives of new immigrants and their families (Galabuzi, 2006; Okafor, 2009; Razack, 2010). This adds a greater level of complexity to the lives of the women and transracial families in this study, including how power dynamics play out between the couple, as families spend time and resources navigating a “racialized structure of citizenship” (Razack, 2010, p.89) (see chapter 7). In this study, I seek to bring forth some of the “counterstories” of migration and immigration that can remain hidden from dominant Canadian public discourse, in order to complicate Canadian discourses of multiculturalism and diversity, including the prevalent assumption of Canadian benevolence and ‘tolerance’ (Fleras, 2014; Thobani, 2007).

With processes of globalization, colonial conceptions of Africa continue to be challenged and African diasporas continue to grow (Mensah, 2014; Okpewho & Nzegwe, 2009; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). In Canada, African diasporic communities are increasing, and yet African immigrants are under-researched in the Canadian context (Mensah, 2014; Tettey & Puplampu; 2005). Examining the African diaspora and black African immigrants in particular, are significant ways to analyze colonial ideologies of difference, and how these ideologies form the basis of misconceptions about “Africa” and “Africans” (Mayer, 2002).

In this study, I consider how “Africa” and “Africans” are conceptualized within the colonial imagination and how these conceptualizations continue to inform popular

discourses of Africa today. I also examine how these colonial constructs interlock with other ideologies of difference and bureaucratic systems of delay to inform how African immigrants in Canada are imagined, and how these conceptions shape and control their lives, and the lives of their transracial/cultural families (see chapter 7). The experiences of the families herein implore us to explore African diasporas, and consider how to disrupt and complicate single stories to make space for the rich and multiple stories there are to tell (Adichie, 2009; Wainaina, 2005).

Third, as noted, studies on multiracial families do not generally address how white people experience race, or how racial socialization takes place for white people (Burton et al., 2010; Britton, 2013). In this study, I **critically interrogate whiteness**, in addition to racism—not just the latter, which we often see in the literature on multiracial families, and white women in multiracial families. In a significant amount of the literature, there appears to be emphasis on white women’s levels of racial consciousness and identification; yet, there has not been significant analysis on how micro-level individual white privileges are linked to macro-level historical and ideological conditions of white supremacy and colonialism (with the limited exception of Frankenberg, 1993 and Deliovsky, 2010). We also see that in existing research studies, whiteness and power are not explicitly examined *with* the research participants. Herein, I contribute to the literature on white women in multiracial families, critical whiteness studies, and antiracism scholarship by unpacking whiteness as part of the research process with my participants, as informed by antiracist pedagogies and research methodology (Okolie, 2005). I **complicate whiteness** and examine the relationship between whiteness and power by considering how women understand whiteness in relation to their own lives; I attempt to move beyond the analysis of individual white privilege to connect women’s experiences to broader structural conditions of white supremacy (see chapter 6). I analyze how multiple and complex notions of whiteness are situated within the specific conditions women and their families navigate, and how national, cultural, and ethnic identities mediate the women’s conceptions of and identifications with whiteness (see chapter 6). I also explore where white women in multiracial families fit into the reproduction and disruption of whiteness (see chapters 7 and 8).

Fourth, I explore how women in this study can be imagined as **agentive political and social actors within feminist and antiracist frameworks.** There are very few scholars (namely Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010), who analyze the experiences and practices of white women in multiracial families as a form of literacy, agency and empowerment. I wish to contribute to the small body of scholarship that explores how white women in multiracial families can participate in antiracist practices in the spaces of the home and community. In my literature reviews, I found no other existing studies on white women in multiracial/cultural families that explicitly address antiracism pedagogy and practice in depth, or in which antiracism theory, pedagogy, and methodology informed the research process. I drew on antiracism pedagogies and methodologies throughout this study, which includes how I facilitated the group workshop discussions and textual engagement (see chapter 4). Moreover, I discuss how women's gendered labour in the home and community environments can be part of larger social and political change, including specific insights and recommendations from the research process and study findings that have direct implications for antiracism pedagogy and praxis (see chapter 8).

Fifth, I wish to contribute to **the reconceptualization and expansion of existing conceptual and linguistic frameworks of "difference."** As noted above, literature on multiracial/cultural families, and white women in multiracial families, continues to employ traditional binary concepts of difference, which limit our ability to imagine, "multiplicities, hybridity, and context" of transracial/cultural families (Murad, 2005, p.481). Transracial/cultural families allow us to unpack and imagine beyond current conceptions of race, difference, and identity. As Luke & Luke (1998) argue, there still is no "...politically sensitive yet subversive, analytically powerful and practically enabling vocabulary with which to analyse and describe the relational differences that make a difference for persons, and social formations of multiple racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds" (p.750). I hope this study can contribute to the development of new theoretical frameworks, and "politically sensitive yet subversive" vocabulary to imagine how new transgressive ethnicities and identities can be conceived. I do this by exploring and challenging the learning processes through which we come to understand "otherness" in my analysis of the women's early and ongoing socialization as "good white girls" (Moon, 1999), and as adults who transgress colour lines (see chapters 6 and

7). While all academic researchers may be implicated in reproducing oppressive racial binaries to varying extents,²¹ in this study, I move beyond the hyperfocus on individual racial identification, and dominant framings of difference as negative, deficient, and challenging, which continue to permeate much of the literature. I have chosen to identify these families as *transracial/cultural* families and the spaces in which they live as *diasporic* spaces (Brah, 1996) to expand discursive and conceptual ways to imagine bodies and spaces across differences, something I contend is necessary to consider for the future of diverse western states (Essed, 2007; Luke & Luke, 1998).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have highlighted the key themes and considerations in the literature on multiracial families, and white women of European descent in multiracial families. As I discuss above, there are numerous similarities between the two bodies of literature, wherein we see a focus on official racial classifications and individual racial identity development, grounded in traditional paradigms. We see that much of the existing scholarship in both areas is situated within the American and British contexts, reflecting the racial histories and logics of those states. I bring forth the gaps and spaces for further inquiry in research studies on multiracial families and white women in multiracial families, and assert ways in which my research study can make significant contributions to existing scholarship. In chapter three, I will provide an in-depth discussion of the theoretical frameworks and specific scholarship that informed my study and continues to inspire my work.

²¹ Frankenberg (1993) articulates this struggle in the following statement:

I am uncomfortable with the term 'mixed' in relation to race, because it seems to found notions of racial identity on terms that are not only biological rather than social, political, or historical, but also simplistically biological. However, I am at a loss to think of an adequate alternative. (p.126)

Chapter 3. Theoretical Frameworks

Introduction

As I moved through the analysis of my research data on white Euro-Canadian women's experiences and practices, I realized that it was not enough to examine the women's subjectivities and understandings of racial ideologies. My theoretical grounding shifted, and it became clear to me that I had to first interrogate whiteness-in definition, in manifestation, and in situation to broader ideologies and conditions-in order to make whiteness visible. To address the reproduction and potential disruption of ideologies of race and difference, I had to draw on scholarship that names and challenges whiteness and white supremacy, as central to these ideologies. Although I was committed to not center whiteness in the study, I realized that in order to *decenter* whiteness, I had to examine it. I had to complicate it, unpack it, and analyze how whiteness, and the historical construction of white femininity in particular, created the foundation upon which the participants understand, experience, and are positioned in the social worlds they grew up in, and the new ones they are actively creating in their adult lives. I had to denaturalize their whiteness, I had to understand not just who they were in relation to their partners and children in this present situated moment, but who they have historically been as gendered, sexualized, classed, and raced bodies within histories of empire: in colonial homesteads in Jamaica and Fiji, on southern plantations in the United States, and on the western prairies of Canada. I had to undertake an analysis of racism within the larger structure and operation of white supremacy, to even imagine what role these women could play in antiracism struggles.

I needed to resist the hegemonic western liberal paradigms that falsely isolate social and ideological constructions, such as gender and race. This involves interlocking analyses that force us to confront the complex and messy historical and present-day conditions that perpetuate white supremacy, and that situate and implicate individuals,

including myself and the women in this study, in its rituals (Deliovsky, 2010; Moon, 1999). I had to use conceptual frameworks that did not take individual liberal or western scientific paradigms for granted, but historicize, trouble, and seek ways through theory and praxis to push against white supremacy. I had to draw on scholars, who privilege multiple ways of knowing and other epistemologies, in the belief that thinking outside of rigid western knowledge systems is the basis for *real* change (not the “rational” self-absorbed, individualistic kind of change) (Armstrong & Ng, 2005; hooks, 1990, 1995; Dua, 1999). I needed to ensure that “other” voices—the voices and knowledges of non-white and white antiracist and feminist scholars and activists—guided my research and learning. I too required scholars and activists, who would write it “like it is” and “call out” whiteness and white people; scholars such as: bell hooks, George Dei, Sherene Razack, Himani Bannerji, Enakshi Dua, and Gurpreet Singh Johal. I needed (and continue to need) to feel *uncomfortable* and disrupted, because this research journey has been a learning process, during which I have been taught so much by the scholars, who have shared their wisdom and opened their minds, especially in that hope for *real* change. In this chapter, I will provide an overview and discussion of whiteness studies, critical race feminisms, and antiracism, the three theoretical frameworks that have informed and enriched my study and my thinking.

Whiteness Studies

History: The examination of whiteness is not new

Although the last several decades have seen an emergence in studies of whiteness across disciplines (e.g., feminism, critical race theory, cultural studies, history, postcolonial work, multicultural education), the examination of whiteness is not new; in fact, scholars of colour have been analyzing whiteness for over a hundred years (Deliovsky, 2010; Doane, 2003; Twine & Gallagher, 2008). This is evident in the works of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs in the 1800s, WEB DuBois in the early 1900s, and Gayatri Spivak in the 1980s. While whiteness has always been visible to and studied by negatively racialized peoples, the rise of modern whiteness studies grew from contentions in the feminist movement during the 1980s, when feminists of colour challenged white feminists to “gaze inward” (Najmi & Srikanth, 2002). During this period,

considered the “second wave” of whiteness studies, important works by critical race theorists and feminist scholars, including Theodore Allen’s *The Invention of the White Race* (1994), Omi and Winant’s *Racial Formations in the United States* (1994), and Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark* (1992), exposed the invisibility of white supremacy and racism (Johnson, 1999; Twine & Gallagher, 2008). There was also important work on whiteness and gender, including: Frankenberg’s (1993) *White Women and Race*, Ware’s *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History* (1992), Sharpe’s *Allegories of Empire* (1993), and Blee’s (1991) *Women of the Klan* (Najmi & Srikanth, 2002; Johnson, 1999; Twine & Gallagher, 2008).

The renewed interest in whiteness studies can also be attributed to several other variables. First, the popularity of whiteness studies reflects academic struggles over knowledge creation and control (Deliofsky, 2010). Relative to “other” populations, such as Indigenous peoples who have been “studied to death” (Smith, 1999), white peoples of European descent have controlled knowledge production, and maintained ideological control through the study of “others,” while hiding themselves from the scrutiny of the western imperial gaze. Scholars such as bell hooks (1994), challenge white scholars to start critically analyzing their own cultural and racial positions. As white supremacy directly privileges white people, it can arguably be “paradoxical” for white scholars to engage in analysis of such a system. To this effect, Doane (2003) contends that whiteness studies allows white people to analyze issues of race and ethnicity for which they can “claim authenticity and expertise” (p.5). He further questions whether “the rapid growth of ‘whiteness studies’ may also reflect the individual and collective self-interest of white researchers-an attempt to retain a grip on the mainstream of the study of race and ethnic relations” (p.6). While this skepticism is arguably warranted and shared by others, “there are also tremendous risks in not critically engaging whiteness” (Frankenberg, 1997, p.1). It is thus imperative to approach whiteness studies with caution, critical consciousness, and most importantly clear recognition of the scholars of colour who did and continue to do formative work in this field (Deliofsky, 2010).

Second, Nakayama and Martin (1999) note that the growth of multicultural and globalization discourses have also impacted the interest in whiteness studies. With the rise of immigration from “non-traditional” source countries to Canada, demographic shifts

are taking place, particularly in large urban centres (e.g., Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver), and growing small-middle urban centres (e.g., Saskatoon, Calgary). As a result, “visible minority” populations now make up a significant portion of the overall Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2013). As Deliovsky writes, “these current and projected demographic transformations in North America have resulted in European descent populations experiencing their ‘whiteness’” (p.17). These experiences of recognizing whiteness and being forced to see whiteness in relation to non-whiteness are evident in the dominant social, political, and economic issues I address in later chapters, which are currently playing out in the Canadian socio-political context (and beyond), such as: urban gentrification, school curriculum debates, and immigration and foreign policies. The increasing visibility of whiteness also relates to what some identify as a growing “crisis of whiteness” (Doane, 2003) or “white angst” (Andersen, 2003) (see below and in further chapters).

Approaches: The historical and the experiential

Stazewich (2007) identifies two main approaches to whiteness studies: “the historical” and “the experiential” (p.67). In the historical approach, whiteness is conceptualized as “an identity claim,” while for the latter, whiteness is considered “an objective condition” that structures the lives, perspectives, and cultural worlds of white people of European descent (p.81). The historical approach involves studies regarding how whiteness has been negotiated by various groups throughout history to demonstrate that whiteness is historically situated and fluid. For instance, we see this in reference to the “whitening” or ‘making white’ of various European immigrant groups as they assimilated into Canadian and American societies (e.g., Irish, Italians, Jews and so forth). The category of white has thus shifted during different historical periods, suggesting that “it is historically inaccurate to apply the concept of whiteness to all people of European ancestry uncritically, collectively, and trans-historically” (Stazewich, p.67). In fact, although ethnic and cultural groups, such as Jewish and Irish peoples were considered “inferior” to Anglo-Saxons, they “came to be white” in part by positioning themselves as more white, and thus more “superior” to “non-white” peoples (e.g., Africans, Chinese and Indigenous peoples) (Deliovsky, 2010). Whiteness then is in part a form of “positional superiority,” in which those European peoples of different ethnic

and cultural backgrounds imagined and constructed as white, gained material resources denied to those constructed as “non-white” (Said, 1978). Perhaps one of the greatest manifestations of material power is property ownership, as claims to whiteness governed “who could *own property* and who would *be property* [original emphasis]” (Deliofsky, p.19). Access to whiteness also determined who had (and has) access to other “privileges” of citizenship, such as: voting, education, financing, housing and quality employment. This racial classification system was central to colonial nation-building and the development of modern capitalism (Backhouse, 1999; Deliofsky, 2010; Goldberg, 1993; Mills, 2003; Thobani, 2007).

The experiential approach to whiteness studies is grounded in feminist theory, anticolonialism, and antiracism activism and scholarship. In this approach, focus is on “whiteness as an objective condition of a group of human beings that needs to be acknowledged, studied, and overcome” (Satzewich, 2007, p.68). We see the development of studies, which examine the attitudes of white people and focus predominantly on individual forms of prejudice. Empirical methods include: narrative, autobiography and textual analysis (Andersen, 2003). Fighting racism (in scholarship and in social action) involves making whiteness *visible* and increasing white people’s understanding of white privilege (Doane, 2003; McKinney & Feagin, 2003).

Scholars debate the invisibility of or unmarked nature of whiteness. Some have come to reject the notion that whiteness is in fact invisible. For instance, Frankenberg (2001) argues, “the more one scrutinizes it, however, the more the notion of whiteness as unmarked norm is revealed to be a mirage or indeed, to put it even more strongly, a white delusion” (p.73). Throughout history the “socially constructed invisibility of whiteness” has been anxiously guarded to ensure that white supremacy remains undisrupted. This has in effect “protected” white people and practices of white supremacy from analysis and scrutiny (Deliofsky, 2010; Smith, 1999). In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison (1992) writes, “my project is an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served” (p.90). As noted above, for writers of colour such as Morrison, the visibility of whiteness has always been clear. Yet even for white people, whiteness can be both visible and invisible. One of many key questions to

contend with in whiteness studies is how does whiteness become marked or unmarked? To understand this, we need to examine how representations of whiteness have been articulated throughout time. Within colonial ideology, whiteness is definitely marked; it is bounded and violently protected. Within present-day white supremacist ideology, domination is maintained through covert means, and yet is whiteness ever unmarked entirely, or “rather that the daily, aggressive marking of whiteness as a property of ‘white’ privilege has become unnecessary” (Deliofsky, 2010, p.39)? How can whiteness *become* visible? Making whiteness visible to those who have been socialized not to see it is central to whiteness studies, and once in sight whiteness needs to be interrogated “beyond its immediate visible manifestations” (Najmi & Srikanth, 2002, p.13).

Key concepts: Defining whiteness, culture, and white supremacy

Like the social or ideological construction of race, there are multiple ways to conceptualize and to examine whiteness in empirical research. This has arguably been a key contention in the field of whiteness studies, as some argue this can create confusion and pose challenges to conducting sound empirical research on whiteness (Wander, Martin & Nakayama, 1999). In my analysis, I draw primarily on Frankenberg’s (1993) and Deliofsky’s (2010) conceptualizations of whiteness, and Frankenberg’s analysis of culture. Both of these scholars recognise whiteness as an identity and performance at the individual level, and connect whiteness to structural power and domination, to demonstrate how the individual and structural relations and conditions of whiteness intersect and reproduce inequitable power relations. Frankenberg conceptualizes whiteness as “a set of linked dimensions.” Whiteness is simultaneously “a location of structural advantage,” a “standpoint,” and “a set of cultural practices” (p.1). She writes that, “whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced, and moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination” (p.6). By addressing whiteness and power, we recognize that all people are racialized and implicated in systems of racial oppression. Further to this, Frankenberg contends that conceiving of whiteness as a visible cultural practice calls out the “I have no culture” and “race has nothing to do with me” claims that white people employ (p.233-34; Luke & Luke, 1998).

Frankenberg (1993) identifies two predominant ways 'culture' is conceptualized. First is the prevailing notion of culture, grounded in European colonial thought, in which cultures are fixed, bounded, knowable, and "separate from material life" (p.192). Within this framing, which informs current liberal multicultural discourses (see 'antiracism' in this chapter), some groups are considered to have more 'culture' than other groups. It is within this logic that 'white culture' is imagined and that beliefs such as "I have no culture" can be articulated (p.191-92). Another way to imagine culture is to consider 'culture as practice,' which is a more fluid and integrated conception. Within this framing, conceptualizations of culture can change with new life experiences and exposure to new ways of knowing and being. Culture is not a static object, but rather it is a process connected to all aspects of life. Frankenberg argues, we need an expanded definition of culture beyond this binary to imagine culture as, "a mode of organizing daily life and worldview; culture as inseparable from material life; and "bounded" cultures as, in fact, continually functioning 'in and against' the dominant culture itself" (p.206). I am informed by this broader notion of culture for it allows us to imagine that everyone is socialized into cultural processes, and one cannot be "cultureless." Moreover, it makes clear that such processes are directly intertwined with material conditions and relations. This draws our attention to "the social and political contexts in which, like race privilege, white cultural practices mark out a normative space and set of identities, which those who inhabit them, however, frequently cannot see or name" (p.192). Throughout the study, participants' frequently referenced 'culture' by the first definition as fixed, bounded, and knowable. We also see the participants struggle with ideas of 'culture' as they discuss their experiences and changing conceptualizations (see findings chapters).

Deliofsky (2010) explains four forms of whiteness: "whiteness as positional superiority; whiteness as an ideological and relational category crosscut by gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality; and whiteness as an 'un/marked' category" (p.19). Whiteness is a socially constructed imagined 'race' of European peoples of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and "being white" has functioned and continues to function, "as a political, cultural and psychological fiction used to exploit and oppress groups of people not defined as 'white' for the mass accumulation of wealth, power and psychological advantage" (p.20). Whiteness can be used as a conceptual map to name and examine the relationships between socially constructed reality and everyday

experience, and societal structures and colonial ideologies, in order to understand how whiteness and racism function to produce and sustain white supremacy (Deliofsky, 2010).

To conceptualize white supremacy I draw on Charles Mills's (2003) definition. Mills' argues that we need to recover the concept of white supremacy, which has often been conceived as "formal, juridico-political domination" (p.36), such as the social and economic systems of slavery and apartheid. He contends that the first step to this reclamation is to recognize that unequal power dynamics of these systems go far beyond their actual implementation. The concept of white supremacy must be expanded to include its current *de facto* status, evident in the racialized nation-building of 'the west,' and in the ongoing forms of global economic, military, political, and cultural domination by western states and elites.²² While debates continue over the origin of racism, Mills argues that, "white supremacy as a system, or set of systems, clearly comes into existence through European expansionism and the imposition of European rule through settlement and colonialism on Aboriginal and imported slave populations..." (p.38). He defines white supremacy as, "a multidimensional system of domination...extending to white domination in economic, cultural, cognitive-evaluative, somatic, and in a sense even 'metaphysical' spheres" (p.42). Mills also notes that different conceptualizations of white supremacy have always been evident in resistant black intellectual thought (e.g., black power movement, in the words of Malcolm X and David Walker).

In *Killing Rage*, bell hooks (1995) reflects on when she realized racism was not a sufficient concept to name the systemic oppression of people of colour. For hooks, the concept of white supremacy addresses both ideology and human behaviour; it could best explain how women, who considered themselves liberal feminists and non-racist,

²² These ongoing colonial dynamics are something I briefly discuss as part of my findings, particularly in relation to international development theories and practices in Africa. We also witness how the ideologies of white supremacy and colonialism shape dominant discourses about Africa and Africans, evident in the women's discussions. Moreover, we see that it is the very dynamics of white supremacy and colonialism that create conditions in which it is necessary to migrate for livelihood and security, which is why the women in this study met their partners in the diasporic context (see chapter 7).

could seek to control and dominate women of colour.²³ In other words, white supremacy identifies, “the ideology that most determines how white people in this society (irrespective of their political leanings to the right or left) perceive and relate to black people and other people of color” (p.185). Like hooks, it was clear as I engaged in scholarly work and moved through my data analysis that to address whiteness and racism was not sufficient; instead, I had to examine how the participants in the study, even those who grew up in white ‘tolerant’ liberal homes, could not see race and naturalized the inequitable and oppressive racial conditions they were socialized into. I had to consider how the participants, even those committed to principles of social justice and antiracism, continue to reproduce racial ideologies, and had not considered how their own whiteness functioned to provide them unearned privileges in everyday life. By employing the concept of white supremacy we can interrogate ideology *and* behaviour (hooks, 1995). It is clear that, “*white supremacy* needs to be taken as a theoretical object in its own right, a global social system comparable in current significance, though not historical age, to Marx’s *class society* and feminist thinkers’ *patriarchy* [original emphasis]” (Mills, 2003, p.36). When we recognize white supremacy as “a global social system,” we can begin to understand how it functions and how to transform it (hooks, 1995; Mills, 2003).

Key issues

By turning the gaze on white people, whiteness studies offers significant and potentially transformative research on the nature of whiteness and white supremacy. Still, it appears that many scholars advocate a ‘proceed with caution’ approach to the study of whiteness, and express distinct concerns and strong recommendations regarding the future of whiteness studies. First, scholars caution against **the**

²³ Please note that I use the term ‘women of colour’ to signify all women who are negatively racialized within a white supremacist patriarchal society in binary opposition to white men and women. I state that they are *negatively* racialized because white women and men are also racialized; they too “have colour,” yet within a white supremacist society, this colour is still dominantly considered “colourless” and of positive association in relation to blackness. As a result, white and non-white bodies occupy different positions within Canadian society in inequitable and oppressive relation to one another (Deliovsky, 2010; Kitossa, 2002). It is necessary to state that ‘women of colour’ and other terms are contentious and risk essentializing women, their multiple identities, and interlocking experiences of oppression. As a result, critical race feminist scholars take up a multitude of different terms to identify ‘women of colour’ (see below).

essentialization of whiteness and the self-indulgence of whiteness studies.

Satzewich (2007) contends that when put together, the historical and experiential approaches to whiteness have the potential to disrupt whiteness, and yet such approaches can also create new kinds of essentialization. More empirical research on white people has enabled the unpacking of assumed white identities and norms through the exploration of intersectional identities, relating to ethnicity, class, sexuality, gender and more (Johnson, 1999). Complicating essentialized white identities is necessary, and clearly other social and ideological constructions intersect with whiteness and mediate white power (Najmi and Srikanth, 2002). Further, Apple (1998) and others caution that whiteness studies should not be a place for white scholars to recenter themselves. To ensure that whiteness studies does not become “entirely self-reflexive,” Najmi and Srikanth (2002) assert, “the crucial role of ‘non-white’ voices” in whiteness studies, and the need for whiteness studies to remain challenged and ‘complicated’” (p.1).

Second, scholars note the problematic tendency of “**ethnicizing whiteness**” - the strategy employed to defend and deflect from white privilege by making claims to the discrimination, prejudice and “reverse racism” that different ethnic and cultural groups have faced throughout history (Najmi & Srikanth, 2002). In his work, Gallagher (2003) found that while many of his white participants were long removed from their ethnic and cultural backgrounds through generations of assimilation into American mainstream white society, their narratives of immigration held multiple forms of value for them. Even basic information about familial immigration histories created identities of white victimization for later generations. These stories were also utilized as forms of justification and defense against implication and responsibility in systems of white supremacy. Such assertions presume everyone has faced discrimination in the past and hard work will change the relative socioeconomic conditions of all oppressed groups. If racial oppression is considered to exist “in the past” (e.g., slavery, apartheid, residential schools), then white people may feel it is not “their fault” and they are being unjustly blamed and victimized (Doane, 2003). In the Canadian context, this is evident in dominant anti-Aboriginal racial ideologies which urge Indigenous peoples to “get over it.” The tendency to “ethnicize whiteness,” and the predominant notion that racial oppression existed in the past, results in the conclusion that the dominant white society is not responsible for reparation and reconciliation.

The manifestation of “playing the white ethnic card” (Gallagher, 2003), or “white victimacy” evident in immigration narratives of the historical past, is now reflected in new iterations of the present as demographic, social and political changes in western societies create the perception that a majority white population shall soon be a reality of the past. This reflects what scholars are calling “white angst” or a “crisis of whiteness” (Doane, 2003; Myers, 2003). It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore whiteness for multiple reasons, including the fact that ethnic identifications amongst white people are based on distant lineages, and thus represent “more of a descent category than a meaningful social identity” (Doane, 2003, p.15). As a result, Doane argues that, “this has created a sense of ‘hollowness’ of identity among white Americans, especially when contrasted with the assertion of cultural uniqueness by peoples of colour...thus the crisis of whiteness has political, cultural, and sociopsychological dimensions” (p.15). An implication of this crisis is resistance against remedial policies and actions, such as: affirmative action, multicultural policies and open immigration. While this crisis of whiteness is rooted in history, in which white supremacy has taken many overt and covert forms, this present epoch is defined by “a process of ‘outing’ whiteness, exposing the contradictions in past constructions of whiteness and making it more difficult to sustain ‘white’ as a default identity in contrast to a racial ‘other’” (p.16). This recent formation of whiteness can be characterized as contradictory for we witness whiteness once again as both visible and invisible. If this period is indeed characterized by “outing” whiteness, then white people can respond by acknowledging their white privilege, or they can search for new means to maintain white supremacy.

Many scholars write that it is necessary to **expand existing definitions of whiteness, and to examine the relationship between the individual and the structural.** Multiple conceptualizations of whiteness (e.g., identity, experience, ideology, institution) can make it challenging to conduct empirical research (Andersen, 2003). Whiteness must be examined in relation to racism, which firstly involves expanding the theoretical and analytic conceptualizations of whiteness to consider how immigration, globalization, and multiraciality impact constructions of whiteness. Second, more empirical studies of how whiteness informs daily discourses, practices, and life decisions is needed, as well as how racial ideologies are reproduced through generations (Doane, 2003), and how inequitable race relations come to be naturalized (Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

Within whiteness studies, particularly in the experiential approach, there has been a lot of attention on individual white privilege and micro level racial dynamics, while there is limited work on making linkages between individuals and structural institutions (Andersen, 2003; Doane, 2003). There has been criticism that white scholars in whiteness studies have focused on the “pathology of racist individuals” and not on structures of reproduction (Twine & Gallagher, 2008). Focus is on pedagogies to “unlearn” racism, working from the premise that individuals can become “unracist” through educative processes (we see this as a critique in antiracism discourse as well). Focus must also be at the structural level to analyze the role of the “neutral state” and the economy in perpetuating white supremacy, in part through “colour-blind ideologies” and practices (Doane, 2003). Whiteness studies must address relations of power, examine whiteness and white identity in relation to negatively racialized peoples, and ensure that focus remains on racism (Andersen, 2003). Moreover, analyses of whiteness and white supremacy must be historicized and contextualized, as well as linked to power and biological constructions of race.

As whiteness travels across time and space it manifests and exists in multiple local and global contexts. Acknowledgement of the relationship between white supremacy, space and place can generate more complex analyses of the nature and reproduction of whiteness (Shome, 2003). For instance, several scholars note the importance of distinguishing between the American and Canadian contexts. Satzewich (2007) warns that we must consider Canada separately from the United States, as their respective histories (and historical memories) of slavery and colonization differ. He argues that, “...racialized othering was central to the formation of Canada...but racial otherness was complicated. Sometimes it was constructed around skin colour and biological superiority; at other times it was constructed around language, religion, and culture” (p.72). Such analyses also allow for the study of whiteness beyond identification, performance and relationality, to the study of whiteness as power and domination. As many argue, the analysis of power must remain central to whiteness studies (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Deliovsky, 2010).

Clearly whiteness as power can be invoked in multiple contradictory ways, including the enactment of “liberal whiteness,” part of the dominant “colour-blind

ideology” that pervades our present historical period (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). To this effect, scholars also urge for more studies that examine **how liberal whiteness reproduces white supremacy, and studies that connect whiteness to antiracism**. Bonilla-Silva contends that, “new racism” or “color blind racial ideology” is characterized as more insidious and evasive than previous iterations of racial ideologies, and yet “it is as effective as slavery and Jim Crow in maintaining the racial status quo” (p.272). “Color-blind racial ideology” upholds conditions of inequity, and perpetuates ‘subtle’ forms of discrimination and oppression by “simultaneously denying and reinforcing racial boundaries” (Doane, 2003, p.9). Myers (2003) notes that a result of “white fright” or the crises of whiteness described above, is that white people engage in strategies of surveillance and dehumanization of people of colour as a means to maintain control. They also perpetuate white supremacy through everyday race talk, which can be more difficult to capture as people claim ‘non-racist’ or ‘antiracist’ perspectives, and then behave very divergently in private and ‘safe’ settings. Doane and Bonilla-Silva (2003) contend that whiteness studies has significance as long as it can address the systemic nature of oppression, and how “color blindness” is central to the perpetuation of inequity. These connections can allow for greater insight into the relationship between whiteness and antiracism, and the possible development of “antiracist forms of whiteness” (Frankenberg, 1993, p.7). Unfortunately, there is limited empirical research on white antiracist activists and how white racial identities are formed (O’Brien, 2003), but new work is emerging that explores how people make shifts from white supremacist ideologies to antiracist ones. Whiteness studies can offer a space for white people who seek to align themselves with progressive social change “in absence of a visible, antiracist, multiracial movement” (Andersen, 2003, p.24).

The ‘third wave’ and the future

Twine and Gallagher (2008) identify recent scholarship as a “third wave” in whiteness studies, which expands on previous work in distinct ways, and offers promise for the future of whiteness studies. First, the most recent scholarship expands beyond individual accounts of whiteness and white identity, to explorations of how whiteness functions at structural levels within institutions to maintain the invisibility and power of whiteness. Second, whiteness is being explored as localized and situated to analyze

“the nuanced and locally specific ways in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented...” (p.3). Twine and Gallagher note that rather than constituting “a static, uniform category of social identification” (p.6), in third wave whiteness studies whiteness is conceptualized “as a multiplicity of identities that are historically grounded, class specific, politically manipulated and gendered social locations that inhabit local custom and national sentiments within the context of the new ‘global village’” (p.6). Multiple methodologies are employed in third wave whiteness studies to examine how whiteness functions in everyday life and in mainstream cultural reproduction (e.g., the internet, media, biography and music). Most importantly, third wave whiteness studies is responding to the changing “cartography of whiteness” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) in “post-apartheid, postindustrial, post-imperial, post-Civil Rights” environments (Twine & Gallagher, p. 13).

Bonilla-Silva (2003) considers how the “cartography of whiteness” will transform in the future. She argues that the United States will increasingly reflect Latin America with a “triracial system” or skin colour hierarchy comprised of “whites,” “honorary whites” (like “coloureds” in South Africa), and “collective black” (p.278). The anticipated development of a “triracial system” will have multiple consequences, including: changes to definitions of what and who constitutes whiteness/white (similar to previous historical changes with the integration of Irish and Jewish peoples for instance); the possibility that whiteness will become “darker” and incorporate the growing populations of multiracial peoples; shifts in existing ethnic identities; and growth in the category of “honorary whites” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). As scholars consider the future of societies, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, **it is clear that whiteness studies must begin to interrogate how categories of whiteness are changing and how these changes link to broader conditions.** In response, scholars in the United States are starting to examine how non-European immigrants (e.g., Central and Latin American) are incorporated into narratives and identities of whiteness. In the future it is imagined that as racial categories shift, there will be “a space for non-black immigrants and their children to position themselves as ‘white’” (Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p. 14). This includes multiracial populations as well, such as transracial/cultural families.

Critical Race Feminisms

I draw on what I define herein as critical race feminisms, which include, Black feminist, African-Canadian feminist, and anti-racist feminist scholarship. What is understood as black feminist thought in the United States and Britain has influenced much of this work, and while I draw on black feminist scholars, such as hooks and Collins, I am consciously informed by scholarship that situates feminist analyses within the formation of Canadian white settler society. Predominantly comprised of feminists “of colour,” these critical race feminisms share multiple tenets, including the need to: reclaim *herstories*, engage in new theorizing beyond mainstream feminisms on the interlocking subjectivities and positionalities of women within imperial and nation-building histories and current western nation-states, and resist dominant conceptualizations of female oppression and empowerment.

Defining Black-Canadian and anti-racist feminism

In the edited collection, *Back to the Drawing Board: African Canadian Feminisms* (Wane, Deliofsky, & Lawson, 2002), the voices of critical race feminists across differences are highlighted: Black-Canadian, African-Canadian, Euro-Canadian and Indigenous women. The text includes ways that both African and Aboriginal women “practice” multiple Indigenous knowledges, and how relationships between African and Aboriginal women are important to the development of critical race feminisms (Wane et al., 2002; Waterfall, 2002). One of the book’s editors, African-Canadian feminist, Njoki Nathani Wane (2002) asks, what is Black-Canadian feminist thought? As an African woman who resides in Canada, she notes that for her the answer is rooted in her memories of the work and lives of women in her family. Wane writes, “women who worked tirelessly to provide the basic needs for their families and to sustain their communities-engaged in feminist practice and theory” (p.31). Wane posits that, “African feminism involves the power, not paralysis of African women and accounts for their triumphs without underestimating the gravity of their circumstances” (p.31). As such, black feminist thought is grounded in women’s intergenerational practices; while not necessarily self-identified “feminists,” “African women have a long history of gendered

consciousness, and many attribute this consciousness to the long lineage of women in their families” (p.32).

In Canada, black feminist thought is influenced by American and Canadian feminist activists and writers, such as: Sojourner Truth, Mary Shadd, Barbara Smith and the Combahee River Collective. Wane and others argue that a specific black Canadian feminist theory needs to be developed, which reflects the multiple histories of black women situated within the Canadian context. This includes how histories of oppression and present day neo-colonial conditions position black women within Canadian society (Wane, 2002). While, as Ware (1992) argues, the Atlantic slave trade is a critical period in history to begin an analysis of race and gender, the history of black women begins much earlier than the slave trade with an examination of women’s roles in African societies (Kitossa, 2002; Wane, 2002). Like other forms of feminism, Wane argues that feminist theorizing about black Canadian women’s experiences begins with women’s lives. It is in the spaces of the everyday that black women and other women of colour have always been “doing” black feminist theory.

Anti-racist feminists also argue that anti-racist feminism starts with women’s histories of social and political activism (Bannerji, 1993; Dua, 1999). Like black Canadian feminism, antiracist feminist thought can be challenging to define. Dua notes that it is broadly seen as “an attempt to theorize the interconnections between race, class, and gender” (p.9), and she defines it as “a body of writing that attempts to integrate the way race and gender function together in structuring social inequality” (p.9). Historically, much like the broader histories of women of colour in Canada, the body of antiracist feminist work has been largely ignored and undocumented, which has resulted in the notion that women of colour have not been present in antiracist and feminist struggles (Dua, 1999). To the contrary, antiracist feminist thought emerged out of the historical struggles by women of colour fighting for representation and equality in Canadian society and mainstream feminist movements. Dua argues that antiracist feminists have been critically examining the race, gender and class constructions of Canadian society since contact with European colonizers. They have specifically focused on the history of racialization in Canada, and highlight the fact that who is considered to be “Canadian” illustrates the gender and racial formations in Canadian society.

Defining women

There appears to be little consensus amongst black and antiracist feminist writers on how to name groups who have been marginalized by racism. Some scholars are critical of the broad term 'women of colour' due to the possibility that it could essentialize women, and further the notion that white people have 'no colour' (Deliovsky, 2002; Kitossa, 2002). In practice, writers employ different terms, including: immigrant women (Ng & Estable, 1987; Das Gupta, 1999), women of colour (Dua, 1992), non-white women (Bannerji, 1993), and racialized women (Kitossa, 2002; Kobayashi & Peake, 1994). The uses of these select identifications are explained in multiple ways. For instance, African-Canadian feminist Tamari Kitossa (2002) uses the term 'racialized women' instead of 'women of colour,' arguing that the emergence of whiteness studies has made clear white people also have colour; as such, the term 'people of colour' does not adequately capture racialized relations. In another example, Mogadime (2002) employs the terms 'black women' and 'other women of colour' to recognize how racialized women all experience forms of interlocking oppression in different ways, while distinguishing black women's experience with racism. In their text, *Back to the Drawing Board*, Wane, Deliovsky and Lawson (2002) use both the terms 'black' and 'African' to signify women of African ancestry. Certainly black communities in Canada are very diverse, originating from Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean, and many have long histories in the country. Perhaps then a multiplicity of identifications is important to reflect the diverse subjectivities of negatively racialized women, and to address the risk of essentialization. These definitions reflect not only the various interlocking subjectivities of women, but the racial and gender politics of difference. They also remind us, as black feminists and antiracist feminist scholars emphasize, that all women are positioned differently within the society and the economy. It is in fact by recognizing and not erasing these different identifications and standpoints that women will be able to join together in collaborative feminist struggle (hooks, 1995).

Historical context: Women and empire building

In order to understand the political movements of feminisms today and issues for women in the current Canadian context, including how women are positioned differently, and why multiracial feminist organizing is challenging but crucial, an analysis of race and

gender must begin within the historical context of western imperialism. Within the imperial context, the white European woman was a multifaceted and contradictory character: she was at once missionary to the “heathens,” imperial mother to the nation, ambitious settler of the colony, and at times defiant transgressor of racial, social and sexual lines (Ware, 1992). Constructs of white femininity, and in turn white European women shaped and regulated relations between not only men and women, but also between whiteness and blackness within colonial societies. It is in these histories that we witness the complex intersectional imperial ideologies of race, gender, sexuality and class.

A distinct theme that emerges in colonial histories of European women is that in colonial societies, protection of European women was used as justification for the violent suppression of local peoples (Carter, 1997; Knapman, 1986; Ware, 1992).²⁴ As the most valuable property of the European male and the “mother of the empire,” European women were to be “protected” from other men “at any costs” (Ware, 1992; also see Frankenberg, 1993). Another theme in historical accounts of the colonies is the notion that European women were considered more racist than European men. European women were seen to cause problems to “smooth” racial relations because of their “sexual jealousy” of European men and non-European women; in turn, European women tried to dominate non-European women and men in response to their own oppressed position (Knapman, 1986). For instance, hooks (1981) argues that white women have been central to the exploitation of black women since slavery. She writes, “those white women who deplored the sexual exploitation of slave women were usually reluctant to involve themselves with a slave’s plight for fear of jeopardizing their own position in the domestic household” (p.36). Within patriarchal colonial systems, white women benefitted from supporting, not resisting, the exploitation of black women to maintain their status in

²⁴ Although beyond the scope of this study, Ware (1992) posits that in order to undertake a historical analysis of race and gender, it is imperative to examine two distinct moments in colonial histories that shaped the discourse regarding white women and safety within colonial societies: the 1857 national rebellion in India (in Britain this is referred to as “the mutiny”), and the 1865 Morant Bay uprising in Jamaica. Ware argues that both of these manifestations against British imperial rule shaped subsequent imperial ideology and policy. In both cases, violence against European women took place, and imperial repression was harsh; “avenging the womenfolk” was central to the repression (Ware, 1992).

relation to white men.²⁵ With the rise of the western feminist movement, many remain critical of the way white feminists continue to uphold white patriarchal systems by putting their racial and class status over the liberation of all women. Of course, to resist racism and white supremacist patriarchy would threaten white women's positionality within the system (hooks, 1984; Weedon, 1999).

There is more emerging scholarship on western women and colonialism that advances an intersectional analysis of race, gender, class and space to imagine the complexity and contradictory nature of western women's lives (Knapman, 1986). Existing works also highlight the ways in which western women not only perpetuated, but resisted imperialist, racist and gender ideologies (Chaudhuri & Strobel, 1992; Ware, 1992).²⁶ Either way, European women were central to imperialist efforts and histories of white supremacy, and as such, "white womanhood needs to be theorized as an institution in the service of white control and supremacy in the same way that heterosexuality has been used as an institution in the service of patriarchy" (Davy, 1997, p.213).

Canadian nation-building and first wave feminism

Although the Canadian prairies may not evoke the colonial imagery of British India or the "Orient" (Said, 1978), Canada nevertheless was established as a colonial society. In Canadian colonial histories, we witness the same constructions of white

²⁵ The sexual exploitation of black female slaves by white slave owners has been well-documented. Within the slave economy the children of interracial sexual relations became slaves. As Frankenberg (1993), notes the miscegenation laws in the United States during slavery had a distinct economic function. She writes:

[Forced] sexual intercourse with enslaved women-in the context of matrilineal descent laws for enslaved people-produced more slaves. Thus, as such as laws prohibiting *legitimated* unions across race lines drew on cultural dimensions of racism, such laws also served to ensure the continued existence of an enslaved population and to restrict membership in the group with economic and political power (p.73-74).

²⁶ Although histories of imperialism depict European women as passive and vulnerable subjects, there are many instances of women's resistance within imperial systems. In the early nineteenth century, women began to play a bigger philanthropic role, which created the opportunity for women to be involved in the anti-slavery and abolitionist movements. For instance, women used their economic power as domestic consumers to boycott products produced by the slave trade, and publicly campaigned against slavery (Ware, 1992).

femininity and similar strategic use of white women to “settle” the colony. As in other colonial societies, white women were tasked with reproducing the white race and maintaining “proper” homes. We also see the same colonial appeals to the threat of violence against white women as the rationale for violence against Indigenous peoples, and justification for “policing boundaries” between Indigenous and settler populations (Carter, 1997). The black-white binary within the Canadian context centred (and continues to centre on) the relationship between the white colonial self and the Aboriginal other, with white women positioned in binary opposition to Aboriginal women (see chapter 5) (Carter, 1997; Rutherford & Pickles, 2005; Thobani, 2007). White women were strategically used against Aboriginal women to maintain strict racial boundaries, and to control European men’s “desires” (Rutherford & Pickles, 2005, p.181). Many argue that while some white women had positive relations with Aboriginal peoples, many white European women were complicit in the perpetuation of colonial practices against Indigenous peoples. What is clear is that white European women played a complicated and contradictory role in processes of colonization and nation-building in the west. They were not “hapless onlookers of empire, but were ambiguously complicit both as colonisers and colonized, privileged and restricted, acted upon and acting” (McClintock, 1995, p.6).

This brief examination of European women within colonial societies is significant for two key reasons. First, as I argue in multiple ways throughout this study, the construction of white femininity is strategically and ideologically linked to colonial ideologies and practices. This is evident in the histories of British colonies and in the formation of the Canadian nation-state. Second, this construction and the role of European women in colonial societies directly inform the present-day conceptualizations of white femininity (see chapters 5 and 6) and the trajectory of feminism. Antiracist feminist scholar Enakshi Dua (1999) argues that, white women “bought out” to white settler society instead of fighting against the destruction of patriarchy. The mainstream feminist movement in Canada did not address racism, and women of colour were alienated from feminist organizations, which were contending with gender equality within the broader nation-building project of “making Canada white” (p.12). First wave white feminists organized their resistance to gender oppression within the structure of white supremacy, and positioned themselves in binary opposition to women of colour. We see

that mainstream feminism was historically grounded in imperialist ideologies, and this informs its trajectory, including: the focus on concerns of white middle-class women, the omission of a race and class-based analysis of gender relations, and the marginalization of women of colour from the mainstream feminist movements. A central consideration for feminists is to “rescue and restore women to history,” which has led to important new methodologies to examine women’s lives and to theorize from women’s experiences. What became evident to feminists of colour is that mainstream feminists were focused on restoring white middle-class women to history, not all women (Deliovsky, 2010; Ware, 1992). Like Aboriginal women, black women and other women of colour have long histories of community building (e.g., through the establishment of churches, schools and societies), as well as active engagement in political and social movements; yet they are also largely absent from Canadian histories (Wane, 2002; see Kitossa, 2002).²⁷ Women’s *herstories* of resistance form the basis for antiracist feminist activism in Canada. These are herstories of oppression, but they are also herstories of agency and resistance, all of which are necessary to understand the current conditions for non-white women in Canada today (Weedon, 1999).

Second wave feminism

Western mainstream feminism is predominantly situated within liberal thought. Feminism, like other western theories emerging out of the enlightenment period, presumed western superiority and advancement, while calling for universality of western discourses (Weedon, 1999). The development of feminism in the United States and Canada was directly influenced by the American civil rights and black liberation movements of the 1960s. Second wave mainstream white feminists made appeals for the universal plight of women, and yet they left absent analyses of class and race in their examination of gender, ignoring the multiple and complex subjectivities of non-white

²⁷ Feminist historians are beginning to document the histories of antiracist feminists. This work makes clear the numerous examples of political and social activism by women of colour, such as: Métis women’s active involvement in the Métis Rebellion, Indigenous women’s struggles against the oppression of Aboriginal peoples, and Asian and black Canadian women’s resistance against racism in labour practices and immigration policies. Key issues of struggle for non-white women in the formation and evolution of the Canadian white settler state have involved treaty rights, immigration and settlement rights, and democratic rights (Dua, 1999; Thobani, 2007).

women (Carty, 1999, Dua, 1999, hooks, 1984, Ware, 1992; Weedon, 1999). Black Canadian and antiracist feminists contend that women's identities and positionalities are interlocking and they cannot be essentialized. Antiracist feminist scholar Himani Bannerji (1993) argues that feminist essentialism constructs "woman" as a universal, unified subject in relation to "man"; this subject, premised on "an idealist epistemology," is erased from context, history and other social constructions. By erasing the lived realities of women, feminist essentialism contributes to women's oppression and marginalization. For feminism to be truly liberating, it must free all women from patriarchal oppression. If this is the objective, racism must be central to the feminist struggle as sexism and racism are part of the same western colonial ideologies (hooks, 1984). Feminists of colour rejected mainstream feminist essentialism and challenged white women who were reproducing inequitable race relations. Bannerji (1993) writes that white women's response to the calls of non-white women and queer white women against feminist essentialism has been to develop a 'politics of difference' to reject the claim of universalism. While it is significant that feminist theory is now addressing "concrete" and "tangible" issues, spaces are still predominantly controlled by white women. Although non-white women may get some "equal time," this does not represent equality, when conditions in the broader society are still inequitable and unchallenged (p.70, 71). There also continues to be resistance to the recognition that race and racism affect women differently, which has resulted in fractions in feminist organizations based on identity and coalition politics (Dua, 1999; Srivastava, 2007).

In response to marginalization in the mainstream women's movement, black and antiracist feminists began to create feminist theory and method to analyze race and gender, and to make race central to the study of gender (Dua, 1999). During what is considered to be the second wave of antiracist feminist thought (the 1970s to the 1990s), the linkages between race and gender were being studied in more academic disciplines (e.g., women's studies, sociology, political science). There were also more women of colour coming into academia, challenging the lack of scholarship on the relationship between racism and sexism. This meant challenging a society in which racism is so embedded in national formation and "common-sense," and where women of colour-especially immigrant women of colour-are placed *outside* the polity (Bannerji, 1993; Das Gupta, 2007; Dei & Calliste, 2000b; Dua & Robertson, 1999; Hier & Bolaria,

2007). Antiracist feminists continue to challenge the nature of the capitalist economy, dependent on the exploitation of people of colour (Armstrong & Ng; 2005; Bannerji, 1993; Dei & Calliste, 2000b; Dua & Robertson, 1999; Razack, Smith & Thobani, 2010; Weedon, 1999).

The home and motherhood: Differing experiences

A key division between mainstream white middle-class feminists, who quickly dominated the feminist movement in the 1960's, and feminists of colour, was the issue of the private-public divide and women's labour in the domestic sphere. Mainstream western white middle-class feminists focused on the home as a site of inequitable gender relations and oppression for women, and pushed against private domestic labour in the home. They effectively ignored the realities of many women of colour and working-class white women, who labour outside the home to survive (Carty, 1999; Collins, 2000; Dua, 1999; hooks, 1984, 1990). As black feminists and feminists of colour have noted, the home and the family are very different experiences for women of colour in a white supremacist society (Carty, 1999; Dua, 1999; Das Gupta, 1995; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981). For instance, Das Gupta (1995) writes that for some immigrant women of colour and Aboriginal women, the "privilege" of the nuclear family is something that they were denied due to state policies, which disallowed and destroyed women's participation in the family (Dua, 1999; Das Gupta, 1995; Thobani, 2007). As antiracist feminist scholars emphasize, it is therefore imperative to examine how gender, race, and class have shaped non-white women's experience of the family, and in particular how the construction of the nuclear family was central to racialized nation-building processes and continued inequitable conditions in Canadian society (Dua, 1999).

White middle-class feminists also ignored the fact that for women of colour, "the family served as protection against, and a central source of resistance to, racial oppression" (Carty, 1999, p.42). Unlike white women, (we can think here of their domestic roles in colonial societies), historically for African and African-American women, the home was a site of refuge and a place of resistance and empowerment in white supremacist societies (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1984, 1990). Collins argues, one of the central ways African American motherhood practices differ from white European

ones, is that black women have always combined labour inside and outside the home into their mothering practices. Within Afrocentric traditions,²⁸ "...motherhood can serve as a site where Black women express and learn the power of self-definition, the importance of valuing and respecting ourselves, the necessity of self-reliance and independence, and a belief in Black women's empowerment" (p.176). Black women have historically been responsible for providing maternal love and nurturance for black children, which in a white supremacist society is "an act of resistance." By cultivating self-worth and confidence, black mothers empower their children, "to defy and subvert racist discourses that naturalize racial inferiority and commodify blacks as other and object" (O'Reilly, 2004, p.179). Collins further contends that African-American mothering practices also differ from white European ones, in that mothering is not bound by the nuclear family structure or by the narrow space of the single home. In fact, the traditional community-based mothering practices of African-American women as "othermothers" and community mothers, is a way to theorize about political engagement of African American women. The practice of othermothering has been an essential component of mothering for black women, and women have a long tradition of nurturing one another's children in "women-centred networks" (p.178). Afrocentric conceptions of motherhood can provide powerful insights into motherhood as a form of political activism and consciousness, and a challenge to mainstream feminist assertions about the private/public divide.

Collins (2000) adds that mothering as political activism can also pertain to women "who care about Black women." She notes that white women with mixed-race children can also be "politicized in fighting the battles confronting their black children," as women gain new insights on mothering while they are raising their children in a racist society (p.194). White women in transracial/cultural families, who are mothering mixed-race children, such as the participants in this study, have much to learn from Afrocentric

²⁸ It is important to note that what I refer to herein as Afrocentric or Indigenous knowledge systems are not essentialized and static; they are multiple, dynamic knowledge systems that pertain to heterogeneous groups of peoples.

mothering traditions. In fact, two participants in the study were socialized into motherhood in their partner's African community, which shaped their subsequent approaches to mothering, and their perspectives on relationship and community building. Other participants have also been influenced by Afrocentric mothering practices, through their kinship relationships with mothers and sisters-in-law. Moreover, for many of the participants, differing western and Afrocentric parenting practices are part of the complex negotiations within a transracial/cultural relationship (see chapters 6, 7 and 8).²⁹

Third wave

During the third wave of antiracist feminism (the 1990s), scholars furthered theoretical work examining how feminist theory and practice are implicated in the reproduction of racism, analyzing the intersections of race and gender, and documenting women's different experiences with respect to race (Dua, 1999). Although there was broader acknowledgement of the ways feminist movements created divisions amongst women, there was little actual change in the practice and scholarship of mainstream feminism. Moreover, in many academic disciplines, "knowledge about race" continued to be constructed in ways that perpetuated deep divisions between women. Even within critical frameworks, such as political economy and socialist feminism, the interlocking connections between gender, race and class were still made effectively "invisible" (Dua, 1999, p.17). In turn, antiracist feminists argued for the reconceptualization of current theoretical and methodological approaches, and for the creation of new ones. This resulted in the establishment of two new antiracist feminist approaches to examine race and gender in Canadian society: standpoint epistemology and revised Canadian political economy. Standpoint epistemology is influenced by Marxist writers and critical race theorists; drawing on Marxist scholars, such as Marcus Garvey and Franz Fanon, scholars who support a standpoint epistemology stress that, "women of colour occupy a

²⁹ It is interesting to note, as I do in the findings chapters ahead, that the participants in the study who emphasized the importance of relationship and community building in their lives, were women who identified most with Afrocentric parenting practices, and what they called "attachment parenting." These women also troubled western liberal individualistic values in consumer capitalist societies, which they argued resulted in many mothers, (and individuals more broadly), feeling very socially isolated and lonely (see chapters 6 and 7).

structural position within the Canadian political economy which overlaps the margins of race, gender, and class” (Dua, p.19). By examining women of colour’s experiences through a standpoint epistemology, we can understand larger historical processes of race, gender, and class formations in the nation-state, and engage in analyses of how racial ideologies have informed the historical development of colonialism and capitalism. Scholars of standpoint epistemology imagine, “race as a discourse, which is constituted in multiple ways, through knowledge, culture, the imperatives of imperialism and capitalism, as well as through power and agency...” (Dua, p.21). In this approach, the main question scholars ask is, “how are racial differences between women created and maintained?” (Dua, p.21). The advantage of the second method, a revised political economy approach, is the ability to analyse gender within the inequitable power relations of capitalism. Influenced by the work of Stuart Hall and others, according to this approach, racism is “relational and contradictory” (Dua, 1999, p.20). Racism is greatly informed by one’s relative positionality, and scholars seek to understand “how women come into and experience multiple locations and identities” (p.20), and “how the process of racialization differentiates between women according to race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality” (p. 21). Both of these approaches question different, and yet compatible questions regarding how women are and come to be differently situated within the society. Expanding on work in the second wave, antiracist feminist writers continue to record how societal institutions, and Canadian “culture,” are implicated in the reproduction of inequitable racial dynamics, including the normalization/naturalization of whiteness.

The significance of critical race feminisms

Black (Canadian) feminist and antiracist feminist thought can provide alternative epistemological frameworks to critically analyze the relationship between gender, race, nation and economy in the Canadian socio-political context, and how this connects to global conditions (Dua, 1999, Razack et al., 2010). **Through interlocking analyses of complex constructions of gender, race, class, sexuality, immigration status, religion and more, critical race feminist scholars allow us to engage in a comprehensive analysis of women’s unique and divergent positionalities in**

histories of Canadian nation-building, current Canadian society, and the national and global capitalist economies.

Critical race feminisms also suggest that **we need to expand traditional mainstream feminist conceptualizations of gender as a universal category.** Deliovsky (2002) contends that multiple strains of white feminist theory (e.g., socialist, liberal, eco) all emphasize 'women' as an "essential category" (p.63). As black feminist and antiracist feminist scholars make clear, this excludes other forms of oppression that women experience based on their specific positionality. As such, "Woman" cannot exist in singular form, nor can gender be isolated from other interlocking social and ideological constructions. Further, **we need to move beyond traditional western feminist definitions of patriarchy** to complicate the notion that men are also a universal and unified category defined in narrow relation to their binary opposition to women within structural dynamics of power. Deliovsky troubles the assumption that within patriarchal relations men are complicit with one another in the oppression of women. She writes that in the context of interracial relationships, it is the hierarchical power dynamics between men that are played out on the bodies of women. Traditional definitions of patriarchy in white feminisms ignore how white women and white men are in structural relationships of domination with non-white men and women (Deliovsky, 2002).

We also require a broader understanding of patriarchy to explicitly include structures that perpetuate hierarchical relationships between women. I contend that **patriarchy is defined by relations between women and women, just as much as it is between men and women.** It is evident from the brief discussion regarding the histories of empire and white femininity, that women are central to the perpetuation of white supremacist patriarchal structures and ideologies. It is the patriarchal power dynamics and forms of oppression that women reproduce in relation to one another—from the slave plantation, to the feminist movement, to the corporate boardroom—that also uphold a white supremacist patriarchal order (hooks, 1990). The distorted relations between women also reflect colonial histories of how women were positioned in relation to the nation-state as discussed above (Carter, 1999; Lawson, 2004; Wane, 2004).

In this study, drawing on critical race feminist scholars in the Canadian context is important, as white women, like many majority white Euro-Canadians, are socialized into ideologies of difference in relation to the 'Aboriginal Other' (see chapter 5). As Carter (1997) and others (Rutherford & Pickles, 2005; Thobani, 2007) have noted, in the making of the colonial state, white women and Aboriginal women are placed in binary (and hostile) opposition to one another, the first responsible to produce the white settler society, and the latter accused of threatening its demise. For women in this study, relationships with "other" women across differences, are kinship relationships extending to their own daughters, nieces, sisters and mothers-in-law. In these relationships, the women experience their white femininity in different ways, and it is in these female relationships that women learn Indigenous African ways of knowing and Afrocentric mothering practices.

Black feminist and African feminist theories based on Indigenous knowledge systems allow for **new possibilities in conceptualizing women's relationships to other women, children and broader communities**. Afrocentric and African American definitions and practices of motherhood have much to teach women about different ways to parent, organize, teach, collaborate, and resist outside of individualist liberal consumer capitalist nuclear family structures (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1990; Thomas, 2004). While there is no doubt that for white middle-class women the struggle to move into the political realm and out of the home was significant, and subsequent liberal reforms have only made conditions more challenging for women overall, there is a whole other side of the home as a site of resistance and activism that black feminist theorists and feminists of colour bring forth. Collins (1994) poignantly asks, "what themes might emerge if issues of race and class generally, and understanding racial ethnic women's motherwork specifically, become central to feminist theorizing about motherhood?" (p.59). It is when we focus on relationships between women within patriarchal systems, and when white women side with other women (as opposed to white men), that conditions could possibly change. This definitely means that white women would need to

resist racism (hooks, 1984; Weedon, 1999).³⁰ To “learn the meaning and value of sisterhood” women need to build trust. This will not occur through feminist appeals to sisterhood based on “shared victimization,” which alleviates the responsibility of white women to do their own “dirty work” of understanding the ways they perpetuate the oppression of other women (hooks, 1984, p.46). hooks argues that in order to build trust, and ultimately solidarity between women, the affirmation of difference is essential. **It is through the recognition of what divides women, what makes them different, that meaningful relationships and solidarity can be built.** She advocates for a “beloved community,” which she contends is cultivated by, “...each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world” (1995, p.265). This requires working together within the challenging spaces of ambiguity and “in-betweenness,” and creating tools to deal with difficult emotions, such as resentment, biases, and fear. **For white women this means facing fear in order to learn how racism is just as much *their* issue.**

There is concern that white feminists do not want to participate in the critical self-reflection necessary to understand the ways in which they perpetuate inequitable relations, in particular as this would ultimately mean “giving up white feminist hegemony” (Deliovsky, 2002, p.61). And yet, when race is ignored or addressed superficially within white feminist theory, we cannot acknowledge the ways that race is fundamental to the lives of white women as well. It is imperative for mainstream white feminist theorists to examine how the historical construction of white femininity has inequitably privileged white women in their lives and scholarship (Deliovsky, 2002). Bannerji (1993) puts forth the notion of the “social” to suggest that people can address the same issues and articulate different understandings. She states that, “...any woman, white or black, can speak to ‘racism’ as ‘her experience’ without substitution, guilt or condescension.

³⁰ Although it is largely middle and upper class white women who will not participate in an antiracist feminism and who do not want to address race, there have been individual antiracist feminists involved in this work. For instance, white anti-racist feminist Becky Thompson (2001) chronicles the history of multiracial feminism and white anti-racist activism, which she identifies as a “liberation movement” led by women of colour, and includes a small but significant group of white antiracist feminists. Multiracial feminism was characterized by an international focus, linking colonialism and imperialism to conditions for women of colour in the “third world” and the United States. This movement recognized the need to organize in distinct racial groups and create multiracial coalitions (Thompson, 1997).

Indeed, there are many stories to tell” (p.85). She further contends, “The ‘social’ of course does not always signal empathy, sympathy, agreement and positive cooperation. It includes not only existential similarities but profound contradictions as well” (p.84). Perhaps this notion, which acknowledges the mutual responsibility and challenges of engaging in new forms of dialogue about racism and difference, is where multiracial feminist organising based on solidarity in differences can begin. Critical race feminisms enable us to consider how white women, such as the women in this study, can be part of antiracist feminist organizing and practice, and how they can support multiracial coalitions by building communities across difference (see chapter 8).

Antiracism

Defining antiracism

Emerging from critical analyses of racism and liberal multiculturalism, antiracism discourse started in the United Kingdom, and later grew in the United States, Australia and Canada (Carby, 1994; Gilroy, 1994; Lee, 1985; Thomas, 1984). Much like the inspiration for critical race feminisms, the catalyst for antiracism discourse came from political and social activism by local communities, “which challenged the Canadian state to live up to the true meaning of democratic citizenship, social justice, equity and fairness” (Dei, 1996a, p.25). Similar to the concept of racism, antiracism has multiple definitions, interpretations and applications, and this remains one of the key debates in antiracist thought (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Essed, 2007; Gillborn, 2006). For the purpose of my work, I draw on influential Canadian antiracist scholar George Dei, and other antiracist theorists and educators, to theorize a comprehensive antiracist framework that is most importantly distinguished from liberal multiculturalism.

Antiracism can be broadly understood as, “an action-oriented educational and political strategy for institutional and systemic change that addresses the issues of racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (Dei & Calliste, 2000a, p.13; Dei, 1996a). The objective of antiracism is to, “identify, challenge, and change the values, structures, and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of

societal oppressions” (Dei & Calliste, 2000a, p.2). Antiracist theorists critically analyse issues of power and positionality, and how systems of oppression, “reproduce and sustain white dominance, power, and privilege” (Dei, 2007, p.59). They stress that individual awareness of oppression is not enough for social and political change, but rather structural change is required (Dei, 1996; Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004; Fleras, 2014; Kumashiro, 2000; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Antiracism involves a commitment to fight against oppressive and colonial ideologies and practices in all areas of life (Fleras, 2014). Antiracist practice includes multiple strategies and methods to resist and transform inequitable power relations, including anti-oppressive pedagogies and active participation in social, economic, and political change. In this way, much like we can think of racisms in plural form because of their multiple and situated manifestations, so too should we imagine antiracisms, as the approaches and tactics we adopt depend on the conditions in which we are situated (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Dei, 1996a; Dei, 2007; Dei & Calliste, 2000a; Fleras, 2014; Goldberg, 1993). Antiracism is not only resistance to racism, it also seeks to further the creation of more equitable and just societies through theoretical work, education, social activism, and concrete policy change (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Dei, 1996a; Essed, 2007; Fleras, 2012). Below I discuss the central tenets of antiracism and highlight key considerations in antiracist practice.

Tenets of antiracism

The concept of race remains salient to antiracism discourse. Although the scientific concept of race has been broadly discredited, the material implications of race are very real. Moreover, it is not the construction of race alone that is problematic or encourages racism, it is the way in which race has been employed to create hierarchical categories of people and justify oppressive and exploitative systems of domination (Dei, 1996a, 1996b). Dei (1996a) argues that the concept of race should not be erased or abandoned, for it has analytic value in antiracist discourse “as a tool for community and academic political organizing for social change” (p.27). He further posits that rejecting the very notion of race can lead to contestation that racism still exists. This is evident in “deracializing” practices, in which ‘race’ is omitted from written text and spoken discourse to avoid and deny racisms through appeals to ‘culture’ and ‘cultural

differences' (Dei, 1996a, 1996b; Fleras, 2014; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Denying or contesting the legitimacy of the race concept can undermine antiracism efforts by trying to downplay or omit historical and present-day conditions of inequity. This in turn can hinder the development of antiracist practices and policies necessary for social and structural transformation (Dei, 1996a).

Still, the saliency of the race concept remains a contentious issue. Some argue against the continued use of race for antiracism efforts, stating that since race has been delegitimized on a scientific basis, we should no longer be employing it (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Dei & Calliste, 2000a). While this is true, Canadian society was and continues to be racialized, the implications of which are addressed throughout this study. It is the denial and erasure of these conditions that has led to the predominant construction of Canada as a "raceless" society (Backhouse, 1999; Deliovsky, 2010). This is not to state that the concept of race should be unproblematically adopted; rather antiracism needs to deconstruct race beyond negative differences that have been superimposed on it, and "deessentialize" it in order to critically examine the various manifestations of racism (Dei & Calliste, 2000a; Essed, 2007). The concept of race thus remains central to the ways in which, "we claim, occupy, and defend spaces" (Fleras, 2014, p.234), and the basis for an integrative antiracist analysis (Dei et al., 2004).

Relations of power are essential to an analysis of race and difference.

Unlike liberal multicultural ideology that focuses on cultural differences, in antiracism discourse, racism is explicitly connected to relations of power. Antiracism addresses and challenges the inequitable power dynamics between different social groups, and is concerned with identifying the root sources of these relations and restructuring them. This involves connecting historical processes, systems and ideologies of domination to present-day conditions (Dei, 1996a; 1996b; Dei et al., 2004; Fleras, 2014). Within an antiracist framing, awareness of race and racism means, "awareness of how power is socially distributed and not just as reification of already existing racial categories" (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002, p.18). This point distinguishes antiracist approaches from liberal multicultural ones, wherein when race is analysed in relation to power and positionality, everyone is implicated in relationships and structures of domination. Thus, racism

cannot simply be a matter of personal bias or cultural differences between individuals and social groups.

Social constructions of difference are interlocking. Although race and racism are central to an antiracist analysis, we cannot understand the complex and comprehensive nature of social difference unless we examine how all social and ideological constructions create multilayered forms of oppression (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Dei, 1996a; Dei & Calliste, 2000a; Essed, 2007; Fleras, 2014). As opposed to an intersectional analysis, an interlocking analysis “goes further to critically challenge the players and the policies that perpetuate the cycle of oppression” (Dei, 2007, p.194). An interlocking analysis can enable a nuanced understanding of how different racisms manifest across space and time, and how racism intersects with other constructions to create specific and situated conditions of oppression (Dei & Calliste, 2000a).³¹ At the same time, Dei & Calliste (2000a) urge that race not be reduced or subsumed by other constructions, such as gender and class. They contend that this can be a tendency in analyses of global capitalism, and reflects the particular “discomfort” of facing issues of race and racism. As constructions of difference cannot be isolated, the fight against racism must be a fight against all forms of interlocking oppressions (Fleras, 2014). For this reason and others, coalition and network building in anti-oppressive struggles is vital (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Dei & Calliste, 2000a; Thompson, 2001).

Antiracism asserts the need to interrogate white domination and privilege. Although antiracist scholarship has not always addressed whiteness, there is an increasing amount of work on whiteness by antiracism scholars (Dei, 1996a; Lee & Lutz, 2005). This is essential, for we cannot address power relations and social difference without examining the nature of white supremacy, and how whiteness and white privilege function to maintain hierarchical relations. Like whiteness studies, this involves a historical analysis of imperialism, colonialism and slavery, as well as the recognition that political and economic power is still disproportionately held by white middle and

³¹ For instance, in the Canadian context we see calls for such an approach to the current missing and murdered Aboriginal women’s national inquiry, which explicitly addresses how Aboriginal women are racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed within Canadian society, and how they are situated within the historical and ongoing conditions of colonization (Cram, 2016; Kirkup, 2016; Razack, 2002).

upper class men of European descent (Dei, 1996a; Deliovsky, 2010). When we situate individuals and communities within histories of colonialism, imperialism and nation-building, we can begin to map out how racial formations and identities are formed and performed in everyday life. With respect to antiracism education, this means that to create a truly inclusive, positive, and empowering learning environment for all students, we need to interrogate whiteness as a form of domination, and as part of normalized practices in educational contexts. Most importantly, we need to ask, “how can we think through ‘whiteness’ and its complexities without avoiding or evading racial injustice and deep systemic inequities?” (Dei, 2000a, p.29). With respect to this study, this is why I situate the participants as white female subjects within histories of domination, in part to understand how they learn to perform and embody forms of white femininity.

The critical examination of whiteness can also be a positive entry point for white people to get involved in antiracism work. This assertion informed my study, wherein I examined the participants’ experiences in transracial/cultural familial relationships and parenting, to create an opportunity for the participants and I to discuss issues of whiteness and white privilege. Instead of focusing only on race and racism while erasing whiteness, through dialogue in the interviews and group workshops, we effectively started to connect racism, white privilege, and antiracism (see subsequent chapters). Again, through an interrogation of whiteness, white people cannot make claims that racism has nothing to do with them (Frankenberg, 1993).

Individuals have constrained forms of agency. Within western liberal thought, the individual is imagined as, “a somewhat detached and self-contained entity,” and yet “as the history of racism shows, what it means to be an individual, indeed what it means to be human, is understood through cultural and social practice” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p.75). How individuals conceptualize ideologies of difference depends on how they are structurally situated within the society. In critical antiracist discourse, focus is not solely on the individual, but how **individuals and societal institutions reproduce racism and inequity**. It is within the relationship between individuals and institutions where, “the mechanism for either perpetuation of racism or its transformation” lies (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p.23). Derman-Sparks & Phillips contend that since we require both structural and individual change, this poses a paradoxical situation, in which

we need to transform structural conditions of power and domination to change individual behaviour, and yet we also need to change individual behaviour to instigate structural change. Within antiracist discourse, there are differing perspectives on where to focus antiracism efforts. For instance, Goldberg (1993) stresses that first structural change needs to be addressed; in other words, policies, regulations, and laws must be changed, and then individual attitudinal shifts will take place. At the same time, Essed (2007) reminds us that institutions are not abstract entities; they are managed by actors, who reproduce institutional policies and practices, and therefore actors can also work to change them. Thus, in antiracism education, it is imperative to maintain focus on how the dynamics between individuals and structures define relations of power and access. Many antiracist educators address the paradox that Derman-Sparks & Phillips refer to, by focusing on individuals who have agency to resist and change institutional policies and practices.

Individuals have constrained forms of agency, as they have differing access to power and they are bounded by their structural positionality within the society. Although constrained, individuals are “capable of both reflexive thought and proactive action” (Dei et al., 2004, p.20), and it is when individuals comprehend how systems of oppression function, that they have the capacity to resist. The objective of antiracist education then is the growth of consciousness and capacity, “to enable people to be active initiators of change rather than conforming perpetrators or passive victims of social oppression” (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p.23). In critical antiracist discourse and practice, we must focus on where and how individuals and communities can exercise agency at local, national, and global levels (Dei & Calliste, 2000a).

Theory and praxis are intrinsically linked. Within a white supremacist system, there is no passive antiracism. Antiracist scholars and educators need to ensure that they actualize the theoretical principles of antiracism in their work, and they are cognizant that “anti-racism is a political engagement and not merely an intellectual/discursive understanding” (Dei, 2007, p.55). An “active anti-racism” requires a personal commitment and responsibility to challenge and change oppressive systems through significant participation in political and social practice. Antiracist activism needs to be incorporated into all aspects of life, including: family, home, and community; and

antiracist scholars need to situate their work within the real life conditions of marginalized peoples (Dei, 1996a; Dei, 1996b; Dei et al., 2004; Fleras, 2014; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Although antiracism education is generally thought of with respect to formal learning environments, antiracism struggle needs to involve, “knowledge-generating activities in multiple formal and informal learning sites outside of the classroom” (Dei & Calliste, 2000b, p.11).

It is within the principle of theory to praxis and other tenets of antiracism, that we can envision the participants’ everyday forms of labour (e.g., mothering practices), as political labour and specifically as forms of everyday antiracist parenting. For instance, I write about literacy practices that the women perform with their children, or the ways in which they actively disrupt racist discourse in their family relationships (see chapters 7 and 8). Although the majority of the women would not necessarily define their practices within an antiracism framework, I argue that four women in particular are actualizing antiracism praxis, especially in their mothering practices with their children. This begs the question as to whether deep intellectual consciousness and theoretical framing need to be present in order to engage in “active anti-racism,” especially when we consider that many people participate in active racism without consciousness. As primary educators to their children, parents can also practice, “a cooperative and collaborative pedagogy,” in which they co-construct knowledge with their children, and cultivate their children’s critical skills and tools for political and social activism (Dei et al., 2004, p.6; Dei, 1996a; Fleras, 2014; Matlock & DiAngelo, 2015).

The educational system is a key site of reproduction and disruption. As state institutions, schools are active in the perpetuation of oppressive social and economic relations. Historically, schools have been central to the reproduction of the industrial capitalist state (Dei, 1996a). Within dominant ideologies of liberal individualism, students who are part of certain racial and social groups are systematically marginalized within the educational system (Dei, 1996a; Fleras, 2014). Pathologizing individual students and families does not address the real systemic issues and failures of the educational system, including the oppressive conditions that many students endure in Eurocentric schooling environments. Dominant constructions of “success” are premised on the liberal notion of a “level playing field.” Antiracism education requires that we move

beyond individualistic liberal constructions of student “success” and “failure” based on “merit,” to ensure that students’ experiences are contextualized within broader political, social, and economic histories and processes. Antiracism also calls for a holistic and comprehensive analysis that includes the roles and responsibilities of the educational system and broader society in student “disengagement” from school. Fighting for “social inclusion” is central to antiracism struggles, therefore antiracism education requires an economic analysis to understand how the conditions of global capitalism affect youth and families; such as: issues of adequate housing, permanent labour, and access to education and resources (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Dei, 1996a). Antiracist educators argue that educational systems should foster healthy, supportive and collaborative relationships with students, caregivers and communities; and caregivers ought to be encouraged to actively participate in educational decision making processes, so they can contribute their multiple situated knowledges.

Antiracism recognizes that identities are multiple and fluid. Antiracism discourse imagines the individual as a socially constituted self, who holds varied and situated raced, gendered, and classed identities. Individual and collective identities are in constant flux, and they change within specific politics of difference and location. In the specific context of antiracism education, it is important for educators to recognize how students’ individual and collective identities shape their experiences and outcomes in school. This is particularly important as identity is linked to how knowledge is produced and validated. Many students do not feel represented in mainstream educational curriculum and practices, and in turn feel alienated, marginalized and “unsafe” in school environments (Dei, 1996a; Fleras, 2014; St. Denis, 2011).³² Antiracist educators should not erase students’ identities and experiences of discrimination and marginalization with appeals to “sameness,” but instead support students to make positive connections between their sense of self and their group identity. Students can use their culturally-

³² For example, the racialization of Aboriginal and black youth, including dominant constructions of “blackness” in media and popular culture, affect how students are perceived and treated in educational contexts. As research studies demonstrate, teachers’ perceptions of their students affect how they interact with them, and ultimately influence whether students will “succeed” in school. Part of critical antiracism is to understand the many systemic variables that result in disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal and black youth being “pushed out” of school (Dei, 1996a; Dei, 1997).

based identities as a source of empowerment and resistance against negative constructions, and as positive sites of knowledge (Dei, 1993a). Finally, as the society continues to diversify, antiracism education needs to respond to the evolving “cartography of whiteness” (Bonilla-Silva, 2003), and address new racial, ethnic and cultural identities, such as those of growing multiracial populations (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Twine & Gallagher, 2008).

Challenging Eurocentric knowledge and privileging other ways of knowing.

Antiracism challenges the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge, and the marginalization and delegitimation of other knowledge systems. What “counts” as knowledge is directly tied to who has the power to define what constitutes “valid” knowledge. In antiracism education, revealing the political and ideological nature of pedagogy makes clear, “how the production of knowledge with respect to truths and truth-making has historically privileged some and disprivileged others” (Fleras, 2014, p.235). Antiracist schooling promotes a “multi-centric education,” in which Eurocentric knowledge is questioned and multiple ways of knowing are valued, respected and taught (Dei, 1996a; Dei & Calliste, 2000a; Fleras, 2014). This requires institutional commitment and support, and that antiracist scholars and educators intentionally and meaningfully incorporate the multiple forms of knowledge and experiences of their students and communities (Dei, 1996a, 1996b; Fleras, 2014). As “personal experiences are lived through social relations of power” (Dei, 2000a, p.37), marginalized peoples have experiential knowledge of racism, which “enriches and strengthens critical race studies because the voices add experiential accounts to race knowledge production” (p.36). At the same time, it is imperative that minority communities are not constructed as “victims”; rather antiracism privileges histories of resistance to demonstrate and cultivate agency and empowerment (Dei & Calliste, 2000a). Informed by Freirian principles, antiracism challenges the traditional hierarchical learning relationship between teacher and student, wherein the teacher is the knowledge keeper, and the student is the unknowing learner; instead, both the teacher and student participate in a collaborative learning relationship. This is premised on the notion that students, their families, and communities have experiential knowledges that enrich the learning experience, and that the teacher, like anyone, can only have partial knowledge (Dei, 1996a). It is the responsibility of the teacher to create safe, critical, and empowering spaces for students to take up social and political issues

(Berlak, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000; Tucker, 2005). (The principle of collaborative knowledge construction also applies to the relationship between researcher and participant, which greatly informed my study as I discuss in chapter 4.)

Learning must be based on a holistic approach. Antiracism must be based on the premise that humans are in relationship with the natural and social worlds, and that everyone shares a “collective responsibility” in both of these relationships. Antiracism education requires a holistic approach that supports learning, growth and engagement in all aspects of life: ecological, cultural, political, social, and spiritual, and encourages individuals to cultivate “a deep understanding of the conscious self and how this self relates to others” (Dei, 1996a, p.31). Antiracism education should foster our relationships and cultivate a sense of collective consciousness. An objective of antiracism is to create “democratic communities,” in which the rights of the individual are considered in connection with the rights and needs of the community. Within an antiracist framing, unlike a liberal one, there are collective rights and responsibilities in addition to individual ones, to “ensure that everyone has access to the valued goods, resources and tools needed to function effectively as members of society” (Dei, p.123). We see these values articulated by several of the participants in discussions regarding relationship and community building across differences (see chapters 7 and 8).

Antiracist scholars urge us to move away from the construction of ‘diversity’ as problematic, and something that requires containment and management. Human migration across spaces is central to the examination of racism and antiracism (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002). As growing numbers of people cross borders, we see the development of complex economic, political, and social networks across difference, and in turn the creation of new diasporic identities and spaces (see chapter 7). Yet, these transnational conditions of the global capitalist system are also marked by increasing inequity, conflict, and violence. Antiracist scholar, Philomena Essed (2007), writes that she is concerned with the dominant way in which growing migration to western societies is constructed as problematic, as though migrants are ‘problems’ that must be managed and fixed. This can create greater divisiveness, discrimination, and xenophobia as “others” threaten the imagined nation-state based on “sameness” (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Essed, 2007; Walcott, 1997). Anthias and Lloyd (2002) argue

that new transnational populations and networks have an impact on local and global political and economic policies and should inform policy-making at both levels, especially in the areas of immigration, foreign investment, and labour practices. These conditions should also inform how we engage in antiracism, as antiracist scholars and educators need to respond to how the changing landscapes of human migration and the conditions of global capitalism create new iterations of racism and xenophobia.

Antiracism discourse challenges the multicultural framing of difference as something negative that needs to be downplayed with appeals to “sameness.” In an antiracist framing, the notion of difference should be reimagined as positive and empowering, and focus should be on how differences can enrich an antiracist praxis, without negating issues of power (Dei, 1996a, 2007; Dei & Calliste, 2000a, Dei et al., 2004). In antiracism education, we need to ask ourselves how we teach about power and difference in ways that will build on our strengths and affirm our agency (Dei, 1996a; 1996b; Dei & Calliste, 2000a, 2000b). In her collaborative piece with Roxana Ng on racism and antiracism, Jeanette Armstrong (2005) writes about the Okanagan concept of *Enowkin*. She refers to Enowkin as, “a process that is to be engaged in to look at difference, but also to engage differences, to solicit difference, to incorporate difference, and to strengthen difference” (p.31). Within this conceptualization, community building and solidarity are valued over consensus, in the sense that everyone consents to listen to one another without having to be in unanimous agreement. In contrast to racism, in which difference is theorized as negative and deficient, this process “recognizes the common group upon which our differences rest” (p.31), and values the process of learning and working within our differences for human cohesion and survival.

Antiracist scholars stress the importance of building alliances and communities across differences. In local and international spaces, antiracist struggles link to other anti-oppressive struggles against subjugation (e.g., we see coalition building on issues such as: Indigenous land claims and rights of self-determination, immigrant women’s rights, and the plights of “undocumented” migrants) (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Essed, 2007). In school contexts, “democratic communities” or “communities of difference” can be fostered by educators and staff through a commitment to reconceptualise and represent positive and agentive notions of difference, while also explicitly addressing

how social differences have been used to exploit and oppress (Dei, 1996a). It is imperative to find “a point of entry” through which to cultivate alliances across difference, and ensure that we do not get caught up in the divisive politics of identity. Everyone can be differently positioned with the understanding that there are many forms of oppression and privilege (Dei, 1996a; Dei & Calliste, 2000a). For the participants in this study, their “point of entry” is their relational identity as partners and mothers in transracial/cultural families.

Competing interpretations and applications of antiracism

Many believe that racism can be dealt with effectively in one hellifying workshop, or one hour-long heated discussion.... I've run into folks who really think that we can beat this devil, kick this habit, be healed of this disease in a snap. In a sincere blink of a well-intentioned eye, presto-poof-racism disappears. “I've dealt with my racism...(envision a laying on of hands)...Hallelujah! Now I can go to the beach.” Well fine. Go to the beach. (Yamato, 1990, p.20)

Antiracist scholars are highly critical of dominant liberal multicultural approaches to difference, and yet within the Canadian context, antiracism and multiculturalism must be distinguished, as various approaches to difference are identified as “antiracist.” Fleras (2014) argues that the Canadian model of inclusive multiculturalism is *theoretically* antiracist (e.g., individual and collective rights for equal treatment, the prohibition of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and more; and respect for cultural differences). Yet, it is premised on the liberal notion of sameness and fairness, thus assuming that individuals and social groups are on a “level playing field” with respect to power, access, and needs in the society. Fleras concludes that perhaps multiculturalism is “...both racist *and* anti-racist simultaneously, at once both liberating yet marginalizing, unifying yet divisive, inclusive yet exclusive, a distraction yet catalytic, with benefits yet costs” (p.252). At the same time, Fleras (2014) and Dei (2011) caution against abandoning multiculturalism altogether, since multiculturalism can still be credited for transforming Canadian society from a white settler colony to a society of diverse populations (though how this came to be is no doubt problematized by many (Backhouse, 1999; Dua, 1999; Thobani, 2007; Razack, 2002)). Dei (2011) asserts that we can still engage in antiracism within a multicultural framework, but we must make it work. He writes, “as an anti-racist educator, I do see

multiculturalism as an allied discourse. We should be careful not to reject it outright and in the process remove a valuable first step towards a more critical anti-racist approach” (p.16). In other words, multiculturalism is not necessarily antithetical to antiracism, but could be considered the beginning, or the foundation from which to engage in critical antiracism practice.

Just as there are multiple definitions of antiracism, so too are there varying interpretations of how antiracist strategies should be defined and implemented. In the Canadian context, there can also be confusion regarding the distinction between antiracism and multiculturalism, when we witness initiatives that combine both discourses (Srivastava, 2007). While the conception of antiracism involves multiple theoretical approaches and pedagogical methods, antiracism is premised on the fact that racism is structural and involves inequitable relations of power. **As such, antiracism rejects individually-focused liberal approaches and solutions to “inequality.”** Srivastava argues that due to the dominance of multiculturalism in Canada, it largely informs how racism is conceptualized and addressed in Canadian institutions and organizations, which can impede antiracist efforts for institutional change.

Educational interventions that employ liberal multicultural frameworks are premised on the “contact hypothesis” -the ideological assumption that more exposure to “others” will increase individual tolerance and sensitivity, and in turn decrease or eliminate prejudice and racism (Srivastava, 2007, p.301; Fleras, 2014; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In these kinds of interventions, the aim is to change individual attitudes and biases through intercultural dialogue and personal storytelling between dominant groups and marginalized groups. Srivastava and others argue that such forms of engagement can actually be more damaging than beneficial. For instance, when such interventions are short-term, the relations between individuals are unequal, and groups are not addressing real systemic issues, this can further entrench prejudices and biases (Fleras, 2014; Srivastava, 2007). Moreover, short-term interventions that focus on individual prejudice alone will do little to fundamentally disrupt ideologies of difference on a long-term basis, especially if individuals are not cultivating the skills they require to engage in social and structural change (Berlak, 2004; Srivastava, 2007). To make any significant difference, dialogue should be built on trust over time, individuals should have

relatively equal status and power, a shared language in which to communicate, mutual respect, and collaborative “pragmatic” goals (Anthias & Lloyd, 2002; Fleras, 2014; Goldberg, 1993). Some antiracist educators also take issue with these kinds of strategies as they tend to focus on people of colour, who become “the objects of knowledge.” Srivastava asserts that this creates a dynamic, in which people of colour are meant to produce knowledge about race and racism that can be either legitimized or discredited by white people. In turn, the racial ideologies and practices of white supremacy that create racism are not addressed, and dominant groups are not required to participate in deep critical self-reflection and analysis (Berlak, 2004; Fleras, 2012; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Srivastava, 2007).

We also see that despite decades of liberal multicultural, individually-based interventions, we continue to witness racism and xenophobia in Canadian society (Fleras, 2014). For this reason and others, in this study I am informed by the work of antiracist scholars and educators, who advocate for **an inclusive or integrated approach to antiracism**. An integrated approach to antiracism stresses that since individuals and institutions are in dynamic interaction in the reproduction of racial ideologies and practices, it is necessary for antiracist educators to engage in antiracist pedagogies that seek to fundamentally disrupt these ideologies and practices, and create opportunities for individuals to envision and mobilize for change in tangible ways. I am influenced by antiracist educators who employ methods that engage their students in disruptive emotional and intellectual learning to challenge existing worldviews and bear witness to racism (see chapters 6 and 8). Unlike liberal multicultural approaches, this kind of antiracism requires students to participate in intensive learning, critical self-reflection, and antiracist praxis (Berlak, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000; Felman & Laub, 1992; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Tucker, 2005).

An integrated antiracist approach begins in **the spaces of our everyday lives and practices**, for it is within our immediate social worlds that we can begin to make connections between our personal and relational experiences, and broader social, political, and economic realities (Dei, 1996a; Okolie, 2004; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). It is in these spaces that we can conceptualize the relationship between individual and collective agency, and societal structures. Wetherell and Potter (1992) posit that

histories of antiracist struggle demonstrate individuals can cultivate antiracist consciousness and be involved in antiracist praxis, but it starts with the self and one's social world. It is a process which involves, "the self-awareness, knowledge, and skills- as well as the confidence, patience, and persistence-to challenge, interrupt, modify, erode, and eliminate any and all manifestations of racism within one's own spheres of influence" (p.3). Everyday antiracism consists of "personal tactics" to deconstruct and resist racism and discrimination (Fleras, 2014); as mentioned we see these kinds of "personal tactics" in the women's literacy practices with their children and others (see chapters 7 and 8). When we focus on the everyday as a site to connect personal, collective, and structural conditions, we can also imagine that everyday forms of labour can be politicized (e.g., mothering), and that antiracist "challenges, resistance, and change" can take many iterations.

Informing my study

Together, the three theoretical frameworks I describe above created the conceptual and intellectual foundation for me to examine the lives and experiences of white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural relationships, and to respond to my central research questions. There are significant interconnections between the theoretical frameworks that strengthen my analysis and that remain thematic throughout the study. As scholars of whiteness studies, critical race feminist scholars, and antiracist theorists all emphasize, social and ideological constructions are complex and intersecting, and how we make meaning of them is situated within specific historical, social, political and economic conditions. In each of these theoretical frameworks, the examination and interrogation of whiteness and white supremacy are integral to the study of race and racism. Whether we consider racialized interpersonal relationships across differences, such as those of the participants and their families, or broader racialized structures, whiteness (the multiple ways in which it manifests), and white supremacy (the structures and ideologies that maintain the dominating power of whiteness), must be made visible, as scholars in each of these fields note. This in turn requires us to understand that all people are racialized and part of racialized systems. At the same time, theorists of whiteness studies, critical race feminists and antiracist

scholars all emphasize the intersectional nature of oppression, and the complexity and fluidity of individual and collective social identities.

In order to address how white Euro-Canadian women can negotiate, reproduce, and challenge discourses of race and difference, I needed to understand how white supremacist ideologies manifest in the spaces of the everyday through discourses and practices. Central to this was the continuous examination of the dialogical relationship between individual/micro-level conditions, and institutional/macro-level conditions. These key relationships between structure and agency, and the individual and the institution, are imperative to consider within each of the critical theoretical framings, as each addresses how change can and must take place at both levels. Ultimately, I had to examine where the participants in this study were situated within these oppressive structures, how they acted to uphold them in their everyday lives and practices, and how they could fight to bring them down.

Critical race feminisms and antiracism emphasize the places of the everyday as powerful sites of learning, resistance, and community building across difference. While the home and family have always been contentious and divisive issues for feminists, critical race feminists demonstrate that the home and the community remain critical spaces for women to organize themselves politically, socially and economically within a patriarchal society. As antiracist theorists contend, critical learning takes place in both formal and informal environments, and antiracist praxis requires working towards the integration of the home, community, and school to foster collaborative relationships and knowledge sharing. In antiracism, the commitment to praxis requires that resistance to hegemonic ideologies takes place in all the spaces in our lives, including our families. Antiracist activism as such needs to be imagined in broad conceptual terms, which critically includes, "...seeing small acts as cumulative and significant for social change" (Dei, 2000a, p.39).

Antiracism and critical race feminisms enrich my analysis by questioning dominant Eurocentric knowledge, and privileging other ways of knowing and imagining difference. For instance, white Euro-Canadian women in this study raising children, who will be socially constructed, and/or self-identity as "black" or "of colour" in a racist

society, can learn much from Afrocentric and African American practices of motherhood, to support the racial and overall development of their children. These mothering practices can also facilitate the women's own learning, and create opportunities for critical consciousness-raising. Through the work of critical race feminists and antiracist theorists, I have been able to imagine the participants' mothering practices as politically and socially significant labour, and it is through this labour that women can feel empowered, exercise their agency, and possibly gain critical forms of antiracist consciousness. As antiracist theorists make clear, antiracist consciousness and identification are ongoing and messy processes, but if individuals are open to learning and willing to engage in critical self-reflection, new awareness and identities can form. By linking the participants' everyday lives as white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families to antiracism pedagogies, we can consider how individuals, such as these women, can possibly create new white antiracist identities and participate in antiracist praxis (Thompson, 2001).

Scholars of whiteness studies, Canadian critical race feminists and antiracist theorists, stress the importance of situating studies within the specific socio-political Canadian context and white settler society. For this reason, this study considers whiteness and discourses of race and difference within Canada's colonial history, and situates the women within the current social and political Canadian climate. Finally, theorists from all three frameworks, and particularly antiracism, challenge me to consider how the society is changing through "crises of whiteness," and transforming racial formations necessitating a reconceptualization of how difference is "negotiated" within our relationships and societies (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Essed, 2007; Twine & Gallagher, 2008). As antiracist theorists stress, we need to reimagine difference as positive, nurturing, and imperative to the future of diverse human societies (Armstrong & Ng, 2005; Essed, 2007). The women in this study and their transracial/cultural families demonstrate and embody the diversification of our society, and as such scholarship that analyzes the perspectives and lived experiences of such families, including this study, can provide insight into the transnational landscapes of the future.

Chapter 4. Methodology-The Research Process as a Learning Journey

Introduction

How do we make sense of the social world? In the following chapter on methodology, I discuss this research study as an ongoing learning journey. This process of critical reflection characterized all aspects of my work: from preliminary brainstorming for research topics, in which I contemplated the nature of knowledge and knowledge construction, to the implementation of the integrated steps in data collection, in which I considered how critical and decolonizing methodologies can inform a study on race and difference, without re-inscribing whiteness. This chapter is divided into two sections: the first explores the critical methodologies (decolonizing, Indigenous, feminist and antiracist) that lay the ontological and epistemological foundations of my research process, as well as several of the key questions and considerations I contemplated along the way. The second section addresses the research study details, including the research methods I employed, and my process of critical discourse analysis and data coding.

Section I: Making Sense of the Social World

Getting grounded: Ontology and epistemology

In his book, *Qualitative Researching*, Mason (1996) urges qualitative researchers to ask themselves intellectually challenging questions about how they understand the nature of the social world (ontology), and how they understand the nature of knowledge and its production (epistemology). Gaining insight into how we conceive of the world around us, significantly informs why and how we conduct research. Mason writes, “qualitative researchers need to be able to think and act strategically in ways which

combine intellectual, philosophical, technical and practical concerns rather than compartmentalizing them into separate boxes” (p.2). This is particularly true in the case of antiracism research, in which an intellectual and emotional engagement for the researcher, participants, and readers is necessary to confront ideologies of race and difference. Such “holistic” involvement can, in effect, create a deeper connection between the personal and the professional, making research more meaningful, as well as more critically and actively self-reflexive in nature. With respect to epistemology, Mason contends that responding to questions about what knowledge or evidence of the social world “is” enables researchers, “...to explore what kind of epistemological position your research expresses or implements” (p.13). For me, as a researcher, what is most important in this pensive exercise broadly, and in the statement above specifically, is that through a self-conscious and self-reflexive research process, the researcher has agency as to how they wish their research to be articulated and for what purpose. This means contending with competing notions of what constitutes knowledge and evidence, and how it *should* be reflected/legitimated, and “made real” in our understandings of the social world. For instance, dominant discourses of positivism, the continuing battle between quantitative and qualitative research paradigms, appeals to validity, legitimacy and ownership of research data (and in effect how we construct social reality), are internalized by the researcher, who seeks to produce “valid” and “legitimate” knowledge (Dei & Johal, 2005; Swadener & Mutua, 2008; Twine & Warren, 2000). These are struggles that we, as researchers, do not necessarily name when we initially consider how we will conduct our research, but as Mason writes, this is where we need to begin. Part of self-reflexive research for me is working towards normative ideas of not only what I think I know reality and knowledge to be, but also what I *imagine* them to be. For this reason, I have chosen to explore and to be principally informed by decolonizing, Indigenous, and feminist methodologies, and antiracism research methods, all of which share many of the same ontological and epistemological principles crucial to the development of multiple ways of knowing.

Critical methodologies: Research as colonial reproduction and disruption

In her influential work, Indigenous scholar Linda Smith (1999) reminds us that the concept of research “...is not an innocent or distant academic exercise, but an activity

that has something at stake and that occurs within a set of political and social conditions” (p.5). She also writes, “the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p.1). Following this, we must forever remember that no research is neutral or isolated, and our discussions of even the term ‘research’ are constructed and shaped by certain ideological frameworks (Dei, 2005; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). This is a shared essential principle of Indigenous, feminist and antiracism research methodologies: research is colonial in its (traditional) nature, and unequal relations of power govern the construct of academic research (Dei, 2005; Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). In critical methodologies, there is recognition that there are multiple ways of knowing, experiencing and interpreting social reality, and a commitment to decolonizing the research process and beyond (within the larger society). This involves: privileging marginalized voices, narratives and epistemologies, addressing the asymmetrical power relationships between the researcher and the research participants, and recognizing the inherent subjectivity of the researcher, who frames and influences the research process. Decolonizing the research process includes careful consideration of the direct relationship between theory and praxis, in which research should be for, and have a positive impact on, research participants/community, reflecting mutual needs and goals (Dei, 2005; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; DeVault & Gross, 2012; Okolie, 2005; Swadener & Mutua, 2008; Tomaselli, Dyll, & Francis, 2008).

Decolonizing research

While there is no one definition of decolonizing research, there are general shared principles, which include the understanding that “non-Western” ways of knowing are marginalized or silenced in existing research paradigms, and the necessity of privileging and working within alternative epistemologies (Dei, 2005; Swadener & Mutua, 2008; Tomaselli, Dyll, & Francis, 2008). Within Indigenous epistemologies/methodologies, there is an assertion that we need to recognize the research construct as colonial, while we consciously engage with decolonization (Smith, 1999; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). This is similar to antiracism research; as Dei (2005) argues, antiracism must be considered within the context of colonialism and research should be conducted within an anticolonial framework. Tomaselli et al., (2008) posit, we need to disrupt the authority of research for research’s sake and query the assumptions

about the very nature of research itself. We must make the research process a part of research inquiry, wherein the process is conscious and thoughtful, the researcher's positionality and subjectivity are interrogated, and the methods employed as insightfully understood.

As a researcher, I need to recognize that all relationships are shaped and informed by ideologies of race and difference, which can often be reproduced without conscious complicity (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Swadener & Mutua, 2008; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This is both the subject and object of my study, in that I sought to examine the reproduction and disruption of racial ideologies for women in transracial/cultural families, and at the same time, do so within a decolonizing research framework that is similarly critical of colonial reproduction. After all, decolonizing research extends to places beyond where colonization occurred, but also to where colonial research approaches are used (Swadener & Mutua, 2008). The multiracial family can certainly be considered a research site in which colonial discourses have been perpetuated (and where socialization into whiteness occurs) (Frankenberg, 1993, 1997; Najmi & Srikanth, 2002; Twine, 2010). If decolonizing research can expand to spaces outside of formal systems of colonization, it can also include spaces in which resistance against colonization can take place, such as diasporic spaces (Brah, 1996), where I contend transracial/cultural families reside (see chapter 7). Disrupting binary meanings and identities (e.g., black/white, insider/outsider, us/them) can create opportunities for redefinition of the research field, which holds many more possible research identities and ways of being (Swadener & Mutua, 2008, p.38). These principles are central to my research on white women, as I sought to examine the reproduction and disruption of ideologies of difference, I had to attempt to do this *outside* of traditional positivist forms of research, and remain cognizant that I do not want to engage in research as colonial reproduction. This is even more imperative as I conduct research as a white scholar with white women, who would not typically be considered to have marginalized voices (though some may disagree based on their gender and some of the participants' respective socioeconomic statuses).

As I moved through the stages of the research process, I continued to reflect on the risk of colonial reproduction. White researchers need to be cautious as to how they

normalize white racist discourse by maintaining the language and ideologies of white supremacy, and in turn the “invisibility” of whiteness. I wondered whether I was reproducing (and worse re-centering) colonial ideologies by employing the same terminology of white supremacy and fixed binaries of race and gender, such as “white” and “black” (Gallagher, 2000). With this and other pertinent considerations in mind, I chose to explicitly incorporate and draw on my experiential knowledge in my study. I did this particularly when there were relational moments in the individual interviews, and in the participant workshops to bring forth conceptual connections between ‘the self’ and bigger ideologies, and to take our dialogues into deeper analysis (this was exemplified in my narrative about reproducing colonial dynamics within my own relationship) (see chapter 1 and 8).

As part of implicating myself in the process and creating a shared vulnerability, I explicitly sought to name and centralize whiteness, and the relationship between whiteness, white privilege and colonialism. This is based on the contention that if one genuinely seeks to not only examine, but to deconstruct whiteness, research endeavours should create opportunities for the researcher and the participants to critically trouble “white scripts,” and work to create “counter-narratives of whiteness” (Gallagher, 2000, p.68). As I argue, colonization, and in turn decolonization, are processes which are (re)constituted/take place on many levels, including within interpersonal relational spaces (between ‘self’ and ‘other’). Within this framing, the researcher cannot maintain a distant gaze between oneself as the ‘objective observer,’ and the participant as ‘the object of study,’ for this in and of itself is to maintain a colonial relationship: a separation of self and other. Instead, as per critical methodologies, the researcher is an essential part of a dialogical process with the participants, one in which such an observational gaze need also be placed on the self (Butler, 2005; Max, 2005; Okolie, 2005). In this way, research can be part of a decolonization process, wherein the researcher continuously interrogates the self as a socially and ideologically constructed subject situated within colonial ideologies, and challenges the reproduction of colonial discourses during, and because of, the relational knowledge created during the research process (Max, 2005). If we are to disrupt whiteness and imagine decolonization, ‘white’ people need to have discussions in which whiteness and colonialism are explicitly brought forth, and responsibility to challenge white privilege and racism is shared by the

researcher and the participants (Gallagher, 2000). As Dei (2005) writes, antiracism research examines, “local resistance to oppression, and the learning objective is to create healthy spaces in which subjects can collaborate with researchers to understand the nature of social oppression” (p.11). In this study I sought to create relational spaces with the participants. These are spaces of inquiry, where critical and intimate engagement between people can take place; they can share personal experiences, and participate in co-constructing knowledge. In these relational spaces, my objective was to create a sense of ‘comfortable discomfort’ with my participants, wherein they could articulate their reflections on race and whiteness, and together we could make linkages between white privilege and colonialism, without “getting stuck” within the negative, and sometimes debilitating, emotions of guilt and shame (see Berlak, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000).

The socially constructed and subjective researcher

The promises of positivist research are objectivity and truth, which are treated as authoritative and legitimate, yet these very notions are socially constructed (Wahab, 2005). Reality is not “just there,” it is constituted through the everyday lives of people, and the research process is part of knowledge construction (DeVault & Gross, 2012). If reality is socially constructed by individuals, our knowing and our telling of what we understand social reality to be is inherently subjective, and as such, inherently human. The research process is an opportunity for the researcher to consider their own experiences and ways of knowing in knowledge production (Dei, 2005; Pink, 2007). As someone socially constructed as white, who was socialized into whiteness and directly benefits from racial privilege, I must explicitly recognize my complicity in a system of white supremacy (Butler, 2005; Johal, 2005; Max, 2005). I do not and cannot *know* the lived experiences of racism by negatively racialized peoples, nor can the white women with whom I conducted this research (Bergerson, 2003; Berlak, 2004). That there are limits to knowing is a central guiding principle in my study and consistently informed my research process. That being said, there are no limits to learning, and within a critical decolonizing framework, the researcher is principally a learner, and this is who she must understand herself to be (Dei, 2005, Wahab, 2005). She must go beyond learning about ‘differences’ to actively engage in a critical analysis of white power and privilege, and to

analyse her own subjectivity and complicity in past and present processes of colonization (Johal, 2005; Max, 2005; Swadener & Mutua, 2008). These considerations came forth both within and outside of the research study. As a researcher who holds shared and embodied knowledge in the study, I learned that I had to repeatedly confront the self as I engaged with the participants. Tensions regarding white Canadian female subjectivities emerged as six of the women explicitly recounted their early socialization into constructing Aboriginal peoples as ‘the racialized others,’ and as seven of the participants problematized the colonial history and present-day conditions of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (see chapters 5 and 6). Outside of the study, I learned that I need to continuously (and necessarily) struggle with my own subjectivity as a white woman and mother in a transracial/cultural family, as well as how I perform white privilege, and perpetuate the ongoing colonization of Aboriginal peoples, and the marginalization of negatively racialized peoples (Johal, 2005; Swadener and Mutua, 2008). Throughout the study and beyond, questions were ever-present in my mind, such as: How do I enact colonial whiteness? How might I be perpetuating “white speak” (Moon, 1999)? How do I reproduce racist ideologies? How do I think and behave in contradictory ways? These contemplations involve everything from the rooted cognitive frameworks I draw on to understand the social world and social groups within it, to the movements I make in public and commercial spaces in ritualistic daily life. Most importantly, I had to ask myself the very same troublesome questions that I posed to my participants, and to genuinely reflect on my own responses, which changed in light of new insights based on interactions with participants and engagement with relevant literature.

Within research practice, white researchers engaging in antiracist research arguably need to struggle with notions of complicity and resistance, particularly when the notion of “shared whiteness” (Gallagher, 2000) can be presumed and naturalized in “white speak” (Moon, 1999). The notion of “shared whiteness” can allow people to assume one agrees and adheres to white racist discourse, or that they are “kindred spirits in racism” (Gallagher, p.72). If one remains silent in the reproduction of racial discourses, does that result in their complicity? Is this also to participate in a form of white erasure? On the other hand, a white researcher conducting antiracism research can be constructed as a “race traitor,” if one resists the white racial discourses

perpetuated by those around them. They can also be seen to colonize by claiming authority and legitimacy to knowledge about racism and racial oppression (Twine, 2000).

As white researchers face the real risk of colonizing antiracism work, they must not only explicitly address their positionality, but also acknowledge their “pigmentary passport of privilege” (Johal, 2005, p.273). This necessarily involves more than simply naming white subjectivities and going about antiracism work without disruption. It is very easy for white researchers to use antiracism principles to maintain their positions and privilege, especially when white antiracist scholars and activists may get more recognition and support than marginalized peoples engaging in antiracism work (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). And yet, as Johal (2005) bluntly states, “you cannot call yourself an ally if you expect the world to continue to revolve around you” (p.287). White researchers need to thoughtfully consider how to not recentre themselves in their research, but at the same time interrogate whiteness and white supremacy, as well as recognize their own implication in racism, which is “our” and not “their” issue (Butler, 2005, p.130-31). This involves a commitment to antiracism work and the implications of it, and recognition of the institutional power (false authority) that allows white researchers to do antiracism work (Okolie, 2005). Finally, there must be honesty that antiracism work is painful and traumatic because racism is painful and traumatic. Antiracism work is not easy, nor is it meant to be.

As a white scholar conducting antiracism research, I learned that an acknowledgement and acceptance of discomfort and disruption is an integral part of antiracism research as a learning journey. The researcher must be vulnerable in profound ways. She must find meaningful ways to write herself into the research process, without centering herself within it. It is challenging to write the self “in,” particularly as there is no allocated place to do so; rather, one must push one’s way into the process and make new space in the text. For white scholars doing antiracism work in general, and in the specific context of my study examining what can be contentious issues, this kind of vulnerability is even more essential. When we are vulnerable, we enable others to be as well; and this can bring the researcher, the participants, and the readers’ closer together. As Behar (1996) tells us, “when you write vulnerably others respond vulnerably. A different set of problems and predicaments arise which would

never surface in response to more detached writing” (p.16).³³ This has application not only to the writing process, but also to the dialogical process that unfolds between the researcher and the participants, (as well as between the participants themselves), throughout the research process.

Participant relationships and embodied/shared knowledge

Antiracism researchers argue that researchers must be aware of how they are “creating” their participants, as well as aware of how their own subjectivities are understood by those with whom they conduct research, and how this informs their research relationships (Dei, 2005; Pink, 2007). It is necessary to cultivate relationships with participants that are premised on respect and the establishment of trust. To facilitate relationship building, it is important to be authentic and honest with participants by not ignoring issues of power and difference (DeVault and Gross, 2012) As this study involved a researcher and research participants who are socially constructed as white, issues of power and difference extended beyond the direct research relationship to include how dynamics of power are part of other primary relationships (e.g., with partners and children). This was addressed through discussions in the interviews and workshops (see below). Throughout the research process, I remained aware of how I was constructing the participants, and I reflected on how I was interacting with them. I also thought about how they in turn may be constructing me and one another in the group workshops. These considerations I created time and space to contemplate, and also used as an opportunity to grow as a researcher, by continuously rethinking my approach; for instance, by reviewing my interview questions and language usage, revising the workshop format, and revisiting the workshop texts to ensure they were still appropriate to meet the study objectives.

³³ Clearly there are also drawbacks and challenges to this approach. When one writes oneself into their work it is tricky as one cannot be sure where it will go. For instance, a researcher may appear self-absorbed or indulgent, and/or they could seem irrelevant to the research study. They could also risk detracting from the significance of the research topic by placing too much emphasis on the self, and worse of all act to colonize antiracism space (as mentioned above). Evidently, there is much to negotiate in this pursuit, but it remains worthwhile and necessary, particularly as one must remember the vulnerability and exposure of those one researches (Behar, 1996).

Shared knowledge can be beneficial for collaborative antiracist/anticolonial research, for when the researcher has embodied knowledge of their research subject, participants may be more candid in their responses, and the researcher may also be able to “read” language, gestures, and behaviours others may not see (Okolie, 2005). This can create a research relationship, in which “...there is a common experience/understanding between those who ask and those who are being asked” (Dunbar, p.90). Through embodied knowledge, the researcher can become a “knowing listener” (p.90), who is able to read silences, facial expressions, body language, and other nuanced ways of communicating. I think this embodied knowledge is particularly important in a study regarding racial ideologies, which involves issues that can make people feel uncomfortable or apprehensive to discuss in an open manner. Participants may feel more open to sharing their ideas, particularly ones that may be intimate or controversial (Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010). As I moved through the research process with my participants, I witnessed how the sense of shared knowledge facilitated open dialogue, and I realised the value of “reading” one another in nuanced ways. I contend this allowed for conversations that may not have taken place without the ability to interpret participant articulations and inferences; in particular, I believe there are participant perspectives that may not have been disclosed to me without the assumption that shared knowledge existed between us (aka I “get it”). This was evident in distinct ways during the individual interviews; for instance, when participants made reference to my understanding or experiencing the same conditions, by asking rhetorical questions such as, “you know what I mean,” and “you get it, right.” This was also clear in the numerous times participants would stop during their storytelling to ask me about my experience of a similar situation, or request that I provide a specific example of racial and discriminatory discourse in daily interactions. I believe this also supported the cultivation of a shared learning process in the study for me as the researcher and for the participants as well. Opening up spaces for dialogue in the more intimate context of the individual interviews, and then in the space of the group workshops, created opportunities to challenge ourselves and one another, both personally and intellectually. A sense of common experience seemed to facilitate a shared intimacy between the women; an intimacy I anticipate would have grown into a sense of community if the study were a long-term endeavour.

With all the above in mind, it is necessary to state that embodied knowledge does not equate to sameness; just as “active listening” is critical, a researcher must not assume sameness with their participants, or they could simply end up ‘hearing what they want to hear’ (DeVault & Gross, 2012). While similar experiences and points of reference (e.g., cultural, social, spatial) may be shared, it became clear as the participants recounted their stories, how complex and intersectional individual subjectivities are (Dei & Johal, 2005; Few, 2007). Informed by social constructions including: socioeconomic status, education, spatial location, ethnicity, religion, and political and sexual orientation, each participant embodied multilayered and interlocking subject positions. While there were definitely shared references and assumptions about whiteness, white privileges and forms of white femininity that thematically emerged between the participants, individual experiences and perspectives were not necessarily the same. This was evident in the various ways the women understood and expressed the notion of “whiteness,” and what this construction “is” to them, especially in relation to their self-identification (refer to chapter 5). In this study, I also noted how the women’s subjectivities appeared to be highly mediated by space, and how they occupy it (e.g., the places they grew up, currently reside, have travelled to, worked in, and/or studied), as well as their respective social groups. Thus, while we shared ‘experiential knowledge’ of being women in transracial/cultural families of Euro-Canadian and African descent, our understandings of and approaches to our lives, relationships, and in turn ideologies of race and difference themselves, distinctly varied. During the group workshops, the diversity in experience and social locations amongst the women seemed to generate much rich dialogue, and enabled knowledge sharing and new insights to take place.

I also noted while eight out of ten participants were very interested in the research, and they explicitly stated their hope that the study would generate more awareness about racism and multiracial families, I found after the workshops, the seven women who participated appeared to be more invested in the study. The experience of meeting with other women in similar families, something several of the participants including Liana and Maya had not experienced before, allowed them to discuss issues in ways they stated they could not do with friends in monoracial/cultural families. As per antiracism and critical methodologies, this investment in the study was pertinent as I sought to collaborate with participants in a shared process of knowledge co-construction

(Dei, 2005). This collaborative approach directly informed the research methods I employed, which emphasized participants' voices and experience through the principle of narrative/storytelling.

Storytelling/co-constructing knowledge

Dunbar (2008) writes that, “the story is important because it has the capacity to tell the truth about history” (p.98). What is “the truth about history”? According to Dunbar, there are countless truths, just as there are countless stories to reflect them; yet throughout history, many voices, narratives, and ways of knowing have not been a privileged part of legitimate truths and official histories. For this reason, to privilege and validate the voices of marginalized peoples in central to antiracism theory and critical race feminisms (Dei, 2005; Dua, 1999; Mohanran, 1999; Okolie, 2005). Personal narratives are not merely articulations of an isolated self, but reflections of larger community and societal narratives and conditions (DeVault & Gross, 2012). As the research study unfolded, it became clear participant narratives were stories that not only told of personal experience, but of place. The histories of their respective lives were also histories of changing landscapes, growing cities, and new social formations. The relational spaces that were created during the research process, in the interviews and in the participant workshops, were themselves very much embedded within situated political and social conditions of the two locations, where I conducted the study: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and Vancouver, British Columbia. In section two below, I discuss my research process, and detail the research methods I employed. I then address how my use of critical discourse analysis (CDA) allowed me to not only code and analyse my research data, but to push my critical thinking further, as I made sense of colonial ideologies and participant talk.

Section II: The Research Study

Locations: Small prairie city and large west coast city

The research study was conducted in two different geographic locations: the first is the small prairie city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, located in the Canadian flatlands in

the central part of the country. The second is the large urban metropolis of Vancouver, British Columbia, situated on the west coast of Canada. Each place holds unique landscapes and characteristics, as well as localized histories and ongoing demographic changes. Saskatoon is presently experiencing high population growth due to internal migration from within Canada, and increasing immigration from outside of the country. According to the most recent Canadian census data, the population of the Saskatoon metropolitan region grew by 11.4% between the years 2006 to 2011, from 233,923 to a total of 260,000. This growth is markedly higher than the Canadian national population growth of 5.9% (Statistics Canada, 2012). In fact, the province of Saskatchewan has held one of the highest population growth rates over the past four years. The greatest explanatory variable for this steady rise in population is the increase in international migration to the region. According to the Canadian National Household Survey (2011), immigrants³⁴ make up 10.7% of the total population, and over 40% of immigrants to Saskatoon arrived in or after 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2015). Population projections strongly indicate that the city of Saskatoon will almost double in size in the next twenty years (City of Saskatoon, 2013; Rockliffe, 2013).

A city that was once an isolated, rural and agriculturally-based small town, is now undergoing rapid social and economic changes, and embodies all of the considerations and competing economic interests that come with such change in urban development, such as the displacement of marginalized peoples through the “gentrification” of space. Saskatoon in many ways has been imagined as a ‘white settler frontier,’ and has a long history of colonial and racial division and demarcation: between white settlers and Aboriginal peoples, and between the east side and the west side of the city. The west side of the city represents negatively racialized space, associated with bodies of colour, criminality, and violence (Casey, 2014; Razack, 2002, 2014). This city is notorious for racism, discrimination and marginalization of First Nations people and Saskatoon is the location of documented police violence and brutality against Aboriginal peoples. This

³⁴ According to the Statistics Canada publications (2012, 2013) I referenced, an immigrant is defined as: “A person who is or has ever been a landed immigrant/permanent resident. This person has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others have arrived recently” (2013, p.4).

includes the infamous 'starlight tours,' and the freezing death of Neil Stonechild (and many others), which received national media attention and is etched into the memories of many (see Comack, 2012; Razack, 2014). How the racialized dynamics of the city change as more immigrants, who have diverse cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds and affiliations, move into the region is transpiring right now; and how to "negotiate diversity" in this city appears to be of imminent importance. Within these current situated conditions, it is a very pertinent time to consider how these demographic changes are transforming the very nature of this city, and how these changes shape the articulations and experiences of the women in this study.

In contrast to Saskatoon, Vancouver is one of the three largest metropolitan areas in Canada. In 2014, the population of Vancouver was 2,470,289. Similar to Saskatoon, population growth in Vancouver is greatly attributed to international migration, which accounted for an increase in population of 31,500 in 2014. That being said, Vancouver experienced an overall decrease in international migration from previous years. This has been attributed in part to increased immigration to the prairie cities, including Saskatoon (Statistics Canada, 2015). Vancouver has a much longer history of international immigration, and has one of the highest numbers of "foreign-born" residents in Canada, making up approximately 40% of the total population in 2011. Moreover, visible minorities account for 45.2% of the population of Vancouver (1.0 million people). The city of Vancouver has long dealt with the issues of rapid population growth and urbanization, as well as the ensuing gentrification and marginalization of negatively racialized peoples that such 'urban development' can bring. This is evident in the infamous conditions of the downtown eastside of the city (DTES), the location of much research and controversy over urbanization, poverty, health and racialization (e.g., Burnett, 2014; Diewert, 2013; Linden et al., 2013; Liu & Blomley, 2013; The Canadian Press, 2012). Many issues in the city remain highly racialized, contentious and divisive, such as: land ownership for First Nations communities (e.g., Curry, Donker, & Krehbiel, 2014), issues of language (e.g., Chau, 2015; Kubota, 2015), and housing affordability, particularly as the city of Vancouver continues to grow and to increasingly become an unaffordable place to stay for many (Gold, 2016; Lee-Young, 2016; Lindsay, 2015; Yaffe, 2015).

I chose to investigate the experiences of women in transracial/cultural families in these two respective locations for I wanted to address how ideologies of difference are situated within time and space, and how these ideologies manifest in specific and unique spatial and discursive ways within the stories and histories of individual lives, and of the land. I also sought to examine how colonial ideologies act to construct social reality by assigning meaning to place, and how that informs the ways in which the women imagine, navigate and fix spaces where they reside. As I have previously articulated, no space is neutral; each space is demarcated by colonial discourses and practices, which create the conditions of coming-to-know the land, to assign meaning to it, and over time and repeated storytelling, to become part of creating and reproducing social reality (Razack, 2014; Mohanram, 1999; Smith, 1999; Thobani, 2007). Gentrification is such a process of meaning making over the battle of colonial space: who can dominate it and who can access it. New and ongoing processes of urban gentrification are something found in both Saskatoon and Vancouver. These processes can arguably be imagined as a 'recolonization' of space, in which entitlement to land is (re)claimed by those who can control its future (and the future of those who live in it), through economic and political power. It is highly important to describe these processes, and the landscapes that make up the places the women in this study call home, as these lands inform and influence the women's very understandings of the world, as well as how they are positioned within it and in relation to 'others.' Most pertinently, these places shape the women's conceptions of difference, and are the sites within which they navigate, reproduce, and resist colonial ideologies (Mohanram, 1999).

Participant recruitment

For the study, I recruited participants who self-identify as "white Canadian birth mothers,"³⁵ and who are in/have been in a relationship with a black African partner, who is a first generation immigrant to Canada. My objective was to find participants who represent multiple subject positions with respect to: socioeconomic class, ethnicity, religion, education, employment, age, life history, travel experiences, and civil society

³⁵ As discussed in chapter one, I now define the participants as white Euro-Canadian women or white women of Euro-Canadian descent.

engagement, in order to perform a comparative analysis of how these variables mediate constructions and experiences of race and difference. In order to recruit participants, I conducted “third party recruitment” or “snowball recruitment” through participants known to me, or through other contacts already known to me. I also attempted to recruit participants through public communications, first and foremost with the distribution of my public recruitment flyer (Appendix B), at what I deemed to be appropriate community organizations, including: The Saskatchewan Intercultural Association (SIA), the Saskatoon Young Women’s Community Association (YWCA), and MOSAIC, a non-profit organization serving new immigrants and refugees in Vancouver, BC. I also posted participant recruitment flyers at the University of Saskatchewan, The University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University. The third party recruitment using online communication was the most successful way that I recruited participants. I did receive many responses from women, who had been approached by a friend about the study, as well as numerous inquiries from women, located in various places across the country, including: Kelowna, Edmonton and Montreal. I also received inquiries from several women asking if I was considering other mixed couples beyond Canadian-African families, such as, mixed Canadian-Caribbean and Canadian-Chilean families. I would have loved to include women from other regions in Canada, as well as women in a multitude of diverse mixed families. For instance, it would be informative to examine more in depth how place mediates these women’s experiences all over the country, as well as how different kinds of multiracial/cultural families in Canada experience and negotiate distinct forms of racialization. While I had to limit the scope of this study, I intend to pursue these lines of inquiry in future research.

I received no responses from the public communications I put out. As I was recruiting a very specific and small percentage of the overall population, it was understandable there were a relatively limited number of respondents (a total of 16), who would be considered eligible to participate in the study. At the same time, I contend that this can also be attributed to the intimate and potentially contentious nature of the subject matter. I imagine that some women may have been hesitant to respond, particularly if they did not know who I was, or perhaps why I was “studying” these women and their families. The women’s hesitancy was certainly something I noted in my correspondence with several women through third party recruitment. In particular, I

found that I received a very different and much more positive response when potential participants knew that I was also a self-identified white Canadian woman of European descent in a multiracial/cultural family. I also noted when women whom I knew connected me with others they often premised their introduction on my own subjectivity and positionality in this study, to highlight my status as a woman in a family “like theirs.” This would not have been conveyed in my public communications flyers, and I believe this is a key reason why I was ultimately successful in participant recruitment through third party recruitment, as opposed to public solicitation. I realised that when attempting to do decolonizing research, it is crucial to connect with potential participants. Once I became aware of the significance of changing this dynamic, I reconsidered whether I should have announced my own subjectivity in my initial communication with potential participants in a brief, yet meaningful way.

The participants

I initially concluded that the study could accommodate a maximum of twelve participants. Participant selection was primarily based on the following: a) Identifying participant criteria (as per above), b) respective geographic location (as it was important that the women meet face-to-face for the group workshops), and c) their availability to participate in the study. I decided if I received more than the maximum number of participants, selection would be based on a first come, first serve basis. Based on the selection criteria, I had a total of ten participants: six in Vancouver, British Columbia, and four in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. This was an ideal number in that I was able to collect much data through comprehensive one-on-one interviews, and through the intimate nature of the workshops, due to their small size.

The final ten participants involved in the study had a range of subjectivities and identifications, which I examine in the following chapters. First, the women ranged in age from mid-twenties to late thirties, and were of various socioeconomic backgrounds. Education levels and employment professions also varied amongst the women; six women had undergraduate degrees (and one was in the progress of getting her undergraduate degree), three participants had some post-secondary technical or professional training, and three had graduate degrees. Seven of the women worked in

full-time positions in multiple sectors, including: the provincial government, the private sector, and in non-governmental organizations. Two women were full-time students and one woman was on maternity leave. The women held different positions such as: government bureaucrat, hairstylist, office worker, daycare owner and sexual wellness educator, PhD researcher, and social work student. Eight of the women were legally married to their spouses, and in relationships that ranged from two years to over seventeen years together. One participant was in a long-term common law relationship with her partner, and one participant was legally divorced from her ex-husband. Two of the women were in their second marriages, and they both had a child from their previous relationship (one marriage was also a multiracial/cultural relationship, and one was a monoracial/cultural relationship). The participants had children who ranged in age from 0 (one participant was pregnant during the data collection stage) to sixteen. The four Saskatoon participants had children ranging from 0-16 years of age, with a majority of their children under the age of ten, while all six of the Vancouver participants had children ranging from 1-5 years of age (with the exception of one participant who had a fourteen year old stepson). In sum, seven of the women in the study had children under the age of ten. I found that the age of the children directly influenced how much relative experience the women had in navigating issues of race and difference. For instance, for women whose children were not yet of school age, their social interactions may be more limited to home or centre-based daycares, and immediate social groups and family members; whereas, for women who had older children, they may have navigated more social dynamics (e.g., teacher and peer-based interactions), and experienced more periods of socio-emotional and identity development over time with their children.

All ten participants in the study were born in Canada and are legal Canadian citizens. Seven of the women's partners were either permanent residents of Canada, or were recently granted Canadian citizenship. Three of the women's partners were going through the process of getting permanent residency or citizenship. The women's partners had emigrated from various African countries to Canada between five and twelve years ago. Their home countries included: Zimbabwe, the Congo, South Africa, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali and Kenya. The women represented a variety of religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and affiliations, including: Mennonite, Christian, Jewish, Catholic, Muslim (through marriage), Agnostic, Ukrainian, Irish and Portuguese. It is of

note that two of the women, Zanadu and Julia, had fathers, who were directly involved in the Christian church as a minister and a pastor. All of the women self-identified as white, although this construct and identification was questioned and disrupted for many of the women (see chapters 5 and 6). It is of note that one participant was distinct from the others in this regard. As a Portuguese woman of first-generation immigrant parents to Canada, Vancouver participant, Simone, has experienced direct forms of racialization and racism growing up in East Vancouver. Although she self-identifies as white, she has been socially constructed as “non-white” on distinct occasions throughout her life, and as such has experienced forms of discrimination and oppression the other participants have not. I also found differences between the women, who had a strong ethnic/cultural identity, cultivated by growing up in a familial home with one or both first-generation immigrant parents. I found this gave the women a sense of “feeling different” or “being different” within the spaces of early socialization, and cultivated their insightful understandings of their identities, notions of difference, and the concept of Canadian ‘culture’ (see chapters 5 and 6).

The varied travel experience of the women was another variable that seemed to contribute to their respective conceptualizations of difference. Seven of the women had travelled quite extensively, and six had lived abroad for varying periods of time. Three of the participants, Liana, Maya and Simone, had limited travel experience. It is of note that seven women had travelled to their partner’s home country and community, and five participants had spent time living in their partner’s home community (only three participants had never been to their partner’s country of origin: Liana, Maya and Simone). Six of the women had also lived in different African countries in various capacities: for work, school internships, academic research and travel.

Throughout the research process, it was evident how much the variables discussed above, such as: religious, cultural and ethnic identifications, education, travel, socioeconomic class, geographic location, and ages of the women and of their children, mediated and influenced the women’s constructions and experiences of race and difference (Frankenberg, 1997; Luke & Luke, 1998; Twine, 2010, Verbian, 2012, 2013). For example, the generally shared age range of the participants meant that the women had similar popular cultural and generation-based reference points in the society. A

great illustration of this is the thematic reference to the formative influence of hip hop culture, which emerged as part of mainstream music during the 1990s (see chapter 5). This was also evident in the ways the women distinguished themselves from the older generation of their parents, for whom racism appears to be more overtly reproduced and traditionally entrenched in their discursive worlds (Gallagher, 2000). This also applies to the relatively similar socioeconomic status of the women, six of whom were from lower-middle-class and middle-class backgrounds. Two of the women were working-class, and two were of upper-middle-class origins. As the researcher, my age and my socioeconomic status were also similar to the majority of participants, and allowed me to relate to many of the women with similar language and cultural reference points. When socioeconomic class backgrounds varied, which they did with several participants, it became evident how racial ideologies are directly mediated by class status, in the language and assumptions participants articulated during group workshop interactions. In the Vancouver workshop discussions, there were references to working-class racist discourses as being overt and aggressive, while middle-class forms of racist discourse were considered more polite and covert. This was attributed in part to education levels, employment types, and 'cultural group norms' (Luke & Luke, 1998; Twine, 2010) (see chapters 5 and 6). This in turn directly reflects the ways socioeconomic status mediates how "narratives of whiteness" are conceived and produced, and how important it is to deconstruct these narratives, in relation to complex intersecting discourses of whiteness and identification (Frankenberg, 1993; Gallagher, 2000). Below I provide a brief biographical sketch of each participant.

Simone: Simone is of Portuguese descent on her mother's side and British-Canadian descent on her father's side. She is a fashionable woman of medium height and build with straight black hair and olive coloured skin. She grew up in a multiracial, lower-middle-class neighbourhood in East Vancouver, British Columbia, where she still resides with her two young children, ages one and four, and her common-law Muslim Malian partner. She is in her late twenties, has post-secondary vocational training, and works as a professional hairdresser. During Simone's interview, her children were being watched by her sister within a short distance from us. Unlike the other participants, whose interviews were between one to two hours, Simone's interview lasted for 45 minutes, which seemed successful since her children also actively sought Simone's

attention. The conditions of the interview made it challenging to address multiple issues or discuss ideas in an in-depth manner. Unfortunately, due to childcare and work demands, Simone could not attend the Vancouver group workshop and as such her voice is not present in the participant discussions.

Liana: Liana is a white Euro-Canadian woman, who grew up in a working-class, white neighbourhood in Surrey, British Columbia. She has a short stature, beautiful long brown curly hair and a great laugh. She has lived in Surrey and Vancouver her entire life. Liana is in her mid-thirties, has vocation training and currently works in a medical office. She has one son, age three, with her Muslim Ghanaian husband. Liana met her husband at the age of 19 and her partnership of over seventeen years represents the longest of the participants. During Liana's interview, she frequently describes herself and her partner as "boring" because she states that they do not experience or address issues of race (see below). At the same time, Liana repeatedly stated her interest in the texts for the group workshop; for instance, she stated that she watched the documentary film twice, including once with her partner. In the Vancouver group workshop Liana played a largely observational role, wherein she was listening to the other participants' interactions and engagements with the texts. When I asked multiple times throughout the workshop if she wanted to share her thoughts with the group, she responded that many of the ideas discussed were new for her and that she was "taking it in" and wanted to learn more.

Julia: Julia is a white Euro-Canadian woman in her early thirties who grew up in a white middle-upper-class neighbourhood in Ottawa, Ontario. She is a tall, pale and thin woman with light brown hair and a graceful manner. The daughter of a minister, her life has involved active engagement in church communities and public health work with missionary organizations in Angola, Kenya and Rwanda. Julia is a PhD student in international public health and resides in Vancouver, British Columbia with her young son, age 1, and her partner of "coloured" status from Zimbabwe, whom she has been with for over five years. As a PhD student collecting data herself, I found that Julia's interview was distinct from the others in that it felt like more of a formal and structured exchange, rather than an organic and fluid conversation. Unfortunately due to illness and

work demands, Julia could not attend the Vancouver workshop and as such her voice is not present in the participant discussions.

Maya: Maya is a white Euro-Canadian woman who identifies as Mennonite. She is of medium height and build with straight brown hair, freckles, and a warm smile. She was raised in Saskatchewan and Alberta in working and lower-middle-class communities. She is in her mid-thirties and has an eight year old son from her previous monoracial/cultural marriage. Maya has completed part of her postsecondary training in child and youth care. She is a small spa business owner and starting early maternity leave. At the time of the study, Maya had been married to her husband of Igbo descent from Nigeria for two years and she was pregnant with their first child.

Azania: Azania is a white Euro-Canadian woman who was raised in white monoracial communities in Armstrong and Langley, British Columbia. In her early thirties, Azania is an attractive woman of medium height with fair skin and brown eyes. She has an undergraduate degree in social work and is employed in the non-profit sector in Vancouver, British Columbia at AIDS Vancouver. Azania met her Xhosa partner while she was travelling in South Africa, and he later emigrated to join her in Canada. They now live on the east side of Vancouver with their three-year old twin son and daughter.

Miranda: Miranda is a woman of Jewish Sephardic and Ashkenazi descent with fiery red curly hair and a tall stature. She grew up in a largely white monoracial middle-upper-class neighbourhood in Toronto, Ontario and moved to Vancouver to pursue graduate studies in geography. She is in her early thirties and has a three year old son and a six-month baby with her husband from Congo. Her teenaged step-son from her husband's previous partnership also resides with her family. Miranda currently works in the provincial government in land management and natural resources.

Zanadu: Zanadu is a white woman who frequently moved around in rural Saskatchewan as a child due to her father's position as a church pastor. She is a muscular woman of medium height and small build with a strong character. She is in her mid-thirties and runs a daycare out of her home. She is also pursuing studies to become a sexual wellness educator. Like Liana, Zanadu has been with her Maasai partner from

Kenya since she was nineteen years old. They first met and lived in Kenya then moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan where they now have five children together, ranging in age from four years old to fifteen years old.

Imogen: Imogen is a white woman of Irish Catholic descent and the child of first-generation immigrants to Canada. She is a tall woman in her mid-thirties of medium build with thick brown hair and a distinctly confident manner. Raised in Prince George, British Columbia in a predominantly white monoracial middle-class community, she moved to Vancouver to pursue undergraduate studies. She now has a master's degree in Education and works for the provincial government in the area of multiculturalism and immigration. She lives in East Vancouver with her Venda partner from South Africa and their three-year old son.

Mimi: Mimi is a white woman of Ukrainian descent, who was raised in a small predominantly white monoracial town in Saskatchewan. She is short in height and of medium build with a strong and vibrant personality. She is in her early thirties and lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Mimi met her husband from Kenya when she was in her early twenties and they have two children together, aged eight and ten. After eleven years together, they divorced and she now shares custody of their children. She is currently pursuing her undergraduate degree in social work.

J: J is white Euro-Canadian woman of Ukrainian descent. She is tall with dyed blonde hair, and has a strong build and a dynamic character. She was adopted and raised in small white monoracial farming communities in Saskatchewan. She is in her late thirties and has three children; a teenaged daughter from her previous relationship with a partner from Nigeria, and two sons, four and six, with her Muslim Ghanaian husband of eight years. She has an undergraduate degree in administration and works at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. J could not attend the Saskatoon group workshop due to unforeseeable circumstances and therefore she is not represented in the participant dialogues.

Before I move on to the specific details regarding the research methods I employed below, it is necessary to state that all ten participants were or had been involved in heterosexual relationships with men, and bore children through "traditional"

means (they carried their children and gave birth through traditional labour or C-section). I write this as I want to name and note the predominance of heteronormative discourses in this study, and yet to make clear that it is not my intention to naturalize or render invisible the danger of such discourses, which can be re-inscribed if left unidentified. In particular, the dangerous hegemonic role discourses of heterosexual normativity play in the reproduction of whiteness and white supremacy (Johal, 2005).

Research methods

Informed by decolonizing methodologies and antiracism research methods, I employed four methods of inquiry:

1. Initial participant survey
2. One-on-one participant interviews
3. Participant group workshops
4. Follow up inquiry

Data collection took place between June and September of 2014.

Initial participant survey and informed consent

After each participant reviewed the letter of invitation and expressed interest being in the study, I provided them with a copy of the consent form (Appendix D). I then sent the 'initial participant survey,' which contained several questions regarding their experiences with race, racism and whiteness (Appendix C). Participants were given the option to answer the survey questions over on the phone or in person. Six of the participants completed the survey (Azania, Julia, Liana, Maya, Mimi, and Miranda) and four did not (J, Imogen, Simone and Zanadu). Even for those participants who did not fill out the survey, they still received and read the questions, which gave them a clearer sense of the study content as intended.

The survey was a very useful first step in the research process. It allowed me to gain initial insight into whether a prospective participant would be interested and willing to engage in candid discussions about race and difference. I was also able to ascertain how individual participants think about and frame issues of difference, and most importantly if and how they see these issues in their daily lives. I perceived the survey to be an opportunity for the participants to consider these issues, particularly for those who had not necessarily thought about them at length. This enabled contemplation to take place between the initial survey and the individual interviews, which I contend led to more thoughtful engagement in the next steps of the research study.

I was struck by how open and thoughtful the six women appeared to be in the survey responses, even before I had met three of them in person. For instance, in response to question 1: “How do issues of race and racism affect your family?” Azania and Julia noted ways in which their partners are racialized and addressed everyday manifestations of racism, while Liana and Maya wrote they did not really notice these issues in their daily lives:

Julia: I experience racism, as I witness my husband’s family being racist towards black people and as I see how racism towards them (by white people and black people at times) has shaped their worldview and everyday practices.

Liana: We haven’t had any real issues of racism in our family. At first, my parents had concerns about being with a black person...there has been a few indirect comments made by an extended family member. We don’t let it bother us.

I also gained insight into what, if any, changes the women noted in their perspectives of race and difference, after being in their transracial/cultural family with the second questions: “Have your ideas about race changed since you have been in a multiracial family?” “Have your perspectives changed in any other ways?” Once again answers to these questions varied:

Maya: I am lucky as I have grown up in a multicultural extended family so I am used to what it brings...I love different races, and hope barriers are being broken down so people aren’t so scared of differences.

Mimi: It has made me more vocal about defending things and explaining what I would have let go before. I am not willing to “let it go”...I will not impose my western ethnocentric white view. I try to put myself in the “other person’s shoes,” I would not have done that before.

For the final question, “Has your being in your family changed your identity as a ‘white’ person, a Canadian, a woman?” Julia, Maya and Liana wrote their identities had not changed at all, while Azania and Mimi noted that their identities had certainly changed as a result of being in their families:

Liana: No, my identity hasn’t changed. I am still the same “white” person I have always been!!

Mimi: Everything is different...I have a whole new identity as a mother of biracial kids.

Through the varying survey responses, I witnessed what kinds of racial ideologies were being reproduced, and how the women interpreted racism and discrimination (Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Numerous discursive practices were illuminated and differences in perspectives and experiences amongst the women were made clear. If the research process is to be imagined as a learning journey, the survey responses provided a beginning point; and from this preliminary stage, I was able to track several distinct changes in the ways participants began to alter some of their articulations about race and difference by the workshop stage. I also witnessed many insightful and impactful comments that were made in response to the follow up inquiry questions, and by comparing them to the initial survey questions I was better able to examine those changes (see chapter 8).

Participant interviews

The research interview is understood as a conversation based on everyday life, “...where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee” (Kvale & Brickman, 2009, p.2). Understood as the “inter-view,” this conceptualization of the interview stresses the relational and interactional nature of knowledge construction, wherein the “process of knowing through conversations is intersubjective and social involving interviewer and the interviewee as co-constructors of knowledge” (p.18); knowledge thus emerges *between* subjects and the social world. For

the purpose of this study, I conducted semi-structured life history/narrative interviews with emphasis on social constructions of race and difference, and racial consciousness (Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010) (see Appendix F for guiding interview questions). It was also my objective to frame the interviewing approach to facilitate discussions that bring forth and address the insidious nature of racism and unequal power relations (Frankenberg, 1993). In order to do this, I was informed by antiracism scholar, Andrew Okolie's (2005) "interventive in-depth interviewing" method, he puts forth as part of an antiracism research framework. This dialogical approach privileges narrative/storytelling, and tasks the researcher to deeply analyse participant narratives and perspectives. The researcher's objective is to consider the articulations and lived experiences of the participants, and to frame and examine them within broader socio-historical conditions. The researcher can then bring back their analysis to the participants for reflection and further engagement in a follow up interview. In this approach, the ultimate goal is to conscientize participants by making connections between what we have come to see as isolated individual experiences, and larger economic, political, and social conditions. Particularly when we envision the research process as a pedagogical process, creating cognitive linkages between micro and macro conditions is fundamental to the potential disruption of deeply embedded colonial ideologies and discourses (Dei, 2005; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This begins with critical reflection on the self: the historical, relational, and experiential self, to consider for instance, why do certain memories resonate in our minds? Why are specific events so vivid? Why are select people etched in our brains? This can allow for individuals to work back through influential memories as adults, to contemplate how ideological constructions of difference shaped those experiences, and what resonating impact those memories have had on life trajectories. This kind of interviewing approach is also congruent with the critical discursive analysis that I employed to analyse the data, as language is considered a social practice, which exists within specific situated conditions, and individual discursive acts reflect the larger discourses one is socialized into (Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

The individual interviews took place in June and July of 2014, and were between one to two hours in length. We began with review of the consent form and selection of the participants' pseudonym for confidentiality purposes. Next, I framed the research study as a process with multiple steps over the course of several months, and

encouraged the participants to share any reflections and insights they may have as we went through the process. I also reiterated the intentions of the study, including how it might inform antiracism education, and asked them to consider any ways this research could be beneficial to mothers like themselves, as well as other parents. The interview conditions varied with each participant, and locations included: neighbourhood coffee shops and restaurants, outside urban parks, and participants' homes. With the strengths and challenges of each interview setting, I found that the participant interview became what DeVault and Gross (2012) call, "an encounter between women with common interests who would share knowledge" (p.211). In every interview to varying extents, the research relationship felt intimate and the interview approach was not clinical, which was congruent with the decolonizing research framework I sought to work within.

In the interviews, as well as in the group workshops, I had to address and negotiate the gendered forms of labour and complex negotiations these women had to make to participate in the study. As a researcher this could be difficult at times, as I did not want to alienate any women from participating, nor did I want to falsely separate the kinds of important labour they performed (Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010). As this research study is related to issues of race and difference in the women's lives and families, children are central to this subject. I wanted the women to feel that their children were factored into the research process – whether by way of conducting the interviews in their homes with their children, or by providing childcare options and reimbursements for childcare costs as needed. As a researcher, I also needed to gather data, so at times these were two competing interests, especially as both participants' children and I were competing for attention from the women at times.

During the interviews there were numerous instances when participants articulated that they had never thought about 'why' they felt or thought a specific way, and through our dialogue, meaning making and greater insight were being developed. I found this in particular when we addressed the issue of whiteness and identity. For example, I asked one of the Saskatoon participants, Maya, about her identity, and she responded that she does not identify as white because of the negativity associated to whiteness. She then distinguished between "different kinds of white": one associated with white privilege, colonialism and oppression, and the other associated with

categorical and phenotypical identification. When I asked her what the differences were between the two, she answered: “the white that are proud to be white, to be against everybody else. You are making me think hard stuff, I have never thought of this stuff before! (laughing).” Another example is from Liana’s one-on-one interview when we were discussing immigration. I inquired as to whether she thought white majority Canadians in Canada have more privileges than other people. She responded, “...I’ve never thought about that, I don’t know.” In both of these examples, our discussions continued and we were able to move beyond ‘not knowing’ to delve more deeply into these subjects. This once again illustrates how the relational space of the interview can create opportunities to engage in critical discussions about issues such as whiteness and identity. This is also why I chose to conduct the individual interviews before the group workshops, to enable such critical examination of the self to take place, and for crucial linkages between the self and the society to be contemplated, which I anticipated would enrich the group workshop discussions. As per the “interventive in-depth interviewing method” (Okolie, 2005), I also brought back my analysis of the individual interviews to the participants by drawing on key themes and linkages in the workshop, such as: identity, whiteness, colonialism, multiculturalism and antiracism.

Participant workshops

Following the individual interviews, I conducted two small workshops with the research participants in each location: Saskatoon (August 2014) and Vancouver (September 2014). Seven out of ten research participants attended the workshops: Maya, Zanadu, and Mimi in Saskatoon, and Imogen, Miranda, Liana, and Azania in Vancouver (as noted Simone, Julia and J were not able to participate). Both workshops were approximately two and a half hours in length, and each took place in university meeting rooms: Simon Fraser University and the University of Saskatchewan. In order to maintain confidentiality in the workshops, each participant was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement form prior to their participation (Appendix E). The workshop objectives were:

1. To create a space for women in Euro-Canadian and African transracial/cultural families to meet one another and discuss issues and ideas;

2. To address key discussion topics: a. whiteness, white privilege, and racial identity; b. immigration and multiculturalism; and c. mothering and antiracism parenting;

3. To engage with three short texts that correspond with the above discussion topics: a) “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (McIntosh, 1989), b) *True Love or Marriage Fraud?* (Interfilm Productions, 2011), and c) “How to be an Anti-Racist Parent: Real-Life Parents Share Real-Life Tips” (Van Kerckhove, n.d.).

Workshop format and content

With the intended purpose of building rapport amongst the participants, I opened the sessions with introductions. I asked the women to share something about themselves and indicate why they were interested in participating in the study. I then stated the key reasons why I decided to conduct this research, which I highlighted by sharing the narratives I addressed in chapter one; particularly the story about reproducing colonial dynamics in my own relationship. My objective was to make myself vulnerable in the relational space I was attempting to create with the women, by directly implicating myself in the reproduction of the discourses we were addressing, and also to make clear that I see myself as a learner in this process (Max, 2005). I found that framing concepts, such as whiteness, white privilege and racism through stories, made these concepts more relatable, and I hoped that in turn the women would feel comfortable being vulnerable by sharing their own narratives. I noted that the story I shared about the reproduction of colonial dynamics was impactful for two women in particular, Miranda and Zanadu (see chapter 8). For example, in the Saskatoon workshop, Zanadu stated that she was sure her husband has felt the same way as my husband did. The brief narratives I recounted also led to interesting exchanges regarding the complexity of gender, race, culture, and place in shaping the power dynamics in transracial/cultural partnerships (see chapter 8). I observed that each of the seven women who participated in the workshops took risks, to varying extents, to share deeply personal experiences and thoughts with one another and in doing so they made it both an intellectual and emotional engagement (see chapter 8). As per antiracism

pedagogies, this kind of comprehensive engagement is necessary for *unlearning* to take place (Berlak, 2004; Felman & Laub, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000; Tucker, 2005).

We moved into each theme with an excerpt of a written text, or a short viewing of the visual text. For each theme, I firstly asked participants to share anything that captured their attention, they could relate to, and/or they would like to discuss with the group. I also prepared several broad guiding discussion questions for each theme, which were posed at various points to spark discussion, and to ensure that we addressed the key issues (refer to Appendix G). Ultimately, the participants predominantly led the dialogues, and independently drew on different excerpts in the texts. For the first theme, 'whiteness and white privilege,' the group discussed Peggy McIntosh's (1989) highly influential piece, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," which I chose because it deals with white privilege, by providing a list format of everyday racial privileges. This allows readers to contemplate privileges they are largely unaware of in a relatable and non-threatening manner. The text is also relevant to the participants as women, for McIntosh compares male gender privilege to white racial privilege, in that men will recognize the disadvantage of women, but will not necessarily acknowledge that it is based on their own structural advantage. My intention with this piece was to bring forth the notion of white privilege, white femininity, and gender as part of their experiences, but most importantly to ensure these concepts were directly linked to racism. This was a crucial conversation, for there can be a tendency in "race talk" to refer to racism and ignore the implication of whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993, 1997; Luke, 1994; McIntosh, 1989; Najmi & Srikanth, 2002; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

For the second theme, 'immigration and multiculturalism,' I asked the participants to view, *True Love or Marriage Fraud?* a documentary film aired on a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) program, *The Passionate Eye*. The film explores the issue of marriage fraud in Canada, by primarily following three white Canadian women, who are in long-distance relationships with African men. I selected this visual text for I thought it would be relevant to the participants, namely as seven of the women have gone through or are going through the Canadian sponsorship process with their partners. I also chose this documentary for immigration issues in Canada such as "marriage fraud" have increasingly become key topics in Canadian political culture and

media (e.g., Gaucher, 2014; Keung, 2013a, 2013b; Mehta, 2013, Pagtakhan, 2012).³⁶ In the documentary, dominant discourses of immigration and nationalism were explicitly addressed. I created guiding questions and selected key passages to bring forth how these discourses manifest through representation of people and ideas in the film. The documentary presented an opportunity for the women to make linkages between their own lived experiences, and issues of citizenship, immigration, and belonging in Canada (see chapters 6 and 7).

For the final theme on mothering and antiracist parenting, I selected the text, “How to be An Anti-Racist Parent: Real-Life Parents Share Real-Life Tips” (Van Kerckhove, n.d.). This accessible booklet is filled with brief vignettes and quotations by parents, reflecting on their experiences confronting issues of race with their children. There are also key tips and recommendations for parents. This text facilitated engaging discussions amongst the women in the workshops about specific ways to navigate racialized discourses in daily life, which was articulated as an immediate concern and requirement for the participants. At the same time, it allowed the group to unpack what antiracist parenting means to them in practice and what tools they require as parents to take up these issues (see chapter 8).

At the end of each session, I provided the participants with several questions to consider, including: “Why is it important for people to have greater awareness about multiracial families in Canada?” “Why is it important to get the perspectives of women like yourselves?” and “Why is it necessary to talk about these issues?” I deem both workshop sessions to be highly successful and rich engagements. I specifically noted for Azania, Maya, Miranda and Zanadu in particular, the multiple perspectives offered about

³⁶ The subject of marriage fraud in particular was a focus of the Canadian federal conservative government, which conducted a public consultation process on the issue of “marriages of convenience” in 2010 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 2011), and followed up with the creation of new regulations for spousal partnership in 2012. In conjunction with the stricter regulations, the federal government conducted a national advertising campaign, cautioning against marriage fraud by providing information on how to identify it, and the “right way” to immigrate to Canada (CIC, 2012). While there are no clear statistics on the amount of incidents of marriage fraud in Canada (Aulakh, 2010; Mackrael, 2012), then Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Jason Kenney, stated in a 2012 press release that, “Canadians are generous and welcoming, but they have no tolerance for fraudsters who lie and cheat to jump the queue...” (CIC, 2012, para. 10). He further noted that the new regulations, “...will help deter marriage fraud, prevent the callous victimization of innocent Canadians and help us put an end to these scams” (para. 2).

the texts, and the numerous personal stories that were told, played a key role in facilitating linkages between the individual and the structural (see chapters 7 and 8).

Follow up inquiry

I originally framed the final step in the research process as a brief follow up interview, intended to discuss the participants' observations from our initial interview, as well as to examine their thoughts and feedback from the workshop. As per the "interventive in-depth interviewing" approach (Okolie, 2005), I anticipated this would give me the chance to further engage my participants on contextualizing their experiences within larger discourses and conditions. Once I started the research process, I quickly realized that I would need to modify the final step. It was too much to expect my participants to do an additional interview, and I noticed as we moved through the process, particularly from the interviews to the workshops, that I was already meeting the objectives I had established for the follow up interview. This took place in reflective time between the different stages and in relational time as I talked with participants in the interviews, and as they spoke with one another in the workshops. Noting this change early on allowed me to edit the workshop conclusion, to ensure the pertinent questions were asked while my participants were present (see Appendix H). I ultimately decided to keep the follow up inquiry through email correspondence in order to solicit any last comments, and to ensure that my participants knew they could continue to correspond with me, and with one another regarding these issues if they wished. I received responses from five out of ten participants, as well as feedback to the follow up questions I posed at the end of the workshops. Five participants continued to contact me after the study with various information (e.g. events and educational materials), and to share recent experiences they have had since the workshop with racialized discourses in everyday life. Seven of the women were also very interested in sharing parenting resources to address issues of race and difference with their children. As a result, an online group was created for participants who wanted to share resources, articles, and ideas with one another (participation in the group was voluntary). With respect to a specific outcome from the study, six participants stated it would be useful to create a resource for parents, and that they wanted the study to generate greater awareness about multiracial/cultural families in Canada. As the research process moved through various essential steps, from the initial survey to the follow up inquiry, it became clear

that each step built on the previous ones, to culminate in the group workshops. I believe that the order of the different methods was instrumental to the success of the workshops, and overall, the mixed methods I employed allowed for a collaborative learning process to take place, for myself as the researcher and for the participants.

Data analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

I chose to work within critical discourse analysis (CDA), as the broad tenets of CDA complement my theoretical frameworks and the critical methodologies that inform my study. CDA provided an analytical framework for me to critically examine and explore the nature and manifestations of racial ideologies in ‘participant talk,’ and to conceptualize how counter-discursive strategies may be employed to resist them (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). I will first provide a brief background and description of CDA, and then detail my own data analysis and coding process.

CDA examines key relationships between social practices and discourse, investigating how discourse is part of social life and reflective of situated power dynamics (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; van Dijk, 1987, 2011). Critical discourse analysis does not make claims to neutrality, nor adheres to a singular method or approach; instead, CDA scholars acknowledge that research is subjective, and they articulate a consciously political orientation (Blackledge, 2005, Lazar, 2007; Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Research employing CDA is transdisciplinary, and CDA has been utilized across multiple fields to examine constructions of gender, race, identity, and dominant discursive representations in societal institutions, such as: the media, government, and educational system (e.g., Jiwani & Richardson, 2011; Lazar, 2007; Lazar & Kramarae, 2011; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 2001). Within CDA, many different research methods can be employed, from small-scale qualitative studies to large-scale quantitative studies (Wodak, 2001). Although there is no single method or definition of critical discourse analysis, CDA considers the following:

- 1. Language and contextual social practice:** CDA scholars importantly note that language is produced within, and reflective of, specific historical and social

processes; and the cultural context and social practices that surround talk and texts must be considered within a discursive analysis (Meyer, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wodak, 2001). As such, a written or oral text must be examined as situated within micro interactions, (between individuals, and individuals and texts), as well as the macro level conditions of social institutions and the society (Jiwani & Richardson, 2011; Luke, 1995). By examining discourse within context, CDA can allow for a more in-depth analysis of texts by considering, “that every discourse is historically produced and interpreted, that is, it is situated in time and space” (Wodak, 2001, p.3). Critical discourse analysis must take into account the dialogical relationship between discourses, and forms of social and institutional practice (Lazar, 2007; Lazar & Kramarae, 2011). In a study of racism, one must consider, “...how a society gives voice to racism and how forms of discourse institute, solidify, change, create and reproduce social formations” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p.3). Thus, it is necessary to examine the powerful reproduction of racist discourses, as well as how institutional structures, political and economic systems, and social relations perpetuate forms of oppression. Further to this, CDA recognizes that discourses reflect ideologies, and challenges the notion that there are any neutral or objective texts; rather, “all texts are normative, shaping and constructing rather than simply reflecting and describing” (Luke, 1995, p.19).

- 2. Language and power:** CDA examines how language and discourse are implicated in relations of power, and how language functions to perpetuate forms of inequity (Jiwani & Richardson, 2011; Wodak, 2001). Within a critical discourse analysis, power relations are represented in different texts (oral, written and visual), and power manifests in “everyday practices” (Hunter, Emerald, & Martin, 2013, p.107). CDA scholars contend that hegemonic discourses reflect the ideologies of powerful dominant groups within a society. Critical discourse analysis allows researchers to examine hegemonic discourses, and to make visible discourses that are naturalized as “common-sensical” (Jiwani & Richardson, 2011; Luke, 1995; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Wodak, 2001; Wood & Kroger, 2000). In order to understand the complex relationship between language and power, within CDA, there is a focus on the intertextuality of discourse, wherein all texts are informed by, and interact with, other texts. As such, it is critical to examine how dominant discourses, such as: nationalism,

immigration and multiculturalism, are embodied in texts, and how intertextuality maintains unequal power relations, allowing dominant discourses to be reproduced (Blackledge, 2005). For instance, Jiwani and Richardson (2011) argue that racist discourse is reproduced through multiple modalities that are “multiplicative and intertextual” (p.249). Although these texts are different, together they play a powerful role in maintaining the colonial binary of ‘self’ and ‘other,’ and of reinforcing asymmetrical power relations. This is performed in part through political rhetoric, popular culture, media, and everyday talk, which act as mutually reinforcing texts to “...communicate a valuation of the self that is positive while negatively valuing the other” (p.258). Such texts can be powerful and dangerous; by fixing and affirming the self as rational, objective, and “civilized,” these texts can create the basis for the rationalization of oppressive treatment and conditions of ‘others’ (Jiwani & Richardson, 2011). Critical discourse analysis allows us to analyse how such forms of oppression are reproduced in daily life (Lazar & Kramarae, 2011; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Discourses are also points of struggle for power, and texts represent struggles over multiple meanings (Lazar, 2007; Wodak, 2001). Just as discourses can be hegemonic, so too can discourses be resistant; language can be used to resist and subvert hegemonic and discriminatory discourses and practices, through the “breaking of conventions, of stable discursive practices, in acts of ‘creativity’” (Wodak, 2001, p.3; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). For instance, Reisigl and Wodak (2001), write that the concept of race is a, “...legitimising ideological tool to oppress and exploit specific groups and to deny them access to material, cultural and political resources...” (p.2); and yet, the concept has also been used as a form of empowerment, resistance, and social mobilization, with respect to self-identification and identity politics. By examining how oral texts inform social practices, we can analyse forms of social action and agency within social structures (Blackledge, 2005; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001), and critique texts as a way to create awareness about dominant discourses, and to disrupt their “common-sense” naturalization (Meyer, 2001; Wetherell & Potter, 1993; Wodak, 2001). To do this, researchers conduct what Reisigl and Wodak (2001) call a “multidimensional analysis” to study racism, and to analyse how ideological

constructs and dominant discourses of nationalism and xenophobia intersect with one another.

With respect to my analysis of white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families, I sought to understand their relationship to discourses of race and difference, and how this relationship is articulated through their engagement, interpretation, and articulation of these discourses. I interpreted the participants' discursive acts as "social representations," comprised of shared frames of reference common to their given social group, and reflective of broader social practices, and historical, economic, social and political conditions (Meyer, 2002). It is important to reiterate that in such a discursive analysis, the focus of examination is not the individual, but on articulations as representations of broader discourses. In other words, such an approach is not intended to pathologize an individual or label them 'racist' or 'not racist.' As Wood and Kroger (2000) write, "the discursive approach allows for strong condemnation of the utterance but does not require condemnation or exoneration of the speaker; it provides a conceptual foundation for the popular injunction that we should criticize the 'behavior,' not the person" (p.14; also see Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Through an inter-textual analysis of all the research data, I examined participant talk in the interviews and the group workshops, participant written responses in the initial survey and follow up inquiry/communications (for those who responded), and their engagement with the workshop texts. I sought to analyse points of contradiction, change, or disruption in their articulations, as they moved through the research process, as well as how they may articulate resistance to dominant discourses, and when they may be producing counter-discourses of antiracism (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In this process, "...the critical gaze is directed at exposing, inter alia, contradictions and oppositions between discursive and related social practices..." (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, p.33). This can be more challenging, particularly as I observed many times throughout the interviews and in the workshops, in which there appeared to be a lack of counter-discursive frameworks and language for the participants to draw on to practice and resist dominant ideologies. My interpretation was the participants did not want to reproduce dominant ideologies,

but struggled with the language to do so. For instance, there were several interactions during the group workshops, which centred on the proper and appropriate social identifications of various groups. In the Saskatoon workshop, the women spent a considerable amount of time discussing how to respectfully address and refer to Indigenous peoples. While this is very important as the power to control and change dominant social identifications is arguably part of creating counter-discourses through resistance strategies, it is also illustrative of something more. It is indicative of dominant multicultural discursive practices, in which well-regulated, proper identifications and 'politically correct' articulations are instrumental for positive self-identification and social construction of a speaker as 'not' racist, or as a 'tolerant' person (Jiwani & Richardson, 2011; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). These kinds of predominant interactions regarding the 'correct' reference or label, in which language is often policed, does not necessary allow for new language and new discourses to emerge. That being said, when language is critically deconstructed, and its historical, political, and social origin is named, critically counter discursive acts can take place. When counter discursive acts occur, possibilities for larger counter-discourses are born. CDA can allow for a critical analysis of not only how dominant discourses are reproduced and naturalized, but also how counter-discourses can emerge, and how resistance can be imagined within new discursive articulations (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Wodak, 2001).

- 3. Theory – praxis:** The notion of moving theory to practice is central to CDA, and researchers are urged to consider the practical and thoughtful application of their findings to forms of praxis (Lazar, 2007; Wodak, 2001). From its inception, I considered the practical purpose of the research study, bearing in mind that, "there is no unchanging system which fixes the way in which theory will guide human actions" (Wodak, 2001, p.9). As I mentioned above, I did this by asking the participants to consider what they see as the purpose and key benefits of this line of inquiry, and most importantly what impact they think it should have. I left open the possibility to create a mutual outcome after the research study was complete that would benefit women such as themselves (e.g., an antiracism resource guide for families, or a group for mothers in transracial families). As

noted, six participants articulated that a parent resource on issues of difference would be a beneficial and practical outcome, and four women indicated their interest in contributing to such a resource. Also as noted, five participants provided key feedback on the study as part of the follow up inquiry, and an online group was established for the women to share pertinent resources.

My data analysis process

As I have made reference to above, I approached my research study as a process containing a series of steps, each building on one another to engage in learning and critical reflection. I also conceived of my data analysis and coding as a parallel and complementary process, herein I reviewed and analysed the research data in the same linear fashion that I collected it. This made sense to me, for I consciously structured the study stages to move from focus on the individual in the initial participant survey and the individual interviews, to broader concepts and discourses in the workshop and follow up inquiry. As the researcher, my reflection on and analysis of this process began from the inception of the study, and was ongoing thereafter. As per CDA, I imagined this as a process of “continuous feedback,” wherein I was constantly going back and forth between data collection and analysis (Meyer, 2001, p.16). In this conceptualization, research can be imagined as a “circular process,” by which theory application, data collection, and analysis are in dynamic, fluid, and continuous interaction (p.19); in other words, “data collection is not a phase that must be finished before analysis starts but might be a permanently ongoing procedure” (p.18). From the initial participant survey stage, and then consistently thereafter, I engaged in ongoing analysis and reflection, which included preliminary identification of key concepts, themes, and discourses, as well as emerging questions and considerations (Few, 2007). I took written and audio field notes to identify methodological issues to capture noted nonverbal and nuanced forms of communication and inferences, and to identify dominant concepts, themes, and discourses across the interviews and the workshops. I began review and transcription of the interviews as I continued to collect data to not only engage in preliminary analysis, but also to inform how I proceeded with the next steps. Once I completed data collection, I began analysing and coding, and returned to my field notes to “make sense” of the emergent and consistent themes I had identified. In order to make connections between

and across themes, I conducted a “high level” (abstract, conceptual, discursive), and “low level” (specific fixed data, such as: geographic location, age, education level, and so forth,) coding process using an alphabetized system of abbreviated identifications (Madison, 2005). In this process of “constant comparative analysis,” I continuously reviewed my data to ensure that selected codes and themes were accurate, to allow for new themes to emerge, and also to deepen my critical understanding and analysis of the data (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). I determined that saturation was achieved when the repetition of codes and themes was deemed apparent (O’Donoghue, 2004). At the saturation point, I began to organize the codes and themes into different categories, and to separate them under dominant or major themes and subthemes (Bernard, 2011). I then conducted a ‘sense-making’ visual mapping exercise in which I organized the themes according to each of the study research questions (Madison, 2005).

Within openly ideological research, the researcher is tasked with a reconceptualization of validity outside of traditional positivist approaches (Lather, 1986). To ensure validity within the study, I applied several practices: a. Triangulation (Meyer, 2001; Wetherell & Potter, 1992), b. “face validity,” and c. “catalytic validity” (Lather, 1986). For the purpose of triangulation, I was informed by multiple theoretical frameworks (see chapter 2), and I employed multiple methods of data collection (Meyer, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). With respect to what researcher, Patty Lather (1986), calls “face validity,” I regularly communicated with my participants throughout the research process, to ensure a continuous “check” on power relationships between the researcher and the research participants, and to ensure that participants’ voices were accurately reflected (Few, 2007; Lather, 1986). This included: “member checks” after the individual interviews, and following the group workshops, participant review and feedback of interview transcriptions, and numerous offers to continue dialogue further to the study (Meyer, 2001). I also practiced “catalytic validity,” which is intended to ensure that a link between theory and praxis takes place; wherein, participants’ consciousness is raised, and/or participants become more agentive as a result of the research process (Lather, 1986). In the research study, I realized that “catalytic validity” begins with the researcher’s intentions and continues with participant dialogue. Such a form of validity is actualized not through a specific articulation or project, but through the framing and shaping of the research process as a collaborative learning journey, as I have described

above. In the case of this study, I would contend that “catalytic validity” is measured by how the research study content and conversations inform the participants’ understandings and approaches to discursive ideologies of race and difference, and how the study may inform their practices. I observed that four of the participants had become more aware and interested in issues of race and difference, and that three explicitly stated they wanted to take a more proactive approach to addressing issues of difference with their children (see chapter 9).

Conclusion

My conception of the research process as a learning journey, with an emphasis on critical self-reflection and embodied knowledge, and the research methods I employed, allowed me to imagine how to conduct antiracism research as a white scholar with white participants. The research approach I used created the opportunity for temporary relational spaces to exist, as participants engaged in ‘comfortable discomfort’ addressing issues of race and difference. This research process illustrates the need to create similar relational spaces to take up these contentious issues in meaningful ways. It also warrants further exploration into how critical and decolonizing methodological frameworks can inform studies regarding whiteness and difference with majority white participants. In the following chapter, I move into my research study findings, in which I investigate the spaces and discourses that shape the participants’ early socialization into *difference*.

Chapter 5. Socialization into Whiteness and the Early Literacy of Racism

Introduction

As the principle and practice of narrative/storytelling is central to this study, I chose to structure my research findings in a way that responded to the narratives shared in the participant interviews, and that corresponded with the steps in the research process—beginning with the self, and moving towards the self in relation to larger conditions (Okolie, 2005). In this chapter, I respond to my first key research question, “how do white women of Euro-Canadian descent in transracial/cultural families conceive of discourses of race and difference?” I examine the participants’ early socialization processes of identity and sense-making, which are central to their conceptualizations of difference. The dominant themes that emerged in the participant interviews are divided and presented in five categories:

1. Space: Geographic, historic and relational
2. The home and primary relationships
3. The ‘Aboriginal Other’
4. The pop culture gaze and exoticification
5. Visibility/invisibility: American race history and relations versus Canadian erasure

Space: Geographic, historic and relational

So white, it’s translucent. - Mimi

Seven out of ten participants in the study grew up in predominantly monoracial, white, middle-class neighbourhoods, in small town and cities in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Their communities were often *de facto* segregated, reflecting the spatial nature of race and class, and the colonial boundaries of the nation (Goldberg, 1993;

Razack, 1999; 2002; 2014; Thobani, 2007). When I asked Mimi, who has spent the majority of her life in Saskatchewan, about the environment she grew up in during our individual interview, she characterized her small town as, “so white, it’s translucent.” When I asked another participant, Imogen, about where she grew up during our interview, she recounted her early life in a small city in northern British Columbia:

Imogen: It was concentrated areas, like many of the Sheikh population live in one area and they all went to one high school mostly, you know and then the urban Aboriginal population is concentrated much more downtown, so they kind of went to another high school...so you know it was kind of like physically laid out like that, segregated I guess. I don’t know or divided let’s say. I don’t know if it’s necessarily segregation...

When I asked Imogen why she would not call it segregation, she responded:

Well because it was...I never got the sense that people didn’t move to certain areas based on feeling uncomfortable in them. I feel like they go to places where people are, where they want people that they might know. So like the Indian population makes sense to me that they would group together in an area and live together, because they might know people...that kind of makes sense. I don’t think people didn’t—well I never got the sense some people didn’t live there based on race, so much as class.

As Janet Hill (2008) notes, like many Americans (and arguably Canadians as well), these women did not necessarily have regular interaction with people of colour due to “residential segregation” (p.30-31). It is within this dynamic that many white people first learn the “literacy of racism”—that is the early learning of race as a ‘visual and discursive economy,’ which permits them to name, read, and navigate difference in the world, though not see themselves as racialized beings (Wiegman, 1995). Imogen’s articulation speaks to the general apprehension to name segregation and how to define it. She states that she did not get the impression people from various ethno-cultural groups wanted to separate themselves from one another, but rather that the ethnic, racial, and class spatial divisions she witnessed were the result of choices people made to live with

others from their own communities. While people may ‘choose’³⁷ to live within specific communities, racialized urban landscapes have already been mapped for them.

We see the normalization of residential segregation that Imogen, Mimi, and other women speak of, as reflective of a long history of colonial thought. Urban spaces of ‘the west’ were conceived within the colonial imagination and mapped out by colonial and postcolonial administrations.³⁸ The doctrine of segregation shaped the landscapes, while the dictates of liberal individualism and multiculturalism, further naturalize these conditions through presumptions of individual “free” choice and the existence of distinct and geographically contained ethno-cultural communities (e.g., Koreatown, Little India, Chinatown, and so forth) (Goldberg, 1993). Within a multicultural paradigm, this spatial configuration symbolizes the diversity of the society and the tolerance of the majority population, which are antithetical to the intolerant and discriminatory notion of ‘segregation.’ It can be difficult to name segregation due to its naturalization throughout Canadian history. There may also be hesitation to state that *de facto* segregation exists in this country, when historical and present-day understandings of racial segregation are based on formalized segregation policies and practices in the United States, and in South African apartheid laws. Imogen’s work in an international children’s organization brought her to South Africa, where she lived for a period of time with her partner’s family and directly experienced ‘post-apartheid’ racial segregation. Her experiential knowledge in South Africa, as well as her early understanding of American racial history, may explain why she would not characterize her small northern British Columbian town as segregated.

³⁷ It is necessary to recognize that “choices” are shaped and bounded by socioeconomic class, legal status, racialized identity, and multiple other complex variables. The urban landscape is mapped for the order and containment of racialized others; it is not free and accessible space for all bodies (Goldberg, 1993). As a result, many people may not live where they “choose” to live. Consider the brief discussion in chapter four regarding gentrified spaces and racialized spaces in Saskatoon and Vancouver.

³⁸ Within the Canadian context, we can reference the Indian reservation system and the residential school system as clear colonial policies and practices to demarcate the spaces that Aboriginal bodies were “meant” to occupy. The pass system on reservations made clear that movement from assigned spaces was strictly regulated, and that transgression had clear consequences (Razack, 2002). For an American example, see Goldberg (1993) regarding American inner city projects.

The racial history of Canada reveals many informal and localized restrictions, with respect to employment, housing, education, and interracial relationships, to ensure that segregation remained in place (Backhouse, 1999). This reminds us once again of the socially and ideologically constructed nature of space; while predominantly understood as “passive geographic territories” (O’Connell, 2010, p.541), both rural and urban spaces are in fact highly constitutive of racial and class boundaries, as well as central to nation-building, and individual and collective identity-making (Goldberg, 1993; Mohanram, 1999; O’Connell, 2010; Razack, 1999).

In the women’s narratives, I noted that space was a key theme, particularly the binary between rural and urban spaces, in the formation of the white unmarked ‘self’ situated within an imagined multicultural society. For J, who has lived in Saskatchewan her whole life, she framed her personal history as shaped by the demographics of the small prairie city of Saskatoon. During our individual interview when I asked how she would describe the ethnic and racial makeup of where she grew up, she responded:

You know Saskatoon was such a small community until the university really started to pick up in their sciences...I think the university just grew, like Immigration Canada started to disperse the work forces, like they expanded the need for more workers, field workers. They started to send more people to Saskatchewan...and government put a lot of money into the sciences and funding programs to enhance them, so that’s when you see the bigger increase in the populations of ethnic-like Blacks and Chinese and East Indians...

Here J frames population development and diversity as official and deliberate, in that the federal government directed immigrants to ‘settle’ a traditionally rural and agrarian province (Loewen & Friesen, 2009). Through directed funding into the university sciences, the city is opened up to international students and scholars, changing the demographic dichotomy between white European settlers and Aboriginal peoples within an imagined white settler community. Within Canadian national mythologies, “rural spaces are positioned as idyllic, safe places that uphold true Canadian (white) values contrary to multicultural discourses” (O’Connell, p.542). While government and industry initiatives support the migration of foreign workers to meet Canada’s labour demands, (e.g., in growing rural economies, such as Saskatchewan’s Potash industry), as a small prairie city like Saskatoon begins to experience increasing growth in international and

national migration, the national white settler narratives can be threatened. This can be witnessed in how demographic change is constructed and circulated in popular media and everyday discourses. Within mainstream media, news stories reveal the threat of increased migration and in turn urbanization, some of which is quite concerning, such as: increased vulnerability of marginalized populations, further gentrification of urban space, decrease in housing affordability, and so forth (Casey, 2014; Diewert, 2013) (see chapter 4). There are also stories that can breed fear and xenophobia; for instance, several news stories cite population growth as a contributing variable to increased crime and violence in the city (see CBC, 2015; Hamilton, 2016). These stories illustrate that when racialized bodies, associated with urban space and urban problems (e.g., poverty, crime, violence, gang involvement), are brought to peaceful and safe rural spaces, they threaten to poison and ruin them. Yet, this ignores the racialized unemployment, poverty, crime, and racism that can be characteristic of many rural spaces (O'Connell, 2010). In their text, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Canada*, Loewen and Friesen (2009) detail the ways in which prairie cities have shaped and influenced the trajectory of Canadian immigration and integration. They write, "...despite long-lived rural stereotypes inherited from previous generations-grand open spaces and pioneer farms-prairie cities were noteworthy sites in the making of regional and national history" (p.3). These structural, demographic, and spatial changes shape how J's personal narrative unfolds, demonstrating a relationship between space, early socialization, and identity construction. From the interviews with the Saskatoon participants, we see how these changes are directly connected to their own life experiences.

Although most participants grew up in small towns and rural areas, there were three women, Julia, Miranda and Simone, who grew up in medium to large urban centres. I noted that while their experience of and exposure to multiculturalism discourses differed, they also predominantly resided in largely monoracial white communities, with the exception of Simone who was raised in a multiracial East Vancouver neighbourhood. Miranda was raised in Toronto and then moved to Montreal and Vancouver to pursue her postsecondary studies. Miranda's narrative reminds us that urban spaces may be diverse with respect to the visual representation of multiple ethno-cultural groups, yet these groups can also remain highly segregated. While

Miranda was raised in what she contends is perhaps the most “diverse” city in North America, or at the very least in Canada, Miranda’s early life reflects the spatial containment of “diversity.” She lived in a monoracial, white, middle-upper-class Toronto neighbourhood, which she describes as, “almost exclusively WASP,” or white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. At the same time, the majority of her social world involved other Jewish people, which reflected her parents’ friends and the majority of students at her school. During our individual interview, Miranda talked about her childhood neighbourhood.

M: Well I grew up in Toronto, which as a metropolitan city, is the most diverse place in Canada...possibly the most diverse place in North America. I guess my particular neighbourhood was quite, almost exclusively WASP.

WA: And what does WASP mean to you?

M: White protestant. Umm definitely upper middle-class...I think at least elementary or middle school level, certainly elementary mostly white kids, middle schools maybe some Asian kids, high school just white and Asian. I think there was one or two black people in the whole school, which is pretty skewed for Toronto, which is pretty big in population. Um, yeah I mean my particular locale was not hugely diverse, but you don’t have to go far from where I live where it was diverse.

Besides the few “Asian” kids in high school, and the few “black people” in her school (this is similar to the other participants), ‘diversity’ in the large urban centre existed in close proximity, but away from her “WASP” community. It was not until she attended university in Montreal (moving into another socio-political and geographic space), gained experience volunteering at a community-based organization for new immigrants and refugees, and worked abroad, that she directly and intimately encountered “difference.” When I asked Miranda whether she was aware of ‘differences’ or discussed forms of difference in her family, she astutely noted the characteristics of liberal multicultural discourses that dominated her own social world:

Class, no. Definitely no talk of class or money or anything like that right, that’s I guess a pretty Canadian approach to not discuss such issues. Um races, no, neither. I guess because it was rarely encountered. When I think of my parents, all of their friends, almost one hundred percent-except for my mom’s teacher friends-were all Jewish right, so you know

you can sort of build up this story of yourself and your family as being really liberal, and accepting and enjoy diversity, when your entire network is the same as you. You're not really encountered with it, of any of the challenges that it brings, right? I wouldn't say my parents are racist...my parents aren't rednecks, but again they live in their little world that's pretty similar to them.

Miranda's statement reflects the ideological relationship between space and Canadian liberal multiculturalism. Miranda speaks to building "this story" of white liberal tolerance and acceptance of diversity. She names the contradictory nature of this narrative, wherein white liberal subjects can accept and celebrate diversity from the purview of their largely homogenous social worlds (Fleras, 2014; Thobani, 2007). As Toronto is considered a multicultural city, so too are its inhabitants, such as Miranda's parents. This is juxtaposed to rural spaces, associated with a lack of diversity and tolerance, and occupied by "redneck" subjects. Urban areas, such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, are constructed as spaces of liberal tolerance and multicultural celebration, while rural spaces act as their homogenous, monoracial counterparts. Together, urban and rural spaces create, "interdependent constructions of whiteness that do important race work, spatially and temporally" (O'Connell, 2010, p.537). Urban spaces are not 'naturally' multicultural, but rather they are constituted as such through strategic social, economic, and political practices, as part of constructing a multicultural nation. Through this binary of socially constructed spaces, we witness a profound tension between the ideological need to maintain national white settler mythologies of empty lands, economic prosperity, liberal tolerance, and multicultural diversity, and the economic dependency on foreign labour and immigration to maintain Canada's economic and population growth (Thobani, 2007).

The home and primary relationships

The first site of production of this interstitial "whiteness" is that of home.
(Moon, 1999, p.17)

The home is one of the first and most influential learning environments; it is a cultural space from which we engage in identity-making about who we 'are' and how we are positioned in relation to others. It is also the first place from which we make sense

about how to 'read' and to 'know' the world, and where we are situated within it. For white women, whiteness is a 'process of becoming' or 'coming into being' through discursive, social, and spatial practices that begin in early socialization (Deliovsky, 2010; Moon, 1999). In the early learning space of the home, white women are socialized to become "good *white* girls" (Moon, p.181). Moon writes, "for whitewomen, home is often a space in which they are trained to take their "proper" place within these relations, in particular, those of white supremacy" (p.180).³⁹ Becoming a "good *white* girl" is a gendered, classed, and racialized enculturation process.

In the participant narrative accounts of their early lives, I noted that this process of enculturation, or of becoming "good white girls," was premised on the existence and performance of patriarchal white masculinity by their father figures. What emerged as distinctly thematic in the participant narratives was the dominating presence of a male patriarchal figure, who appeared to dictate and regulate the discourses of difference, and the boundaries of acceptable white feminine performance, in the home and in the women's early social worlds. This seemed to be enacted by a dominant male patriarch primarily through everyday discursive practices and through rigid spatial regulation, to ensure that white respectability and racial separation were maintained, both cognitively and spatially. Five of the women cited numerous examples of the daily ways in which their fathers articulated and controlled racialized discourses in the home, and how racial ideologies were normalized within everyday practices. For instance, during our individual interview I asked J about her first awareness of race and racism in early life:

WA: Do you remember first being aware of race and racism or *difference*?

J: Oh yeah.

WA: Was there an experience that you remember happening or a time?

J: ...my dad used to say the expression if my mom served everybody at the table, and my dad would say, "What am I black?" because he wasn't getting served right? ...We already knew that black people weren't treated the same, so I kinda grew up thinking that black people were

³⁹ Please note, "whitewomen" is the original term used by the author.

never treated the same, but I always had a feeling of empathy, like “geeze, that doesn’t seem fair.”

In this account, we see how naturalized and embedded racial ideologies are within everyday white discourse, and how such articulations can in turn reinforce and reproduce notions of white racial superiority and black inferiority within the informal learning environment of the home. As J recounts, something about her father’s ‘common’ expression did not seem right to her, yet she did not necessarily have the resources (including counter-discourses) to understand these conditions through an alternative framework. What is also interesting is how J acknowledges that she certainly understood black people were “never treated the same.” Here, she demonstrates how she clearly internalized the conditions of white supremacy without even being exposed to or living near black people in early life; as such, she was able to ascertain the racial ideologies and oppressive racial dynamics almost exclusively through everyday white discourse and popular media, primarily reproduced within her home and community environments.

Another participant, Mimi, identified her father as “racist.” As she talked about the small Saskatchewan town she was raised in during our interview, she recounted the ways her father reproduced white racism towards Aboriginal peoples, and how her father regulated her social relationships based on his racist assumptions. Here Mimi is recounting two Aboriginal children in her school who were in foster care:

Mimi: ...I mean I didn’t know that at the time, but now as an adult, I realize that the Aboriginal kids in my school were all foster kids, otherwise everybody was white...the boy was always in trouble, and so we were told just to stay away from him cuz he was always getting into trouble. Did that have to do with his race? Probably, knowing my dad.

WA: What does that mean?

Mimi: Oh my dad’s racist, yeah, yeah. Aboriginal people, he thinks they’re all lazy drunks, and he applies all the typical stereotypes...my mom wasn’t overtly racist, I would say she’s more uninformed, a bit ignorant, just kind of sheltered with her Ukrainian family, and that was all she knew. And then my dad was so dominant in the family that whatever he said was just kind of accepted as truth. I mean he grew up, his parents were racist too, so you just see it come down the line.

This passage is significant for several reasons. First, Mimi identifies the predominant features of anti-Aboriginal racism so ubiquitous in white settler racism. It is necessary to state that the conditions she addresses of a white monoracial community, in which two Aboriginal children are in foster care and offered temporary admittance into an exclusively white world, are the result of complex historical processes of *cultural genocide* (MacDonald & Hudson, 2002; Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), 2015, Woolford, 2013), which include violent assimilation and the forced separation of families (Ball, 2007; Ball & Bernhardt, 2008; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1993; TRC, 2015). What Mimi illustrates is how naturalized the classed, racialized, and gendered depictions of the two children were - the boy was “always in trouble,” and the girl was always “poorly dressed.” With respect to the young girl, Mimi recounted a story about picture day:

I remember her coming to picture day and we were all dressed up in our prettiest clothes, and she was wearing brown cords and a brown plaid shirt that looked like a boy’s shirt, and she cried the whole day cuz that’s what she had to wear for picture day, and everybody else was dressed up. So my first experiences were not of you know real inclusivity or anything like that, it was like ‘you’re not like the rest of us.’ But you’re only ok maybe if you have money, or you’re good at sports, then we can accept you. *There’s still that consideration in the fact that they weren’t white* [emphasis added].

The presence of the two Aboriginal children in foster care also confirmed the civility and respectability of the white children, and the benevolence of the white families who “took them in.” Their existence and presence enable the perpetuation of white settler mythologies, in which white bodies belong and bodies of colour exist in a state of *unbelonging* (O’Connell, 2010; Razack, 2002). By performing white masculinity through everyday racialized discourses, Mimi’s father, like other fathers identified by the participants, upholds a ‘solidarity of whiteness’ (Deliofsky, 2010). Mimi did not understand those colonial dynamics at the time, but with age and further reflection, she now can bear witness to the past in new ways. Mimi begins her articulation with the statement “now as an adult” to signify that as she has grown older and had more diverse experiences, she can look back on her childhood. Like many of the other participants, Mimi had new insights and realizations as she critically reflected on her early socialization, and engaged in analysis regarding why the conditions that she took for

granted may be the way “they are.” It appeared that for several of the women in particular, J, Julia, Liana, Maya and Mimi, the interview space of critical reflection and analysis allowed them to “experience and re-experience” their early social worlds in ways they may not have done before (Frankenberg, 1993).

Similar to Azania, J, Liana, and Miranda, Mimi distinctly compares her father and her mother in gender specific ways; she characterizes her father as “racist” and “dominant,” and her mother as “uninformed” and “a bit ignorant.” Such characterizations, in which the male patriarchal figure controls the home, including the discourses reproduced within it, while the female matriarchal figure is positioned as more sheltered and uneducated, were quite thematic in five of the women’s narratives. Mimi further demonstrates a clear understanding of how such racism is passed down through generations, primarily through everyday discourse, such as the daily articulations she heard her father make about the few Aboriginal peoples in their white community. In this respect, learning processes of early socialization are fundamentally relational in nature; the ways in which we learn to ‘read’ the world are the culmination of generations of people, their experiences, their practices, and their stories, all of which they pass down through time. In all ten of the individual interviews, each participant brought forth their stories about the primary relationships in their lives, including their primary relationships with their parents. These relationships appear to be highly influential in shaping the women’s own identities, and particularly in their early conceptions of the colonial relationship between the unmarked white self, and the hyper-visible Aboriginal Other.

The Aboriginal ‘Other’

The learning process of becoming “good white girls” (Moon, 1999) is fundamentally relational, and defined by primary relationships that are not necessarily directly intimate. To ‘come to know’ the self as a white feminine subject, one must learn to identify an ‘Other’—the subject by whom one defines what and who one is *not*. This significant relationship between self and other (Bhabha, 1994) is a relationship defined by absence, by its lack of direct intimacy and engagement. For seven of the participants, the constructed “Others” in their early period of socialization were Aboriginal peoples, who appeared to be “there” in their personal narratives, and yet were cognitively,

ideologically, and spatially removed from their white worlds. For the women, the relationship between the white self and the 'Aboriginal Other' was regulated by overt racial ideologies in their homes and in their communities, or omitted due to the 'invisibility' of Aboriginal peoples in their early lives. Whether seemingly absent or separate from their white worlds, I noted that seven of the participants immediately brought forth this relationship in the interviews, and discussion about it was consistently present throughout the research process. For instance, Maya, who grew up in Saskatchewan and Alberta, discussed moving from a community of predominantly "white Canadians" in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan to Cold Lake, Alberta when she was twelve years old. There she witnessed a different spatial dynamic. During our individual interview she recounted "...there was more [of] a Native population there. You know it was like white people-Native people [Maya motions with her hands to identify a physical separation between white people on one side, and Native people on the other]." Here, Maya, similar to the other five women who grew up in smaller communities, such as: Armstrong, Prince George and Saskatoon, recounts a distinct memory of segregation between 'white' peoples and Aboriginal peoples.

During the individual interviews, when asked about the racial and ethnic makeup of their communities, six of the participants consistently referred to Aboriginal peoples as their primary conceptualization of 'difference' and 'otherness.' Another participant, Azania, who has lived in the Okanagan region of British Columbia and now resides in Vancouver, recalls her early experience of difference during our individual interview:

Well the first place I remember was in the Okanagan, just outside of Armstrong. And we lived right across from an Indian reserve, or Native reserve. And so it was kind of interesting actually when I think about it now, remembering my dad being like, "Never go over there, they've got guns and are drinking and stuff." So I guess that would be my first memory of being connected to another race.

As Azania articulates, she was cautioned by her father regarding how to navigate racialized spaces or "degenerate spaces," spaces in which certain bodies are associated with certain behaviours; spaces in which borders are policed and colour lines are drawn, to ensure the separation of different kinds of bodies, as well as to instill notions of who

belongs 'here' and who belongs 'there' (Razack, 1999, p.160-61).⁴⁰ Part of the colonial separation of space, and central to the conception of the rural-urban binary within Canada, is the separation and containment of Aboriginal peoples through the colonial reservation system. In this statement, Azania recounts an explicit lesson she was taught by her father: a symbolic, bureaucratic, and ideological line is drawn in between the space of the white home and neighbourhood, and the space of the "Indian reserve." The latter space is "degenerate space" containing racialized bodies of the 'Other.' Do not cross the line. Here, the white neighbourhood is similarly constructed to rural space: homogenous, safe and idyllic, while the reserve resembled all the problems of urban space – "...teeming with bodies of color and rife with racial dissent, poverty, and...violence" (O'Connell, 2010, p.11). The demarcation of colonial reservations, and the popular media and everyday discursive depictions of these spaces as places of danger or disease rarely put into a broader context, serve an ideological function in Canadian society. Rendered outside of the civil Canadian polity, these spaces maintain colonial subjects as separate from the rest of the society—cognitively and spatially (Goldberg, 1993; Razack, 2002; 2014). This functions in part through the perception of fear—fear of racialized spaces and fear of racialized bodies (Bourgois, 2000).

Another significant consideration in Azania's story is the historical construction of white femininity in racialized spaces, particularly the notion that white women, as weak and vulnerable subjects, require white male protection from the aggression of 'other' racialized men. Within a white supremacist patriarchal society, part of becoming a "good white girl" is to be socialized into fear; through repeated articulation by family, friends, school, and media, women are taught that they are vulnerable and unsafe, particularly in racialized, non-white spaces. It is the white male's role to protect and shelter white women from racialized men; in doing so, he protects and defends white coloniality and

⁴⁰ Socially constructed spaces within the colonial imagination have come to define belonging/unbelonging, by ideologically determining which bodies are deemed urban/rural and civilized/degenerate. We can think here of Razack's (2014) analysis of Neil Stonechild's death as his 'being out of place' in urban space, or the murder of Trayvon Martin and the notion that he was deemed suspicious because he did not 'belong' in the predominantly white neighbourhood he was walking in as a black youth. There were no legal segregation signs indicating that these bodies were not permitted to be in these places, but through policing and surveillance practices, both formal (in the case of Neil Stonechild and others), and 'informal' (in the case of Trayvon Martin), it is made clear that their unbelonging and expulsion are necessary to maintain urban colonial civility (Goldberg, 1993, O'Connell, 2010; Razack 2002, 2014).

controls white femininity, in part by maintaining colonial boundaries (Deliofsky, 2010; Moon, 1999; Ware, 1992). White patriarchal control is evident in the way Azania and others, such as Mimi and Maya, were directly cautioned by their fathers to stay away from Aboriginal bodies and spaces. The fact these memories were brought forth as their formidable experiences with the notion of *difference* in early life is very telling about how white femininity functions within Canadian society, and the imagined 'Other' perceived to threaten it.

For other participants, the 'Aboriginal Other' was absent/invisible, not known to exist until realizations were made in later life. For one participant in particular, she describes the profound realizations she made as an adult regarding Canadian history and Aboriginal peoples as "an epiphany." As noted, Julia grew up in a middle-upper-class area of Ottawa and now resides in Vancouver, where she is a PhD candidate in international public health. When she reflected on her childhood during our interview, her "memory-work" (Giroux, 1997) revealed that she did hear anti-Aboriginal racism in the home. She also did not remember having any direct interactions with Aboriginal peoples while she was growing up.

Julia: If I look back to childhood, it was sort of a non-issue growing up. And if I had been attuned to it, I could have heard from my parents' generation, all those common idioms: all those useless or lazy or all the problems and I might have internalized that in some ways-I don't remember it being a strong issue of hearing about it often or in school, or with my family. It wasn't like there was a First Nations community close to us, so it was a common topic of conversation, but the lack of it, the absent nature of the conversation makes you develop your own perceptions...

Although Julia grew up in Ottawa, and there were most certainly Aboriginal peoples 'there,' she did not see them. They existed *outside* of her conceptual world—they were invisible. This experience, which is not limited to Julia's life, testifies to dehumanization-profound cognitive and psychical processes, in which the eye is taught not to see the very existence of the 'Other'; this renders whole peoples *unseeable*, *invisible* (Wiegman, 1995). It is this 'inability' to see that is foundational to the creation and perpetuation of the colonial relationship between the self and other (Berlak, 2004; Bhabha, 1999; Mohanram, 1999). For Julia, her 'blindness' was interrupted when her

Zimbabwean partner, an elementary school teacher, went to teach and live on a reserve in Northern Ontario.

Julia: I've had this massive enlightenment with Aboriginal people and First Nations over the last few years, especially living out here [Vancouver], and because my husband worked on a First Nations reserve while we were dating, like up in Northern Ontario teaching. ...and it wasn't until he was working up there...I was just absolutely amazed, well number one the conditions and comparing where I was working in Kenya and Rwanda with children, because he works in primary schools, and the breakdown of families. It just caused me to think a lot about issues in my own country to do with race, and then of course my work in Africa, just positioning myself in this postcolonial environment and becoming a lot more critical of that place in Canada too.

What is fascinating about this story is that Julia's "enlightenment" about Aboriginal peoples and colonialism in her own country was made possible by her Zimbabwean partner. As a white Euro-Canadian woman, who grew up in a middle-upper-class neighbourhood in Ottawa, she was not even made aware of Aboriginal peoples, nor the history of Canadian 'settlement.' Informed by Christian missionary values, as an adult her focus had been on international public health abroad, mostly in Africa. Before her partner lived on reserve, before he transgressed into racialized space that she might very well never have ventured into in her lifetime, she had not realized that the conditions, which she witnessed in the other 'third-world' contexts she has been in many times, actually existed within her own country, right beside her. This profound part of her "enlightenment" led her to engage in extensive informal and formal learning about the history of colonialism in Canada, and public health issues, which will perhaps change her career trajectory to look closer to 'home.'

In her narrative, Julia recounts that her partner was socially accepted on reserve, he felt at home there (perhaps in more ways than he felt in the larger mainstream Canadian society), and he developed significant relationships.

Julia: It's interesting because my husband's mixed race, coloured, like they called him sort of Métis...he could pass Aboriginal-he has an interesting look because he also has Chinese background anyways because his dad's from Mozambique. But I think he was very accepted; he was accepted very quickly. You know the Elders would take him fishing and he would go hunting with them. He also really valued them

and they sensed that. He spent a lot of time talking to people and developed close relationships quite quickly.

As a Zimbabwean man of 'coloured' racial status, her partner grew up in very different racialized discourses and dynamics. Since he was not socialized into the same racialized history and discourses as Julia was in Canada, his participation as a racialized newcomer in Canadian society enabled Julia to bear witness to herself—her individual and collective identity, shaped by place (Canada), and by others (intimate others, and Aboriginal peoples). These important insights, facilitated by intimate relationships (here it is through her partner), and key incidents (her partner's employment and residence on a First Nations reserve), can allow for the relationship between self and other, once invisible, to be *seen*; it can also lead to greater awareness and deeper understanding of colonization more broadly. Julia's articulation suggests that she wants to 'reconcile' a broken relationship—to face the history of her unknowing and the responsibility of her 'coming-to-know'; in part, this is about considering how she, as an individual, fits into or is part of larger colonial stories and ongoing colonial systems. In our interview Julia went on to state:

I feel like with the Aboriginal issues, part of it was that I was ashamed of not knowing. I was ashamed of this sort of blank space that's been so perpetuated, and not that I could have done much about that growing up anyway, unless I had been exposed to it earlier and been a massive advocate, which we should see more of...I think all those years of unknowing that made me feel uneasy, and the knowledge of what is happening and how it is still a point of not just contention but massive silences in this country...I want to be a part of bringing wholeness to communities; I mean I work in health, but that's always the way I say it, because that's the whole perception of health, it's wholeness, and that's what needs to happen is a holistic move towards wholeness of communities, and individuals, and families. Yeah, I would love to see how I can be part of that, and kind of want to explore that more....

Here Julia exemplifies her active negotiation and need to understand who she is and how she is positioned as a white settler subject (and I would add as a white female Euro-Canadian subject), in order to heal and to imagine her role in making a different future. It appears a significant struggle in this negotiation is reimagining and reconciling the missionary aid frameworks that she is used to navigating within in her public health and development work in Africa.

I realized that a response to how white Euro-Canadian women in transracial racial/cultural families conceive of discourses of race and difference was hugely informed by how they see others constructed, especially in formidable early life. During the study, what emerged so distinctly as a theme was that the foundational understanding, the very possibility of conceptualizing the self as a socially constructed body, (of course this was largely without realization at the time and required further reflection and analysis), was their close physical proximity and vast conceptual, emotional, and psychic distance from the 'Aboriginal Other.' I realized that for the majority of the women this was their foundational relationship of difference, of coloniality, in which they came to *recognize* and to identify the *self* (Deliovsky, 2010; Hall, 1996). It was a relationship that seemed to create their conceptual framework of what *difference* "is." Largely premised on white settler mythologies passed down through generations, a white settler self can only be conceived, imagined, and performed in relation to the pathological existence of the Other (Bhabha, 1999; Dei et al., 2004; Hall, 1996). National narratives, or dangerous "single stories" (Adichie, 2009), and the everyday racialized discourses informed by them, which seven women recount hearing in their early learning environments, "continually reaffirm" the binary of Aboriginal inferiority and Euro-Canadian superiority.

Distinguishing 'otherness': Naturalized versus exotic gaze

I explicitly state that this self-other relationship may not have been conscious for the women in early childhood, and for many of them growing awareness and critical reflection on Indigenous peoples, and Canadian history and identity followed in their adult lives. I also noted that thematic in four of the individual interviews was the distinction the women made between identifications of "otherness"; for instance, they distinguished between "black people" and "Aboriginal" or "First Nations" people. When I asked the participants about becoming aware of race and racism, six participants referred to 'black people' and anti-black racism. Many participants also explicitly identified black bodies of colour when they addressed difference as positive and attractive, evident in the use of adjectives, such as 'intriguing' and 'exotic.' As noted, the majority of the women had rarely met or interacted with "black people" and only saw "them" in popular cultural forms prior to their late adolescence. It appears that the

specific exotification and racialization of “black people” is related to the rise of hip hop culture and popular television programs consumed by the majority of the women. This specific exotification and racialization is exemplified in many of the participant narratives, particularly Azania, J and Mimi, in descriptions of black males in particular, as “super cool” and “good at sports.”

For some participants, this exotification and ‘appreciation’ did extend to Indigenous cultures; and yet, it appears that the colonial relationship with Aboriginal peoples, and the colonial conditions that mediate the relationship were so naturalized and normalized as part of early socialization, it is not of the same interest, desire, or intrigue. This is illustrated in the following interaction during J’s interview, in which I asked J about the distinctions she appeared to make between Aboriginal peoples and “other ethnicities”:

J: I grew up in a dominantly Caucasian, German/Polish/Ukrainian environment, and um there was you know, the closest thing-you know, I had friends that were Native or First Nations, but um that’s really-I don’t remember when I saw my first black person...mostly Caucasian interactions my whole life, other than with like some really good friends that were Native/First Nations.

WA: You mentioned that maybe you were ten the first time you saw a ‘black person’ and it seems like there might be a distinction between First Nations-is there a difference there?

J: Oh for sure. Like because they have been here, they were here before “settlers,” like our ancestors were here. So there were First Nations, it wasn’t rare to see them. Our neighbours were First Nations and so yeah I grew up with them I guess.

It seems that for all the participants, Aboriginal peoples had their own status, and occupied their own place in the women’s racial consciousness. This can be attributed to several variables; first, within traditional white settler narratives, Aboriginal peoples are of history, of tradition, and most notably of the land. Rendered colonial subjects, they stand in the way of modern enterprise, rational law and order, and civilized society. Like history that came before us, and the landscapes that surround us, there is no need to actively make “them” visible, because they are “just there.” They were not ‘people of colour,’ but rather, within the racial ideologies the women were socialized into, Aboriginal

peoples were invisible as racialized bodies of colour, and this invisibility extended to them “just being there” and “being used to them.” Within racial ideologies there is the “hypervisibility” and the “invisibility” of bodies of colour. The black body is hypervisible and the polarization of the white-black dichotomy is central to conceptualizing racial difference. Other bodies of colour may be more associated with “cultural differences,” such as the bodies of Aboriginal peoples and other racialized immigrants in Canada (Deliovsky, 2010). In my study, I found that at times the participants would use the identifications “black people” and “African Americans” interchangeably. This in part reflects the predominant process of ‘coming-to-know’ the construct of race, and the dynamics of racism for these women, (and arguably for Canadian students more broadly), as situated within the context of American racial history and relations.

The pop culture gaze and exotification

“One black kid” “One black family”

In eight of the participant interviews, I noted a similar narrative was recounted of the “one black kid,” or the “one black family” in the women’s respective school or town. Unlike the overt forms of racism against Aboriginal peoples several of the women claimed to witness, many recount that more positive associations were fixed to “that” child or family based on their athletic involvement or assumed “coolness” by association to African American popular culture and music. In her interview, Azania referenced the “one black guy” in her high school:

I remember that he was the guy that rapped at the homecoming dance, and everyone thought he was super awesome-and he was pretty good looking too, so that helped...maybe it was because he was different and had something new to offer people. He had a different perspective on things.

Similarly, during her interview Mimi recounted: “there was one black family. Interestingly enough they weren’t treated badly, in fact the kids were kind of put on a pedestal because they were good at sports. So the kids themselves were quite popular and the dad is fairly well known.” As Azania and Mimi illustrate, specific ‘positive’ forms of racialization were fixed to the ‘black child’ or the ‘black family’ based on a racialized

exotification. If they were perceived as being good at sports, or if they were perceived as popular for being “cool” by association to African American pop culture and music, it was interpreted that they were treated well. That being said, the actual perspectives of their racialized classmates and their families are not known, though I would anticipate that they may have different interpretations of their experiences as racialized peoples in small, largely monoracial white Canadian communities.

Three women reported negative forms of racialization after taking more time to reflect further. For instance, like many of the women, J’s early socialization was characterized by racial segregation, which again is framed within spatial terms. As the individual interview progressed, J started to remember more about the racialized social dynamics in her school and community. Following our discussion regarding her early awareness of race and difference, she stated: “So yeah, but living in Saskatoon...I know I don’t remember seeing them [people of colour], like growing up with them anyways...that’s not true, now I’m remembering; I went to school with a kid who was mixed...” When I asked J whether she remembers the child being constructed as ‘different,’ she responded:

I think that people thought he was dirty...well he wasn’t kept well, like he always had really nappy, dirty hair. I think his parents were low income...he always had shady clothes, so I think people saw him as dirty.

The association between blackness and the notion of “being dirty” is an association that moves beyond this single narrative; instead, as we continued to speak, J noted that another person of colour, whom she met as an adult, had told her that he had a very negative experience growing up in Saskatoon. He specifically indicated that people characterized him as “dirty” as a child. J also referenced how this association between blackness and “being dirty” was perpetuated in everyday discourse in her home and as part of rural agrarian white racial discourse:

J: ...We had a farm right outside of Saskatoon, we used to say to him [my nephew], or my parents used to say that you know you get dirty playing outside, you say like “oh you’re so black.” So we were at the grocery store with my nephew, and there was a black person in the line in front of us and he looked over at his mom and said “Mom is that guy ever dirty!” cuz he thought that black was associated with dirt.

Here, we witness the reproduction of traditional racialized discursive references, which situate the body of colour as degenerate, classed, and negatively racialized—“being dirty” and “nappy hair.” We see how these racialized discourses are situated and practiced as part of rural, agrarian whiteness; and while communities were (and some largely remain) monoracial, everyday racial discourses draw on traditional racial tropes and biological classifications of race. In many of the stories women talked about the few racialized children in their communities, and they addressed distinct forms of racialization and stigmatization. I noted that a thematic reference to racialized classmates was with respect to their class and legal status, which made clear their *un*belonging, their unnatural/impermanent presence in the white monoracial communities. This was illustrated in Mimi’s narrative when she realized that the only two Aboriginal children in her community were foster children, and that the behaviour of the male student was deemed unacceptable, while the clothing of the female student illustrated her low socioeconomic status and lack of care. The lack of care notion was also evident in J’s description of the mixed male youth in her community, who was “not well-kept,” as well as other articulations she made regarding the status of “blacks” in Saskatoon, whom she said were not “well-to-do,” especially because many people of colour who arrived in Saskatoon during the early 1980s were refugees.

We see how central these ideologies remain to identity-making in white communities, and how these discourses continue to be circulated as they are passed down through generations. The association between bodies of colour and “being dirty” is but one example of how such negative associations can be recycled and naturalized without disruption through ongoing intergenerational reproduction. The black body as a site of desire and repulsion was central to the contradictory ideologies of western racial sciences and western imperial discourses. Within the colonial imagination, the black body has to remain hypervisual-in composition, in action, and in representation-to maintain its fixture, its fear, and its’ longing. The black body had to remain hypervisual in juxtaposition to the white body to maintain the white body’s myth of invisibility (Bhabha, 1994; Mohanram, 1999; Weedon, 1999). The contradictory nature of colonial racial ideologies is evident in the characterizations of ‘black people’ above, especially black male youth, as black female youth were largely absent from the women’s narratives. The simultaneous desire and ambivalence of the colonial subject that Bhabha writes of, is

exemplified in exotification: the “coolness” of behaviour, the physical performance of the body through dance and sports, and in the repulsion: the “dirty” body, the labouring body, and the classed subject. Again, these ideologies and their repetitive circulation were not based on intimate connections with ‘people of colour’ (“black people” or “Aboriginal people”), but rather the very ‘coming-to-know’ of who the others were derived from a separatedness, a removed gaze. Instead, reproduction of racial ideologies was experienced through everyday spoken discourse and pop cultural representations, which employ the visual and the auditory senses in learning to see and to *hear* difference.

1990s: Television and hip hop culture

For these women, the exotification and fixity assigned to ‘black bodies’ was largely based on and situated in popular cultural depictions they consumed in the form of television shows and mainstream hip hop music. Through these cultural mediums, the women learned to gaze upon and recognize ‘black bodies,’ and to consume ‘black culture.’ When I asked Imogen about her first memories of race and difference in our individual interview, she reflected on an experience she had:

I can remember when I was really young, I used to watch Sesame Street, and I remember one time saying to my mom, “well black people all look the same” (laughing); I said that. I remember that because the only black people I ever saw were on Sesame Street, and I just knew Gordon and Susan; I knew those people. But they stood out to me and I remember one time seeing black people in some department store in Prince George, and I was like “look!” I was pointing them out because I was like, ‘oh my god I’m seeing somebody I’ve only ever seen on TV.’ I was really, really excited (laughing).

There are many fascinating points made in Imogen’s articulation. First is the way she describes the people she watched on Sesame Street. She identifies the two Sesame Street characters by name (“Gordon and Susan”) in a familiar manner, and she recounts that she “saw them” and she “knew” them; she felt she had a relationship to them mediated through television, through an indirect gaze. What is interesting about this is the similarity of this indirect relationship to the relationship of colonial self and other I discussed above. Like the ‘Aboriginal Other,’ a distinct relationship appears to exist, but it is defined by a *lack of* intimacy, a distant visual engagement, not an intimate human connection. Yet at the same time, this relationship is distinct in that while it is

indirect in nature (mediated by a television screen), it is intimate in the sense that it takes place in Imogen's living room-part of her early learning environment. Once Imogen actually saw 'black people' in physical proximity, in her *real* social world, it almost seemed surreal to her, as though they must be the same people she has seen on television, because that is how and where 'they' exist for her. A similar story was told by J, during our interview, about a relationship through distant visual gaze:

J: I grew up on *The Cosbies*. I grew up watching *A Different World*, like all shows that showed black culture. We just didn't have it here. So I had already fallen in love with black people far before I met- you know what I mean. Even though they weren't in my everyday life, they were in my everyday life.

J expresses here what appears for her to be a profound and intimate relationship to what she identifies as 'black culture.' Through certain television shows she "grew up on," again in her "everyday life," mediated by television in her early learning home environment, she cultivates an attraction to, and a subsequent relationship that was so influential for her, she contends that she "had already fallen in love with black people" before she actually had transracial/cultural relationships in her real life. J's statement can also be problematic in multiple ways, and highlights the key characteristics of racial ideologies addressed above: the essentialization, exotification, and fetishization of people of colour, as well the profound segregation that exists between communities (Frankenberg, 1993). There were many contradictions I witnessed in the participant articulations, such as these by J, in which women would articulate antiracist perspectives and clearly demonstrate understanding of race, racism, and other forms of difference, and then within the same conversation engage in negative forms of racialization. I wondered how women who display an understanding of racism can also reproduce racial ideologies within the same utterances (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993). This question resonated with me as I went through the research process, and affirmed how profoundly influential our early learning environments are, and how the racial discourses we were socialized into can remain those we automatically draw on, even when we make conscious choices and engage in critical analysis to change them. Recognizing and working within these contradictions is central to effective antiracism work (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) (see chapter 8).

Hip hop culture

All ten participants were in their teenage years during the 1990s when hip hop was becoming part of American popular music and culture. Similar to other consumers of mainstream hip hop, these women were largely white middle-class youth for whom the music was quite impressionable with respect to how they imagined, and in turn were attracted to “black culture” (Kitwana, 2005; Oliver, 2002). In his text, *Why White Kids Love Hip Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America*, Kitwana (2005) addresses the racial politics of hip hop music, and he analyses the interest and involvement of white youth in hip hop culture. While hip hop culture originated within urban communities of black youth in the United States, the definition of hip hop changed during the 1990s, as it became commercialized and part of popular American culture. Kitwana contends that this shift has altered perceptions of race in the minds of American youth.⁴¹ Unlike other musical genres before it (e.g., rock and roll, jazz), hip hop exploded in the “global information age” and could reach far beyond American borders, influencing youth from all over the world, including Canada.⁴²

Several women distinctly noted that this cultural form drew them to ‘difference’ in that their social worlds started to revolve around hip hop music and dance. During our interview when I asked Miranda about when she became aware of racial differences and racism, we had the following exchange:

Miranda: You know from a very young age we were raised in a culture where late eighties/early nineties when hip hop really took off and became really ubiquitous and not just limited to sort of various black communities in the States; like it became the popular music for everybody.

⁴¹ See Kitwana (2005) for a full discussion of the reasons why white youth are drawn to hip-hop, and the political potential of hip hop music and culture to engage “new racial politics” in the United States.

⁴² Although American hip hop was most influential for these women, and was consumed also as part of mainstream popular culture in Canada, significant iterations of hip hop culture exist in Canada as well. This culture has been an important and influential artistic medium in complex cultural and social environments (e.g., immigrant communities in Montreal, Quebec. See Sarkar & Allen, 2007; Sarkar, Winer, & Sarkar, 2005). Hip hop acts as “a voice of the voiceless” (Kitwana, 2005, p. xiii).

WA: What did hip hop music represent then? Why does it stick out for you?

M: I'm just thinking more mainstreaming of black culture, "so to speak" right? More white people going to parties where they're playing "black music," but it's not black music anymore because everyone listens to rap music, right? Versus before I think it was probably more segregated in terms of music and party choices. I don't know in practice if that really bridged people, but I know at least on the surface at the pop culture level.

Miranda mentions the "mainstreaming of black culture," which resulted in more white people listening to "black music." Here what she effectively sees as a process of "mainstreaming" involved the commercialization of hip hop music, and large numbers of white middle-class youth, like Miranda's friends, who started to consume it. By allowing "black music" into their social worlds (e.g., parties) this shifted the presence of "black culture," yet it did not integrate people. Miranda's statement that because hip hop is mainstream "it's not black music anymore" relates to the fact that while there is so much potential for knowledge and coalition building across lines of difference within hip hop culture, the economic control over hip hop music remains in the hands of white American men, and white youth are its primary consumers. Asserting that "it's not black music anymore" speaks to the understandable contention over the nature of hip hop culture in a white supremacist society, in which a cultural form acting as "a voice for the voiceless" is being rebranded and packaged as "corporate hip hop" for the consumption of white youth (Kitwana, 2005).

For Miranda, this was music that she and her friends listened to, but it did not particularly "bridge people" in her experience, but brought "black culture" in the pop cultural world that "everyone" consumed. For some of the other women, especially J, Mimi and Maya, the mainstreaming of hip hop music became a source of identification with forms of cultural expression outside of their largely segregated lives. It formed a disassociation from their white monoracial social worlds, most notably as the women began to interact with people from different backgrounds. For instance, during our individual interview when we were discussing J's early awareness of race and difference, she stated:

As I went through high school, again I didn't have really any interactions or friends who were black. It was kinda like as a young adult, say 18, 19, that I started to meet [people]...that's when the hip hop culture was starting to pick up, and I fell in love with the music, and yeah it was kinda like this explosion of hip hop and culture all at the same time. And because I was overweight and back then black guys liked big butts-so my first interactions at the bar were with black guys there and they thought I was attractive, so I was like "Oh, ok" (laughing). You know, so I got attention from them where I normally maybe wouldn't have gotten from white men because in Africa it's a social stigma that if you're overweight you must have money right, so you're fed and you're well kept...if you were somebody who was skinny, you were somehow maybe not healthy, which I thought was strange, because it's quite the opposite here, or at least back then.

J's interactions with black men in her late teenage years were facilitated through the "explosion of hip hop and culture" during the late 1990s. For J, it appears that these interactions were based on what for her were new cultural and aesthetic values, which recontextualized the symbolic and aesthetic value of her gendered body. This changed her social trajectory as she moved into new social communities, and further away from the monoracial/cultural world she did not feel she ever necessarily connected to or belonged in. Kitwana (2005) notes that a growing sense of youth alienation, economic uncertainty, and the feared loss of white privilege due to growing minority populations, are variables contributing to the appeal of hip hop culture for white youth. In addition, he attributes the "institutionalization of civil rights culture" to white youth engagement in hip hop, as the stories of the civil rights movement (e.g., Martin Luther King) became integral to national narratives and incorporated into formal education, media, and so forth. This in tandem with more representations of African Americans in popular culture (e.g., television shows such as, *The Cosby Show* and *A Different World* identified by the participants), resulted in aspects of African American history and culture being more visible for white youth than previous generations (Kitwana, 2005). As consumers of American popular culture, we see that some of these influences are present for the Euro-Canadian women in this study as well. For instance, in the women's discussions of Canadian culture and cultural values, six participants identify profound forms of social alienation within mainstream Canadian society (see chapter 6). Seven women also address American racial history and racial politics as one of the most influential ways they formally learned about race and difference (see below).

We see that for these women, popular culture was a medium through which they came to learn (and consume) 'difference' through visual and auditory representation in the form of television shows and hip hop music. As these women's narratives recount, the significant educational function that popular culture and mass (social) media plays in the lives of youth cannot be underestimated (Giroux, 1997). These women, like other youth, are learning through *informal* processes in the home and community environments about how ideological constructions of difference, including their whiteness, function within North American societies.⁴³ Again, this is still largely taking place through an indirect gaze, in which people become and can remain representations: 'the exotic other,' and 'the cool other' (Wiegman, 1995). It was interesting that many of the women problematized the absence of certain kinds of knowledge in their formal schooling experience, and also identified how their formal conceptual understanding of racism was defined by the ways in which it was narrowly taken up in standard school curriculum.

Visibility/invisibility: American race history and relations versus Canadian erasure

Slavery is how we learn what racism is. – Miranda

A 'mythology of racelessness' and 'stupefying innocence'-these would appear to be twin pillars of the Canadian history of race. (Backhouse, 1999, p.14)

The women's knowledge and awareness of race and racism was further limited by the fact racism was not meaningfully or critically addressed in their schools. In the individual interviews and group workshops, eight participants identified the history of slavery in the United States as their conceptual framework for understanding what

⁴³ In the specific context of learning about ideological constructions of difference, popular culture and mass media can also be used as pedagogical tools to disrupt the senses and to refocus the gaze. For instance, while hip hop can be consumed to reify racial differences, hip hop can be used as an amazing tool to engage in critical antiracism work, and represents distinct possibilities for engagement with youth (e.g., Netcho, 2013).

racism “is” based on their formal schooling experience. In our interview, Miranda spoke about how she learned to conceptualize racism:

Slavery is how we learn what racism is...I think a lot of the challenge of even identifying this is that we are taught throughout high school, when you go through all your units about slavery and the history of it, and the whole American black versus white issue throughout history -that's how the story of racism is told in this very extreme dichotomy...if you're a white person, your perception or my perception of racism is pretty skewed, because I'm looking for the big red flags and it's much subtler these days, so much subtler, so it's hard to think of examples of sort of outright racism that I've seen or experiences...

Imogen: I remember my mom talking about slavery, so my concept of racism was based in that; black people were slaves and they faced a lot of racism, but I don't know if I really applied that to a modern contemporary existence for them. I just knew that was something that happened.

The thematic reference many of the women made to equating racism with the history of slavery in the United States was quite illuminating. Conceiving of racism within this specific historical context has numerous consequences. First, as Miranda indicates, her perception of racism is what she characterises as “pretty skewed,” as she looks for the “big red flags” to determine whether racism exists. Within this conceptualization, racism is a distinctly overt oppressive system of “bad people,” such as the transatlantic slavery system and the apartheid system in South Africa. Racism manifests in overt, intentional articulations, and/or actions by ‘racist’ individuals. This conceptual framing limits the ability to “see,” to imagine the insidious ways in which racism is central in a white supremacist society, and to understand how it is, and how it has come to be embedded within institutional and individual practices and discourses. This approach to learning about racism does not provide one with the critical tools necessary to assess the possibilities of unintentional, semi-conscious reproductions of racial ideologies, present in the everyday discourses I have been discussing above (Frankenberg, 1993; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Second, as Miranda illustrates, this framing places racism as something that happened “in the past” and “somewhere else.” Learning to name and understand racism in these ways allows for the absence and erasure of Canada's racialized history and race relations. Canadian national myths of a benevolent “white settler society,” which fixes Europeans as the “original inhabitants” of the land, while

erasing systematic genocide, colonialism, and slavery in Canada, can remain undisrupted (Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007). This also situated the oppression of people of colour and “real racism” as conditions which exist in the United States “melting pot” context, while Canada can remain a diverse and tolerant “mosaic” (Backhouse, 1999).

The histories of American and Canadian racisms differ in distinct ways, namely as Canadian white settler narratives construct “a national persona ostensibly free of systemic exploitation and as a ‘raceless society’” (Deliovsky, 2010, p.22). Contrary to the ideology of “racelessness,” Canada does indeed have a long history of racism and racial oppression (Backhouse, 1999). Although formal segregation laws were not enacted in Canada as they were in the United States, the Indian Act, and other supporting legislation, were (and remain) colonial laws that regulate and control the lives of Aboriginal peoples, by determining access to land, resources, employment, housing, and more (Backhouse, 1999; Thobani, 2007). Throughout Canadian history, there have been many informal ways, in which racial segregation was policed and maintained through the regulation of which bodies belong where and with whom.⁴⁴ Canadian immigration laws are also a central area in which the separation and regulation of bodies has been enacted. Immigration laws have been foundational to the creation of the imagined white Canadian nation-building project and have been enacted to preserve its continued national identity. By denying or limiting entry to the country based on racial classification,

⁴⁴ An example of this is the *White Women’s Labour Law* of 1912, which prohibited white women from working in businesses owned by Asian men. This law in effect regulated the relations between European women and Asian men (Backhouse, 1999; Carter, 1997; Deliovsky, 2010). In a legal case pertaining to the *White Women’s Labour Law*, at issue were the racial identities of the ‘white’ women charged with working at a Chinese restaurant. The case was ultimately dismissed since the “whiteness” of the women (who were of German and Russian descent), was under dispute (also see Carter, 1997; Deliovsky, 2010). This was a fascinating case in that it was the first time the legal representation of whiteness had been formally recognized within the Canadian legal system; a system which maintains white supremacy by ensuring whiteness remains invisible (Blackhouse, 1999). This case further illuminates how the definition of who constituted a ‘white woman’ was shifting throughout time, as more people emigrated from different European countries (Carter, 1997). Here, we witness once more the ways in which white women were strategically (and legally) employed to regulate boundaries of difference. Once again, the protection of ‘vulnerable’ white women is deemed necessary, and the legal separation of white femininity and masculinities of colour is considered legally justifiable (Ware, 1992).

the Canadian government controlled racial communities and maintained Canadian 'whiteness' (Backhouse, 1999).

Before the 1960s, Canada accepted immigrants who were predominantly from "traditional source" countries (e.g., western and northern European countries and North America). These immigrant groups were considered to have the same "Anglo-Saxon" values, while South Europeans and specific groups, such as the Jews and the Ukrainians, were considered suspicious, and as having potential communist and socialist leanings. As nation-building into "the west" expanded, immigration laws were changed to meet increasing labour demands. Thus, immigrant groups who were deemed undesirable, yet could still classify as "white", (and as such maintain the "whiteness" of Canada), were "let in" to build the nation (Deliovsky, 2010; Thobani, 2007). As Western expansion continued, the labour demands were too great, and immigration had to be opened to "non-white" East and South Asian immigrant groups. Yet, once economic conditions changed (e.g., the Pacific National Railway was completed in 1885), immigration policies were again restricted, and the movements and assimilation of "non-white" groups were highly regulated within and outside of the country at various points in Canadian history. Within the state, these included the internment of Japanese communities during the war and the Chinese Head Tax (Backhouse, 1999; Deliovsky, 2010; Thobani, 2007).

For the participants in my study, these histories were not taught in school; instead, the women stated that they were taught about peaceful relations between First Nations and European settlers. This is exemplified in Azania and Miranda's dialogue during the Vancouver workshop, while the participants were discussing whiteness and white privilege by engaging with Peggy McIntosh's text, *White Privilege: Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack* (1989).

Azania: There's one that kind of sticks out for me [referring to McIntosh's list of privileges] and that's my kids going to school and learning a certain curriculum that's very Eurocentric because I remember some of the texts that I was taught in school and it was all about the good old Europeans going over and becoming friends with the Natives, and just paints such an unrealistic picture....

Miranda: Not to mention that in Canadian history we learn stories about Champlain coming over and being best friends with First Nations, and then literally from what I can recall say for maybe a few superstar Canadians, there's no real mention of African Canadians or African, but we do learn the slavery story, so our entire worldview and understanding of black in Canada is oppressed people in the United States, and Canada had the underground railway, so we were the nice guys. And that is that story is just retold and retold and retold. So that's basically the entire-in my growing up-the entire exposure.

Azania: Yeah I don't remember anything about Canadian slavery.

Miranda: Nope we didn't learn about that either.

In this exchange, Azania and Miranda share in their personal, and what clearly become, collective memories. Miranda names the reproduction of dominant narratives, and both women speak to the erasure-the collective absence-of so many peoples and histories of this country. This absence is evidenced in formal texts; for instance, in Steckley's (2003) study of Aboriginal people in Canadian sociology texts, he notes the conscious absence and invisibility of Aboriginal peoples, as well as the minimization of the role racial and ethnic minorities played in Canadian nation-building. These texts serve to distort and remove Indigenous peoples, and to place them *outside* of modernity, and *outside* of the Canadian polity (Razack, 2014; van der Wey, 2012). We also see the erasure of a long history of black presence in Canada. Black settlers actively participated in Canadian history and nation-building, and yet this is erased and dominated by the hegemonic national Canadian history of the Underground Railroad. Although this has been addressed in academia, the national narrative has yet to be disrupted by Canadian histories of black slavery (Walcott, 1997). Official texts, and the national narratives which inform them, are exemplified in the education of erasure that Azania and Miranda spoke of, and maintain the "historical amnesia" that Canada experiences (Henry, 2006).⁴⁵

⁴⁵ I write this during a time of possibility in Canada as the Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has completed its work, and recently released its findings and recommendations report. This is a period of time in Canada in which a new beginning must start as the country is tasked to move out of "historical amnesia" and take responsibility for *cultural genocide*, and how to make for a different future. In the TRC report, the erasure, misrepresentations, and racialization of Aboriginal peoples are specifically addressed in the report's "calls to action" (2015). Thoughtful and well-conceived pedagogies will be central to any change. I take this up briefly in chapter 8.

Conclusion

What I found particularly interesting were the critical ways the participants could reflect back on their periods of early socialization, and question the dominant narratives and discourses of difference they were socialized into. As their social worlds expanded beyond their early primary relationships and learning spaces, many of the women could reflect on how they were formally taught, and what they learned through absence about constructions of difference. By investigating the early learning spaces and discourses of white women of Euro-Canadian descent in transracial/cultural families, this study reveals the ways in which the women 'come to know' who they are as white racialized and gendered subjects, in binary opposition to constructed "Others" within the Canadian context. The women's articulations reveal that their learning takes place in the home and through popular culture, spaces defined by segregation and an indirect gaze. Through these mediums and the discourses of erasure they are taught in formal educational environments, the women learn that race and racism exist in another time and place. They are socialized to identify with Canadian national mythologies of a raceless, tolerant, and diverse society, while at the same time they are meant to become "good white girls" and take their place within the inequitable political, economic, and social systems of the state. Unpacking the early worlds of these participants and their conceptualizations of difference illuminate how constructions of whiteness and white femininity relate to broader Canadian histories and dominant discourses. In the next chapter, I will examine the women's ongoing socialization into difference; their disrupted relationships to whiteness and discourses of nationalism, immigration, and multiculturalism; and their changing social identities.

Chapter 6. Ongoing Socialization and Changing Social Identities

Introduction

For the participants in this study, like many other white people socialized into a white supremacist society, racial ideologies, reproduced through discursive and social practices, were naturalized and normalized, forming the basis of their cognitive frameworks. These “frames of references” are “reinforced” by societal institutions, which recycle similar scripts, as well as through the ideology of liberal individualism, which maintains a focus on the individual as independently responsible for their ‘success’ or ‘failure.’ These discourses ensure that larger societal institutions, which shape and control individual life choices, remain hidden (e.g., the legal system, educational system, and immigration system) (Berlak, 1994; Dei et al., 2004) (see chapter 2). With the exception of two participants, Imogen and Simone, who had witnessed and been taught about racism from an early age, all the participants exemplified this process of erasure (Berlak, 1994; Felman & Laub, 1992), claiming they had never been aware of racism and discrimination in their early lives. For some of the women, including Mimi, J and Julia, they noted it was not until later in adulthood that they began to *re-witness* how ideological constructions of difference shaped their social worlds, and how racial ideologies were internalized as part of their early cognitive frameworks. For instance, during our individual interview when I asked Mimi what her early understanding of racism was, she responded:

No, not until much later, I couldn't pinpoint it. It's not like as a child I went, 'oh that's unfair, they're being treated this way because of—it didn't register with me I don't think; and I never would have been in the position or knowledgeable enough to say, 'this isn't fair, this is racism' because I saw it in my house, and it was just kind of a given the idea of Aboriginal people being unemployed alcoholics—that was an accepted idea in my house and that's what my dad would say.

Although some participants felt that something “wasn’t right,” like J articulated about her father’s comment regarding ‘black people,’ they did not necessarily have the alternative cognitive frameworks or language to re-interpret the situation. This is similar to what Mimi said above in that she was not “knowledgeable enough” to counter the racial discourses in her home, whether or not she felt that they were “fair.” As the women in the study moved into their youth and expanded their social worlds, in part through engagement with new forms of popular music and culture (e.g., hip hop); and they had more social relationships with people of colour, they came to witness the world in new ways.

In order to respond to the second part of my first key research question, “How do white Euro-Canadian women see themselves constructed within discourses of race and difference?” I had to explore the ways in which white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families developed and changed their conceptualizations and engagements with difference, and how that in turn constructed them and positioned them differently as ‘white women’ within the social world. Reiterated once again was the profound relationship between identity and place; and how exposure to difference, bearing witness to racism, and greater consciousness regarding their own white femininity, led the participants to question larger nationalist discourses and cultural norms. To illustrate these changes, this chapter is divided into three broad sections, which reflect the dominant themes that emerged in response to the research question: 1. Ongoing socialization, 2. Complicating whiteness and white femininity, and 3. Disillusionment with dominant Canadian discourses and cultural norms.

Ongoing socialization

Desire for (racial) ‘difference’

During the individual interviews, eight women describe developing awareness to racism through new social relationships. For some of the participants, navigating the social world with friends, who were negatively racialized allowed them to bear witness to racism they had been socialized not to see (Berlak, 1994; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

During the interview in response to my question about when Mimi first became aware of racism, she stated:

I think I started to become very aware of racism when I was 16; the Aboriginal girl, who was adopted into the rich family, she was just a very close friend of mine and we would hang out and party and you know go out, and she started hanging around with a bunch of black guys in the city. It was a group of Eritrean guys, a bit older than us, and we became this tight circle of friends. I remember my dad saying, “what the heck are you doing? Why are you hanging out with a bunch of black guys? What’s your problem?” And then I mean just hanging out with them, we experienced different things. One of the guys is from Ghana and he was very dark skinned, and he had these dreadlocks and everywhere we went these little weird things would happen.

Here, Mimi once again makes clear that her father is still attempting to regulate her white femininity, reinforce the racial discourses she learned in the home, and assert his white masculinity. She recounts that “hanging out” with these racialized friends, in particular black African males, meant experiencing “different things” in the social world, such as the “little weird things” that took place when she was with her Ghanaian friend who wore dreadlocks. What she describes as “little weird things” for her could arguably be imagined as the ways that he regularly experiences racialization and discrimination; in other words, perhaps there is nothing “weird” about such incidents for him. On the other hand, as a white woman who grew up in a predominantly white world, these occurrences were “weird” as they were outside of the “normal” ways she experienced the social world, which would historically reinforce, not reject, her belonging (Deliofsky, 2010). Mimi went on to say:

They were different, right? It just wasn’t the same typical thing. I was being more and more drawn towards hip hoppy kind of lifestyle too...so we’d go to the hip hop club and reggae and dance all night long...that was my style of music and I loved dancing to that music, I had a lot more fun in that group, than I would have going to a stereotypical country bar with all the white boys from Warman.

Like six of the other women, Mimi expresses what can be imagined as a distinct attraction to *difference*, and a conscious interest in moving away from the monoracial white world of “going to a stereotypical country bar with all white boys from Warman.” This speaks again to the interest in experiencing and consuming difference as intrigue

and as exotification (hooks, 1992). We also see an identification with different cultural forms; this was facilitated through her love of hip hop and reggae music and dancing, something that connected the social group. This sense of connection and attraction to 'difference' is something J spoke of as well in our interview. When I asked what drew her to the "black culture" she referred to. She responded:

J: I really had a hard time identifying where I could-there were only so many people I could relate to, and I felt like after watching the struggles...I could relate to some of that struggle, even though I didn't have any racism...so I think I felt like I could identify with someone who maybe felt the same way about not fitting in and having a place in society, you know?

For J, her attraction to 'difference' and to "black people" appears to be based on notions of social belonging, affiliation and marginalization. She identifies with a sense of *unbelonging* and social marginalization she felt in her life growing up as someone who was adopted, and as someone who felt profound body stigma, which she articulates as part of her attraction to people considered *different* within the mainstream society. For her, her body was a form of negative difference, which was reinterpreted as positive in her interactions with black men. It became something she received positive attention for, and that appeared to be another reason for her specific attraction to "black culture." As she immersed herself in new social relationships with African friends, and integrated into a small African diasporic community in Saskatoon, she began to identify more deeply, and in turn her self-identification transformed. In our interview discussion, J also commented: "Everybody I've ever met has always said, 'you must have been a black person in your previous life' (laughing). When I went to Ghana, everyone was like, 'you're just painted the wrong colour.'" J's self-identification is very interesting to imagine, particularly at a time in social history when identity politics are so hyper-politicized, and her articulation speaks to the complex identifications and positionalities of white women in transracial/cultural families (see chapter 2).

Another participant, Azania, framed her attraction to difference as a curiosity to explore other cultures through travel. This is exemplified in our conversation below during her interview:

A: I've always been curious about culture and stuff, like I love to travel...I love culture shock. I love being planted in a place where you don't know the language and the culture is different and the customs are different. So I think I've always had a bit more natural curiosity for other cultures...

WA: What do you feel draws that curiosity? What do you feel that you like about the differences? What motivates that?

A: Hard to pinpoint exactly what it is that makes me so like eager to be engrossed into, cuz it's like the food and the people and the-like in my husband's culture, it was really interesting being in the townships and stuff because everything was different, like washing with a bucket, the houses are small and shack-like, but the idea of community is so wildly different there than it is here, and I think that's really cool...

The examples of interesting differences Azania provides relate to the material living conditions in the South African townships. She frames living practices, such as washing clothing in a bucket, and physical conditions such as the small "shack-like" housing as cultural differences. What we see is that colonial ideologies shape the women's conceptions of culture (Frankenberg, 1993). Within colonial discourses, the romanticization of some cultures ignores other variables, including the socio-political conditions of poverty. The isolation of 'culture' follows a long-standing colonial ideology, in which 'modernity' resides in the progressive west, while traditional and authentic 'culture' lives forever in the primitive world. As these ideologies seep into our glands (Smith, 1961), we draw on them to 'make sense' of difference in the world. With respect to Azania's statement, it is therefore necessary to unpack the connections between the material conditions of the townships in "post-Apartheid" South Africa, colonial ideologies and practices, and the current dynamics of global capitalism (Goldberg, 1993).

Further to the discussion in chapter 5, participants in the study did much of their early learning about racial differences through the gaze and consumption of mass consumer culture. Mass culture is a formidable site in the reproduction of colonial desire for racial difference, and makes clear that commodified otherness is available for consumption. The search for pleasure to be found in the exoticism of the Other is what hooks (1992) refers to as "eating the other" (p.21), a desire that exists within the "deep structure of white supremacy" (p.22). The interest, exploration, and identification with racial differences rests on the premise that "mainstream white culture" is defined by its

lack of colour and flavour; it is 'other cultures' that bring the spice and sensation. We see these sentiments exemplified in Mimi's statement regarding the "stereotypical country bar with the white boys," the value of J's white femininity and sexuality amongst the black men she met, and Azania's curiosity and romanticization of other cultures. These kinds of discursive practices represent what Frankenberg calls, "color-and power-evasive repertoire," which are "apparently valorizing cultural differences but doing so in a way that leaves racial and cultural hierarchies intact" (p.197).

Although encounters with "otherness" do not automatically disrupt the racial positionality of white people or challenge racial hierarchies, there is value in understanding this form of colonial imagination in order to stare straight into the "deep structure of white supremacy," and to create counter-discursive practices (hooks, 1992, p.22). For the women in this study, their "encounter with others" is more complex than a simplistic self-other colonial encounter, and their racialized and gendered positionalities can change, (although of course they retain fundamental aspects of their racial privilege based on skin-colour), through their transgression into intimate transracial/cultural relationships (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Luke, 1993; Murad, 2006; Twine, 2010). It is the experiences of women, such as the participants in this study, which are of keen interest in the examination of colonial imagination and "colour- and power-evasive repertoire" (Frankenberg, 1993).

Transgression

When white women permanently transgress the fixed borders of the white patriarchal world through intimate relationships with 'the other,' they can witness their relationship to whiteness, race and difference change dramatically; their whiteness, which was normalized and invisible, is now tainted and marked (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; Luke, 1994) (see chapter 2). Transgression is a racialized, gendered, sexualized, and classed process. Historically, white middle/upper class women who dared to defy anti-miscegenation laws were thought to have been raped or sexually assaulted by men of colour, while women of lower classes, already of tainted white femininity, were considered deviant and at fault for their transgression. Constructions of middle/upper class white feminine innocence, and lower-class white

feminine deviance were not applied to white men, as their transgression has historically symbolized, and in fact upheld, the colonial order (Frankenberg, 1993; Knapman, 1986; Ware, 1992).⁴⁶

When white women permanently transgress to live, love and have a family, they face forced removal from respectable white femininity. Yet, it is still the privilege of their whiteness that enables their transgression to take place at all (Deliovsky, 2010). As noted in chapter two, Frankenberg (1993) puts forth the notion of becoming “unwhitened” to signify the process by which white women are forcibly removed from respectable white femininity, both symbolically and socially (p.104). This is evidenced in the verbal, emotional, and sometimes physical abuse that women in existing studies report they face from the white world when they enter into transracial relationships, particularly when a child is conceived within a partnership. As women’s public sexualized, racialized and classed identities change, they become vulnerable to assumptions made about their character, morality, sexuality, and mental health status (Dalmage, 2000; Deliovsky, 2010; Harman, 2010; Luke, 1994; Twine, 2010). For example, during our interview Miranda shared an instance of walking down the street with her partner in Vancouver and being called a ‘race traitor’ by a white male. Another participant J stated that numerous people assumed she was a single parent because her child is “mixed-race.” These examples illustrate that when white women do not maintain their allegiance to patriarchal whiteness, there can be strict regulation of their white femininity. The consequences of transgression are made clear, and these women must be put back into their “symbolic feminine place” (Deliovsky, 2010).

Reactions from the white world can take an insidious form when they are situated within individual liberal discourses of multiculturalism and diversity. Four women in this study grew up in “colourblind homes,” rhetorically committed to inclusivity, diversity, and “tolerance.” The contradiction occurs when these notions come into intimate conflict with notions of whiteness, in which the distance of the “indirect gaze” can no longer be

⁴⁶ This dynamic, central to colonial white male power, functions in a unidirectional manner, reflecting the asymmetrical power relations of white supremacy. When racialized people transgress into white spaces-spaces of exclusion-they are quickly brought to “justice” and forcibly removed. I think here of the forced removal and subsequent freezing deaths of Neil Stonechild and other Aboriginal men on the Canadian prairies (Razack, 2014).

maintained between the object (the other), to celebrate/consume/fear/loathe from afar, and the observer (the self/the unmarked white) (hooks, 1992). For these women, the conflict is framed as feelings of concern, (especially for the welfare of mixed children), disappointment, shame, and betrayal family members articulate when women publicly transgress racial borders (Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010). Through transgression, these women not only threaten respectable “good girl” white femininity, they directly challenge liberal colourblindness, and as such unveil this false sense of white morality (Bergerson, 2003; Mahrouse, 2010).

While the participants in this study did articulate incidents of overt regulation, the women predominantly reported more covert and insidious forms of racialization and discrimination within the family and within the larger social world, such as staring behaviours and racialized inferences (see chapter 6). This was a clear deviation from existing studies, in which many participants thematically reported direct forms of stigma and aggression (see chapter 2). Several explanatory variables for this marked distinction can be attributed to the demographics of the women in the study, as well as where they are situated within space and time. In many previous studies dating back over several decades, the women represent multiple age groups, and include women who were or have been in multiracial/cultural relationships in previous decades (e.g., 1960s, 1970s). Clearly over time the politics of race and identity have been transforming; in the Canadian context, this has much to do with the enactment of the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988) and the creation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982). As discussed in chapter three in particular, individual liberalism and multiculturalism have profoundly changed the ways in which racial ideologies are articulated, and most importantly the discursive rules and regulations of their articulation (Dei et al., 2004; Fleras, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; Thobani, 2007; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

I found this to be the case with the participants in the study, all of whom are in their late twenties to late thirties. This is a specific demographic of women who grew up in the socio-political Canadian context in which the foundation of individual liberalism, and the celebration of multicultural tolerance are part of Canada’s national identity and cultural psyche (Creese, 2011; Thobani, 2007). I witnessed this in the ways six women

employed discursive strategies to rationalize their family members' articulations of 'concern' or 'caution' about their transracial/cultural relationships (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Several participants, especially Azania, Liana and Maya, noted that once their family members became familiar with their partner as 'an individual,' their parents and family members embraced them. This appeared to occur through individualization of their partners, wherein their partner became 'an exception to the rule' (they do not threaten the family), and/or they act as a positive representative for a fixed group (e.g., 'black people' and 'Africans'). We witness this in the cases of Liana and Azania in particular. For example, Liana grew up in a white, working-class community in Surrey, British Columbia, and stated that she was not consciously aware of race and difference in her early world. When she met her Ghanaian husband at a night club when she was only 19, she described how hesitant she was to introduce him to her parents. During our interview, I asked her why and she recounted her parents' initial concern about the relationship.

L: I remember when we were first dating she said, and I was 19, and she said [her mother]

"Oh what are you going to do if you have children?" I'm thinking, I'm only 19 and I'm not thinking about having children now. "Oh but if you do they are going to be made fun of"...and I don't know why, but I think they [her parents] had a negative perspective on black people. I don't know why and never asked them and I don't know if I ever want to ask them.

WA: Why is that, why don't you want to ask them?

L: Well they're old so I don't know if it's just from growing up...my dad's mom and grandma-I've heard, "races stay together, 'whites are with whites,' 'Chinese are with Chinese'"I said to my mom, 'you can find good and bad in every colour and every race...you can't judge a whole community by one person's actions.' It took me five months to bring him home and he was so nervous...because I told him that my mom and dad had concerns...but since then they have totally opened up and they love him like he's their son. My dad calls him son and he calls him dad.

The presumption that Liana's future children would be "made fun of" reflects a central tenet of anti-mixing discourse, in which mixed-race children embody a "cultural *unbelonging*" and an "impurity"; they are "doomed not to fit into the social structure as it is currently constituted" (Frankenberg, 1993, p.77) (see chapter 2). For Liana's mother,

this is reason enough to rationalize and reinforce racial boundaries, and in turn to justify why Liana should not pursue a serious relationship with a black partner. Liana suggests that her parents' anxiety is related to racial ideologies that have been passed down through her family, as well as a negative experience that someone they knew had in a relationship with a person of colour (though the person's cultural or racial identity is unclear). As Liana's parents get to know her husband, and to humanize him, he appears to be less threatening. He comes to represent 'an exception to the rule,' and he is allowed in. Liana rationalizes her parents' "concerns" by attributing them to unconscious ignorance (e.g., her grandparents spoke that way, her parents grew up in a segregationist era, and they lack formal secondary and postsecondary education). In her interactions with them, she responds to their concerns with "color and power-evasive repertoire" (Frankenberg, 1993), by avoiding racial inequity and making claims to the universality of childhood social dynamics, by suggesting that all children will be picked on, regardless of their skin colour. This repertoire, popularly employed within the multicultural paradigm, suggests that racism is 'of the past' which Liana's parents were still stuck in, and that multiculturalism of the present is antithetical to this. It also suggests that once her parents met her husband, they moved from the past into the present, because now they can no longer see colour and they can value his "cultural differences."

Azania found that her mother consciously separated her ideas about race and difference from her family. During our interview, Azania talked about her mother several times, and described her as someone who engages in racialization of broad racial and ethno-cultural groups. Since Azania's mother likes Azania's husband as an individual and her exposure to "black people" is limited, she likely has positive associations.

Azania: She was really welcoming to my husband, and she's never mentioned anything about race; but like I said too, she doesn't really have any experience with black people, and my husband is very charming, easy to get along with guy. I could be wrong, but I think this is her representation of the black community, so she sees them positively.

The essentialization of "the black community" demonstrates the segregated racial and cultural conditions that Azania's mother (and many others) live in. Her son-in-law's skin colour and personality now reflect huge populations of diverse individuals and

communities, and he becomes and bears the burden of being 'the representative for the whole group' (Dei et al., 2004). When I asked Azania if her mother had reconsidered any of her ideas about difference, or gained new insights because of her mother's new social relationships with Azania's transracial/cultural family, Azania definitively stated that her mother had not. In this way, Azania's mother exemplifies the contradictory nature of racial ideologies, and the manner in which they can remain static, even when the world around us is changing in ways that directly challenge these fixed ideas.

It is also difficult to say how much influence situated place had in the distinction between how women experienced forms of racialization and discrimination in this study versus previous studies. As there are limited studies in the Canadian context, particularly with women of this age range, this is largely unknown. For example, would the finding of more insidious manifestations have been different if the women lived in other cities or another country? Would this be similar in the United States or in the United Kingdom with a generally similar demographic of women? How much of an influential role does socioeconomic status and education play in this distinction in the Canadian context versus other contexts? (see chapter nine where I briefly propose future studies).

The manifestations of racial ideologies are class-based, and the racial discourses and discursive performances of whiteness vary within different socioeconomic groups. For instance, middle-class liberal discourse is more predominantly premised on "colourblindness" and erasure, whereas within working-class discourse, it may be more socially acceptable to articulate overt forms of racialization (Deliovsky, 2010; Moon, 1999; O'Connell, 2010).⁴⁷ A manifestation of middle-class liberal discourse I observed is the existence of what I will term, "*multicultural cred*," particularly amongst four of the participants' mothers. As a performance of white liberal tolerance, this term illustrates when one goes out of one's way in a social situation to make clear their affiliation with and acceptance of colour and difference (Thobani, 2007; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

⁴⁷ I think here of the rise in popularity of the 'redneck' as a source of working-class, predominantly rural, white identification and pride. An increase in the positive association to redneck identities is exemplified by the increasing presence of this identification in popular mainstream culture (see O'Connell, 2010).

Azania, Julia, Liana and Miranda, identified this kind of practice in similar behaviour they witnessed by their mothers after becoming part of a transracial/cultural family. I noted that the public practice of 'multicultural cred' was specifically gendered as well, in that the participants related this behaviour exclusively to their mothers. During my interview discussion with Miranda about any experiences she had dealing with racism and discrimination, she brought up her mother's behaviour:

My mom always goes out of her way to bring up how she has an African son-in-law in the most absurd way; like she'll be in line for whatever-name a government service-and then someone will be in line, and she will see a French African family in line in front of her and she'll jump in the conversation and start talking, and drop the fact that she has a Francophone African son-in-law; which I get, it's just making connections and there is nothing outright bad about that, but it goes to the extreme levels of finding any excuse to talk to a black person to tell them that she has a black son-in-law, as though they're going to give her a prize...

As someone also part of the extended transracial/cultural family, Miranda's mother may imagine that her relationship to difference and her own relational identity have changed. She wants to participate in new social interactions, and yet the intention may be unclear to those with whom she is trying to engage. During our interview, Liana also spoke of a similar behaviour by her mother:

...she's even gone up to people and she's the kind of person who worries about what other people think, and it's almost like she's proud to have a son-in-law who's from Africa and to have a biracial grandchild because she'll say, "Oh one of my grandsons' is half black," and "Oh he is so beautiful," and she has no problem telling people that. Coming from a person who really cares what people think, I think it's really opened her eyes a lot.

When I asked Miranda and Liana why their mothers might perform in public space in such a way, they had the following responses:

Miranda: I really don't know what's going on in her mind when she does that, if it's a manifestation of her discomfort with it, or just she thinks it's actually just really interesting for her to have someone who is so different be part of the family...I think it's probably a mix of both. She's uncomfortable with it to some degree so masks it with enthusiasm for anything black, and/or Francophone.

Liana: I don't know, I find it kind of strange...I don't think she would even know...and with him [her husband] being Muslim too—she made comments to people about—because it's Ramadan now, so he's fasting, and she said to this gentleman we were sitting at the table with, “Oh, my son-in-law is fasting right now, he's Muslim, it's Ramadan and he can't eat for x amount of hours,” and I was kind of surprised...I don't know if she is comfortable with it now...it's not shunned upon as much anymore in her eyes...maybe she likes letting people know that she is very accepting.

Miranda and Liana explain their mothers' public social behaviour in similar ways. Both begin their statements with “I don't know,” and then each addresses a sense of simultaneous comfort and discomfort their mothers feel with respect to intimate difference, which appears to manifest itself most distinctly in the way their mothers' seek to anxiously display their tolerance for “diversity.” Enhancing one's *multicultural cred*—the perceived status one gets for being viewed as an inclusive person, who allows diversity into their lives and otherness into their intimate families—is central to performing a “tolerant identity” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This can be performed through multicultural capitalist consumption (cuisine, music, travel), through education (learning about other customs, cultures, and languages), and through relationships (family, friends, colleagues). Through this practice, Miranda's and Liana's mothers perform their moral tolerance and white benevolence; and yet at the same time, they embody the anxiety of multiculturalism that Miranda alluded to earlier, wherein multiculturalism “works” as long as the white Euro-Canadian population can celebrate Others and their exotic differences, and not be challenged by them (St. Denis, 2011; Thobani, 2007).

It must be stated once again that the practice of *multicultural cred* does not exemplify individual culpability or signify a consciously malicious practice. The individual is not a sovereign actor, but rather a socially and discursively constituted subject, and the concern within this study is not racism and discrimination as individual pathologies, but rather *how* the articulations of individuals reflect racial ideologies and social practices, and how we can learn from them (Dei et al., 2004; Thobani, 2007; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Socialized into multiculturalism discourses, *multicultural cred* is a performance we are socialized to practice, myself included. This practice is “well-intentioned” on the part of the women's mothers and family members, and decidedly preferable to the forms of racialization and exclusion women and their transracial/cultural

families have reported in other studies (see chapter 2). Again, I highlight this finding as it was thematic in several discussions with the participants, and I believe it provides an illustrative example of how white liberal “non-racism” (or attempting to appear as someone who is not racist, as opposed to “antiracism” in which someone is actively fighting against racism) is performed in everyday life, without unpacking the racial ideologies of otherness that it is informed by (Ng, 1993; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Being inclusive and open to others and the diversity of the social world is not itself problematic, what is problematic is the fact these practices do not disrupt, but maintain the same inequitable conditions that make such consumption and “cred” possible. They celebrate the ‘goodness’ and maintain the comfort of white people, and do not “interrogate” whiteness; as such, the existing liberal multicultural paradigm reinforces the structures of white supremacy, ensuring that the same asymmetrical power relations exist between white people and negatively racialized peoples (Frankenberg, 1993; Thobani, 2007).

At the same time, it is most important to illustrate the profound impacts that changes in one’s kinship relationships can make. Unlike practices which maintain distance from ‘others,’ familial relationships can enable new processes of racial consciousness and ongoing socialization to take place, not only for women in transracial/cultural relationships, but for members of their immediate families as well. Five women report positive attitudinal changes in their parents, as well as increased awareness through these new relationships. For example, during our interview Liana discussed how her parents respect her husband’s religious practices, including Ramadan:

At my mom and dad’s house or someone’s house-and my parents are really good too actually, if we come over for dinner, my mom knows not to cook pork, or if we have Christmas breakfast, she doesn’t cook any bacon or sausage; she knows not to cook it because [her husband] is coming.

During our interview, another participant Julia indicated how her parents’ social networks have become more diverse over time, just as hers did:

As I sort of chose my friends and extended beyond my parents’ networks, I think that’s where I probably developed more of a network of people from different cultures. And now I see that my parents have too actually. Like my mom teaches English as a second language, and she’ll always

have [the students] over...and they started being involved in African things as I did, like my mom sponsored a school in Kenya, and then developed a relationship with one of the Kenyan diplomats through my dad...like I'm seeing them have more links.

While these dynamics, such as sponsorship of a Kenyan school or accommodations for Ramadan, may still be framed within the multicultural tolerance paradigm, which can leave the focus on the white self, who is performing their “tolerant identity” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), these changes however small, are significant. For instance, from having never met an African Muslim person to facilitating a festive Eid meal, Liana’s mother has done a lot of learning, and has brought practices, which are fundamentally different from her own, into her home through intimate relationships. Relationships across differences can open up new possibilities to address real issues. That being said, these relations do not automatically transform racial hierarchies or threaten one’s dominant position within the society. Rather, part of the destabilization of white supremacy depends on naming and facing racism and whiteness, and ultimately interrogating how these structures and ideologies manifest within intimate relationships (hooks, 1992). Again, exploring the lives of transracial/cultural families allows us to do examine this.

We see that permanent transgression of the boundaries of difference is complicated and deeply relational. As the examples above demonstrate, the responses from family members vary and change over time. For the participants’ parents, new kinship relationships can be an opportunity to navigate the world differently, to disrupt some of their own assumptions, or even to reconsider their own identities. That being said, there must be a willingness to do so, otherwise negatively racialized individuals can become an ‘exception to the rule’ or ‘exotic others,’ leaving the desire/loathing, self/other colonial binaries intact (Berlak, 2004; Dei et al., 2004; hooks, 1992; Thobani, 2007).

For the women themselves, their natal families can be a site of agency, where they can perform resistance to racial ideologies (Deliovsky, 2010). For example, during our interview I asked Mimi how she negotiates her father’s racism after she adamantly stated that she will not tolerate anyone who is racist in her life.

Mimi: That's tough. I call him out sometimes, most of the times I avoid the conversations...we don't spend any real quality time together because as soon as we do, all of his hatred and bigotry and negativity, it all comes out; so when I say I don't have time for that, I mean it, with anybody. So how do I try to negotiate it with him? I try to avoid it I guess...whether or not I say, "Dad, you're being racist." I've said it before.

As Mimi illustrates, challenging primary relationships and racial discourses can be difficult, particularly white male racism performed by a dominant patriarchal figure. This is a careful negotiation, as her father remains highly critical of her behaviour and life choices, and directly questions why she seeks to "go outside of her race" in her personal relationships. The strategic forms of agency she employs with her father vary from overt rejection of his beliefs—"you're being racist," to avoidance of any interaction with him. From Mimi's articulation, we see that her father's overt racism and bigotry is named as the primary reason they do not spend meaningful time together. In not doing so, Mimi is asserting her conscious conviction that she does not "have time" for those kinds of racial discourses in her life. In our interview, when I asked J how she dealt with family and friends' responses to her relationship, she stated:

I just kind of made it a package deal, like 'take it or leave it' if you didn't want to be with me because I was with a black person, then too bad for you. I didn't really give people a choice and I think you shouldn't have to give people a choice. They either respect who you are, who you are with, or they're not worth my time.

Similar to Mimi, J's conviction that she will not tolerate anti-mixing discourses in her personal relationships is made clear. J directly frames this as a matter of respect for her and for her decisions.

While several of the women directly confront their families, including J, Mimi, and Maya, I also found that some women, particularly Azania and Liana, rationalized the discriminatory behaviours of their family members by reframing them as articulations of concern, ignorance, or benevolence, especially if they had a close relationship with the person. I found that the differences in responsive strategies amongst the women can be attributed to the multiple variables that have influenced whether the women have become aware or have been forced to become aware of their whiteness. For instance, Liana has not been in many situations where she has had to confront her whiteness.

Though she can draw on experiences she critically questioned, she does not appear to want to probe her relationships or to trouble larger racialized power dynamics. We see this in her use of specific discursive strategies to minimize and rationalize certain behaviours, such as her mother's concerns about her future children (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). The discussion above illuminates the continued importance of primary relationships in the women's lives, and the immediate and ongoing negotiations that take place within these relationships, as a result of white Euro-Canadian women challenging white supremacy through transgression (Moon, 1999). These interpersonal dynamics were thematically addressed by eight participants in the individual interviews and the group workshops. As relationships and families grow, these negotiations change over time.

“That girl” and “Hoochie slut”: Regulating the boundaries of acceptable white femininity

I fully realize that I'm as white as they come when it comes to how I look. I mean I don't try to be *'that girl'* [emphasis added]. - Mimi

In the United States, interracial partnerships were made illegal through the enactment of anti-miscegenation laws,⁴⁸ and just as importantly through other forms of white terror, such as the sadistic practice of lynching. In Canada, there were no “official” laws against interracial marriages, but there is evidence that the regulation of interracial relationships also existed, largely through more informal laws and practices (Backhouse, 1999). Central to the enactment of “good girl” white femininity for European women, is the compulsory practice of monoracial heterosexuality.⁴⁹ In dominant anti-mixing discourses, popular depictions of white European women who violate the conditions of acceptable white femininity, by entering into interracial relationships, make the consequences of transgression clear. One of the disciplinary actions of transgression is

⁴⁸ The United States Supreme Court declared anti-miscegenation laws unconstitutional in 1967 (Frankenberg, 1993).

⁴⁹ As briefly noted in chapter 4, heterosexual normative discourses play a principal role in the construction of white femininity, and are explicitly part of white women's identity-making processes in 'becoming' “good white girls.” As the women in the study were all in heterosexual relationships, they were not violating the terms of heteronormativity (Deliovisky, 2010).

exemplified by the negative identifications of white women with specific labels, such as “white sluts,” to signify their removal from respectable white femininity (Frankenberg, 1993; Deliovsky, 2010).

In the individual interviews and the group workshops, eight women thematically addressed the predominant conceptions of interracial relationships between white women and black men. They specifically referenced the assumption that white women and black men are together for sexual reasons. In the individual interviews, two participants, Mimi and Maya, referred to what they thought of as stereotypical white women who sought out black men as “that girl” and “hoochie slut”:

Mimi: I fully realize that I’m as white as they come when it comes to how I look. I mean I don’t try to be “*that girl*,” and I’m putting that in quotations, the one who you know dresses all hip hop and wears her hair in braids, and it’s almost like she is trying desperately to be something she’s not...

When I asked another participant, Maya, how she felt she was perceived by others as a white European-Canadian woman in an African transracial/cultural family, she responded:

I think if I were at the bar with all my guy friends that are African...it can’t just be that these are my guy friends, but the fact that they’re this big gang, so I must be a “*hoochie slut*” or something to be there...there’s even been websites made of girls that only like to be with black men, so they are a certain kind of slut.

Such stigmatizing labels make clear that the obsessive gaze remains on the gendered body and with female sexuality. These labels are used to represent women who defy the ideology and practices of white supremacy, and are strategically employed to signify a certain kind of degenerate sexuality, one that is only evoked by its association to blackness and otherness. These transgressions also act to solidify a collective white consciousness and sense of solidarity (Deliovsky, 2010).

We see that Mimi and Maya were critical of women whom they believe to be inappropriately acting out specific forms of racialized desire and degenerate sexuality. This appears to be directly related to their need to separate themselves from such constructions, and to draw lines between their form of transgression and ‘unacceptable’

ones. I observed that for these women their relationships, formalized through legal marriage and the conception of children, qualified them to a different, legitimate status that maintained their white femininity. For instance, Mimi talked about “that girl” and felt she might have been performing that kind of white femininity when she got braids before she left for Kenya with her husband:

M: Well I was embarrassed at first and I’m like ‘Ahh I’m that girl,’ and I didn’t want to get them until right before I left; and I wouldn’t have gone out with these braids and paraded myself around, but I’d already married my husband, it didn’t bother me as much I guess.

WA: You said you’d already married him, so it didn’t bother you as much. Why didn’t it bother you as much?

M: Cuz being married to a black man gave me some leeway as far as what you’re allowed to get away with; cuz now you’re not ‘that girl,’ you’re married to a black guy and therefore you know it’s not weird for you to do certain things anymore...when I came back [from Kenya] I was wearing beaded jewellery, I was wearing cultural looking things, and carrying a brown baby, because that’s what I was doing for three years. It didn’t occur to me that somebody would question me anymore, like ‘who are you trying to be?’ that was the experience I always had before I lived in Kenya, like ‘that girl’ you’re trying to be something you’re not. But now it wasn’t something I wasn’t, it was something I was.

Mimi is removed from “that girl” status for several key reasons: she has the legal status of being married to her partner, which moves the relationship out of the popularly perceived sexually-based and superficial engagement. Second, Mimi travelled to Kenya and lived in her partner’s community for three years, which grants her an elevated status, for she has “authentic” cultural experience. Finally, Mimi had a child, which directly connects her to a permanent transracial/cultural family and signifies the authority and legitimacy of her identity.

Like Mimi and Maya, other participants, including Zanadu, Imogen, J and Julia, were critical of the behaviours of white women and the labels assigned to them because they saw how these constructions reinforce dominant anti-mixing discourses. Through reinforcement of these discourses, the participants seem to feel they were being constructed unjustly in the same way. Ironically, by separating themselves from “these” women, they are participating in the same kinds of solidarity rituals that they were being

ostracized from. All white women participate in these discourses in some way, whether they actively reproduce, have been constructed within, unconsciously draw on, or capitulate to them (Frankenberg, 1993). We see all of these forms of participation in the statements made by Mimi and Maya, which signify the ongoing presence and reproduction of anti-mixing discourses. We must remind ourselves that these representations of racialized masculinities and femininities relate back to discussion of the historical construct of white femininity, and the relationship between European women and empire (see chapter 3). Through language, the historical boundaries between whiteness and blackness are made present; and “when a ‘white’ woman is called a ‘white slut,’ the weight of history bears down on that appellation” (Deliovsky, 2010, p.76).

Complicating whiteness and white femininity

I had missionary grandparents for Christ’s sakes. - Zanadu

With the exception of one participant Liana, who stated she had not considered her whiteness, all of the women in the study recounted a changing relationship to whiteness as part of how they imagine themselves, and other women in transracial relationships, to be perceived in the social world. Many women also articulated a disassociation with whiteness as part of their ongoing identity-making (based on what ‘whiteness’ means to each of them). It appears that for the women in the study, to be “unwhitened” (Frankenberg, 1993) was a relational, psychical, and cognitive process. Unlike other studies, in my study I found that none of the participants appeared to feel segregated by or “forcibly removed” from their white worlds per se; instead, I observed that nine of the women articulated a conscious disassociation with the construct of whiteness, and what whiteness represents within situated historical, political, and economic conditions. This was problematized within the Canadian context with respect to what it means to be a “white Canadian,” and within the African context, where the participants’ associated whiteness to oppressive colonial rule. For example, during our individual interview Maya appeared to struggle with her racial identity and her husband’s conception of whiteness as a Nigerian of Ibo descent. This was something we addressed throughout our discussions.

Maya: I don't really identify as white, which is funny because I am but I don't really...I guess I don't want to be white as in the negativity that white can be...like the history of what the white people did in Africa...so then maybe that's why I don't want to because if my husband talks about you know why he won't want to buy at Shell, the gas station, because they came over and killed a lot of people and did some horrible stuff, "the white people," so I know it's always a negative thing...

For J, her disassociation to whiteness was directly informed by her intimate association to blackness. When I asked J how she identified with whiteness during our interview, she stated:

That's a tough question because my kids aren't white, so I identify more with my kids because they're a part of me, so I identify more with their blackness, than I do with my whiteness (laughing). Isn't that weird? ...I don't know, that's a tough question. I don't really relate to being white.

How does one conceptualize such an articulation? Here, J elucidates the complexity and relational nature of self-identification. While J arguably remains 'white' in the social world, since her children are "a part of" her, she identifies with them and their blackness. This relates to the complicated subject positions that white women in transracial/cultural families occupy in the constructed binary between 'white' and 'black' worlds (O'Donoghue, 2004).

When I initially asked another participant, Zanadu, about her identity and whiteness towards the beginning of our interview, she stated that she had not really thought about her identity in those socially constructed terms, but rather that she identified her place in the world primarily in relational terms: as a woman, a mother, and a wife. As we continued to speak in the interview and in the group workshop, it was clear that Zanadu began to form connections between her identity, familial history, and colonial power relations. For example, during the group workshop discussion about whiteness and white privilege, Zanada stated, "I have the whole colonial thing. I had missionary grandparents for Christ's sakes! My mom still says 'I've spent however many years trying to undo what they did' sort of thing."

The articulations above illuminate the new racial (and beyond) socialization and identification processes that these women can go through as part of being in a

transracial/cultural relationship, wherein their awareness of and connection to whiteness—as a social practice, construction, and as power and privilege—may be transforming (though, as mentioned, this certainly is not always the case.) For women such as Maya and J, these realizations are not only related to their relationships with their partners and families as addressed in other studies, but also connected to the spatial and historical nature of whiteness and colonial systems. For instance, Maya has never been to Nigeria, nor met her partner’s family members (though she intends to), yet as Maya stated, her disassociation or dis-identification with whiteness is significantly attributed to white British colonial rule in Nigeria, and the ongoing influence of neocolonial economics. This was illustrated by her partner’s reference to the multinational petroleum company, Shell, and the impact Shell has had on Nigerian society (e.g., BBC, 2009; United Nations Environment Program, 2011). Clearly for her partner, this is linked to ‘white people’ and Maya does not want to be associated with that form of whiteness, for she understands her ‘white’ subjectivity within her own lineage as separate from colonial whiteness. In our interview Maya went on to state:

Maya: I don’t think of myself being white cuz I’m Mennonite, that’s my thing...

WA: That’s very interesting that you are saying you don’t identify as white, but you identify as Mennonite. Earlier you were saying that Mennonites are white, right? (Maya laughs).

Maya: ...Another thing is Mennonites don’t fight, we don’t. That’s why we fled, we refused to fight in wars, we were always peacekeepers. I guess I see white...white as the skin, we know what it is: the lighter skin colour...but there’s white and there’s white. There’s the negative white and there’s just the white Caucasian.

WA: What do you feel are the differences?

Maya: The white that are proud to be white, to be against everybody else...I am just not one of those white people....I just feel like that tainted, ‘I wish I wasn’t’ because of history that happened and the culture was done by white people.

As we spoke during her interview, it was evident that Maya was trying to “make sense” of whiteness with respect to her racial and cultural identity, familial lineage and

colonial power. She distinguished between what she understands as two forms of whiteness: one form that is about negative power and oppression, and another which is innocent and peaceful (e.g., her Mennonite community). These forms of whiteness are also distinguished by a conscious intentionality; the former are proud whites who openly assert their superiority, while the latter are humble and seek harmony with others. Maya's articulations demonstrate her ongoing socialization, as she contemplates white power and privilege in her own life and within human history. As she alludes to, this process of bearing witness can bring feelings of confusion, pain, and guilt. It can also lead to new levels of understanding and consciousness (Berlak, 2004; Felman & Laub, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000). Maya learned about her whiteness through what whiteness means from the perspective of her partner, who was socialized in postcolonial Nigeria. Through him, she could see herself; she could witness the historical weight of her own whiteness.

Two participants in the study, Zanadu (as mentioned) and Julia, both have direct colonial ties in their immediate families. Zanadu's maternal grandparents were missionaries, something she thinks her mother struggled to "undo" in her life, and very interestingly, something that over the course of the study, Zanadu acknowledged likely has had a large impact on her own life decisions. Further into our interview as I continued to attempt to speak with Zanadu about whiteness and her own identity, she stated:

Zanadu: I guess I grew up hearing that too, her sort of feeling she wanted to undo or make up for some of what her history was or what her family would have done, you know. I think. Maybe I have that.

WA: You feel like you have that?

Z: Yeah maybe I just grew up hearing that or something. I'm not sure, I am trying to think even how the slavery thing started because it was a couple of years ago, but I just went nuts reading so many books, like every book I could get my hands on.

During the interview, Zanadu also spoke about her passion for literature, and her specific interest in slave narratives (see chapter 7). As I probed her about where that interest originated, Zanadu loosely began to connect her mother's missionary history and

subsequent negative feelings, with her interest in learning and teaching her children about slavery and issues of oppression. What is especially fascinating to me is how Zanadu took the feelings and messages from her mother that she grew up with, and channelled them into a self-directed learning journey about the history of racism and imperialism. We see that both Maya and Zanadu were making significant linkages between themselves, and broader historical, political, economic and social conditions. In a sense they demonstrate that they understand their subjectivities as white females to be situated within the historical dynamics of colonialism. Their whiteness, far from being invisible and neutral, is loaded with complex and contextual meaning, and central to constructs of power and privilege.

For many of the participants, these 'realizations of whiteness' take place relationally and spatially. Through intimate relationships with people of colour: their partners, families, and good friends, whiteness and racism can become *visible* (Deliofsky, 2010). For Imogen, she attributes her consciousness about her own whiteness and the pervasive existence of racism to her intimate relationships with people of colour. During her interview, Imogen and I discussed her conceptualization and identification with whiteness.

Imogen: In terms of what has taught me more about whiteness, well it's just having people close to me who are not white. I didn't witness stuff cuz I wasn't with people who were on the receiving end of that...I just didn't see, or wasn't really able to see their experiences in the community or how they might be treated. So my closeness then to different people has definitely done it...so now being with husband I see stuff, like similar things like people talk to me, they don't talk to him, or they're getting us information but they're just making eye contact with me, like he's not even there, I see things like cabs don't stop for him, but they'll stop for me.

Miranda similarly attributes a greater level of consciousness about racism to when she was dating her boyfriend in university, who is an Egyptian Arab, noting that she "saw things through his eyes." During her interview, Miranda recounted:

In university my boyfriend was Arab, so I guess I began to see the world much more through his eyes, cuz he visually looked Arab....he certainly- especially in Montreal- felt judged or that people made assumptions about his political orientations without getting to know him.

Similar to many of the women, and to white majority Euro-Canadians more broadly, white supremacy is in part premised on and maintained by the limited vision of white people to see their own structural privilege (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2013). Such intimate 'second-hand' witnessing of racism can now allow these women to see a bit more broadly (Berlak, 2004).

When women transgress geographic and social locations, witnessing also takes place as the changing spatial nature of their whiteness can enable them to gain greater racial consciousness (Gallagher, 2000). As mentioned, two of the women, Zanadu and Mimi, lived in their partners' communities in Kenya for three to five years. In their adoptive communities, they both experienced their whiteness in new ways. Mimi met her husband in Saskatoon; after deciding to get married, she went with him to Kenya while they waited for his Canadian permanent residency. What she thought would be several months turned into three years, during which time she had her first child. For Mimi, living in Kenya as a white Canadian female "ex-pat"⁵⁰ married to her black Kenyan husband, integrated her into specific and situated neo-colonial dynamics. In her interview, Mimi told me stories about living in Kenya as a white Euro-Canadian woman, including her perspectives on white missionaries in Kenya.

Mimi: I saw how white people would take advantage of the people because they could, and they didn't value the culture that they were now in. It was like, you know, you've come to this country, you're a visitor in this country, and you're going to treat people that way. So I was mortified when someone would mistake me as a missionary because of what I was seeing some missionaries doing.

Zanadu met her husband shortly after she arrived in Kenya on her backpacking trip through various African countries. Although they did not share a common language, they

⁵⁰ This term is loaded with complex meaning. For instance, there is serious contention over who is permitted to be 'an ex-pat' and who is labeled a 'refugee' or 'migrant.' These terms reflect the geo-politics of privilege, in which predominantly Western skilled professionals exercise their privilege and mobility to relocate to other regions of the world. They are largely permitted to retain their mobility, rights and citizenship, while others, particularly negatively racialized and classed peoples identified as refugees or migrants, must migrate for necessity (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2015; Koutonin, 2015). They largely do not have the same rights or privileges, and can face vastly different conditions when they arrive in a host country. This particularly resonates during the time in which I write this thesis as Syrian people desperately flee their country, and the many disillusioning geopolitical responses we witness to their plights (e.g., Cameron, 2015; Chevalier, 2015; Morsi, 2015).

developed a meaningful relationship, and like Mimi, Zanadu stayed in Kenya longer than she anticipated. She lived with her husband in his Maasai community for five years, where she had their first child. During our interview, she articulated many profound insights and recounted many formidable experiences she had while she lived there. During both the interview and the group workshop, Zanadu repeatedly identified the ability “to fly out” of Kenya, to leave at will, as the ultimate symbol of her white privilege. During our interview when we were discussing whiteness, Zanadu stated:

Anytime things got difficult I could just fly out. They can't fly out in any situation. And we can go and do all sorts of things to help other people, but at the end of the day, if something happens, the shit hits the fan, we fly out. They don't. They're still there. I think that bothers me, yet I'm not saying I wouldn't fly out, but that maybe bothers me-I don't know, it's this white privilege and the border thing, and being Canadian....we all exist in the world, but because I'm Canadian and have this passport, I can always fly out if things get tough; I guess I feel bad about that.

Here, Zanadu references a form of privilege that is multilayered and relates to a long and complex colonial history. Through this notion of “flying out,” the privileges that Zanadu holds as a white Euro-Canadian woman appear to have the most salient material implications for her. She is present in Kenya as an “ex-pat” (see footnote 47), exploring the world on her own terms, and possessing control over her status there. Her experience is juxtaposed to the lives of people with whom she lives in her partner's Maasai village (including members of her family through marriage). Her cognizance that when conditions are challenging she does not have to endure them, while the community does, speaks profoundly to her positionality as a white western subject in post-colonial Africa, there to seek pleasure and gain experience. Zanadu alludes to her struggle with her positionality in that context, and the guilt she feels that she has this unearned privilege. At the same time, she is candid in stating she would use this privilege if necessary, and that she did, to move her and her husband to Canada when, due to local political and economic conditions, they have to leave the country immediately.

Experiences such as Mimi's and Zanadu's in Kenya, appeared to create opportunities for self-reflection on the relationship between whiteness, colonialism, and racism. As Mimi detailed in her narratives about living in Kenya, these connections to the

past, and the ideologies that formed the basis for the imperial mission to civilize the 'barbaric' world, are still at play in Kenya, as well as other parts of the world where missionary work continues. For Mimi, to be mistaken as one of "those" missionaries was unthinkable for her. In this way, like Maya, she did not want to be associated with a white colonial self, because her position in Kenya, premised on her relationship with her partner, and by extension his family and community, was not a colonial self; she felt it was something else.

For Julia, who grew up in a church community where her father was a pastor and missionary work is part of the church practice, negotiating theories of missionary work, whiteness, and her own positionality was also an immense consideration. During our interview, Julia stated that she frequently felt uncomfortable working with a missionary organization. When I asked her to elaborate, she responded:

Yeah, that's another issue right. Yeah cuz um I mean the church clearly has caused so much harm in places, and on the flip side has been one of the-I mean I don't even believe in development necessarily, but sometimes I always waffle between just questioning my place and my role when I'm overseas like one hundred percent being like I shouldn't be here, we shouldn't be here, why are organizations doing this, and then on the flip side being like we have this history and there needs to be, we need to be part of a solution because that's the way globalization is right now, and how can we do that in a way that's not just building capacity, but looking at local solutions and truly not just in speak...

Working within and negotiating dominant development frameworks and discourses, is something that Julia told several stories about during her interview, and it was clearly something she was continuing to navigate. The asymmetrical power relations of missionary and development work, particularly for her as a white Euro-Canadian female PhD candidate in public health, and the loaded notions of "capacity building" and "finding local solutions," created many uncomfortable and disruptive moments for her. When I questioned Julia about what drives this feeling of discomfort, she stated:

I think it was just carrying that weight of history and of the perceptions of you know that foreigner represents donor funds, represents knowledge, represents anything that leads towards development, instead of like it was intended to be like a very mutual partnership and building on efforts the community was already doing, which I think is quite valuable but as it plays out, all of these dynamics of difference, and race and space, and

geography and that weight of colonialism and I don't know what the word is "missiology" or whatever, that history of mission too, it's there.

This speaks to the larger phenomenon of missionary work, and is directly linked to the long colonial history of 'aid' and 'development' to "third world countries." Here Julia makes direct links between a colonial history and the neocolonial politics of "development" (Andreasson, 2005; Cannon, 2008; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, & Chambati, 2013; Ndi, 2011). She feels the "weight of history" as she attempts to navigate all of the historical dynamics of imperialism in her public health work in postcolonial African contexts, which are palpable in her interactions with others. One gets the impression that these power dynamics are felt, they are "there" and yet they are not openly addressed. Julia has what can be imagined as the naïve hope that development projects will be community-based and community-controlled through a "very mutual partnership," and yet the historically precedented colonial ideologies and structured frameworks she works within do not make this possible. While she longs to be an equal partner with the local professionals and community members with whom she is working, as a white Euro-Canadian female subject she holds unequal power and access to resources, and this determines how she is constructed by others.

Unlike the majority of the participants, three women, Liana, Maya and Simone, did not appear to have spent significant time outside of the spaces and discourses they were socialized into. I noted that for the women who remained more geographically and socially sheltered, they did not appear to have as much awareness about white privilege and racism, and the universalization of whiteness and racial ideologies were not experienced or challenged in the same way for these women. Incidents of racialization and discrimination they witnessed seemed to be constructed more as "isolated individual acts." I also noted that these women's partners were relatively less active in performing cultural customs, speaking their native language, and travelling "back home." For instance, Liana has lived in Vancouver and Surrey her entire life, has largely maintained the same familial and friendship circles, and has not travelled much. During her interview when I asked Liana about her and her husband's experiences of racism, she repeatedly stated that she was "boring" because she and her family have not really experienced any issues with race and racism. Liana stated:

I don't think he's ever-and this is why I think I'm boring because I don't think we've ever had-he's never had anybody say anything to him, or as a couple we've never had anybody say anything to us in terms of being white and black besides a drunk man literally across the street there saying something about, 'just because you're black you think you can wear basketball clothing!' but we don't take that seriously, the guy was drunk. But no my husband hasn't had any issues...we haven't had any problems.

I asked Liana what she thought about the idea of racial privilege and whether she thought white people have different privileges in Canadian society than non-white people. I also asked her about whether she and her husband had ever spoken about racism in their twenty year relationship. Here is an excerpt of our discussion:

L: ...I've never thought about that, I don't know.

WA: Has your husband ever talked about it?

L: My husband seems very...I don't know how to explain it; because he's never complained about Canada, he just works, pays the taxes and just lives. He doesn't ever complain about it. He has a job, he's never said anything.

As Liana has lived and worked in familiar spaces, where multicultural ideologies of diversity and tolerance are predominantly practiced, her whiteness has not been challenged, nor has she or her husband experienced overt (or insidious) forms of racialization that she was aware of. The one exception is the statement by the "drunk man," which could be quickly dismissed due to his intoxication. As Liana asserts, issues of difference and racism are not topics she and her husband readily discuss in their relationship. Here, she constructed her husband as a hard working immigrant, who is just happy to live in Canada, and does not "complain." For women such as Liana in particular, the participant group workshop highlighted their desire and need to learn more about the linkages between whiteness and racism, so in part, as women and mothers, they can support their children.

Disillusionment with dominant Canadian discourses and cultural norms

It's tricky to define our culture because in a way our culture is almost the fact there isn't one - Azania

Canadian 'culture'?

As the majority of participants engaged in a critical examination of whiteness, as part of their ongoing socialization and identity-making processes, I observed that eight of the women also problematized dominant discourses of Canadian nationalism and constructions of national identity. Discussions regarding the nature of Canadian culture and dominant Canadian cultural norms and values, were predominantly thematic in the individual interviews and the group workshops. After becoming part of transracial/cultural families, and being intimately exposed to and incorporating other cultural practices and ways of knowing into their personal lives, it appeared that for many women, such as Mimi, Azania, Imogen, J and Maya, their own individual and national self-identifications were juxtaposed against their partner's culture. Their partner's cultural identity, practices, and customs were more visible, fixed, and tangible for them, particularly when in binary opposition to what the women see as an ambiguous Canadian national identity and culture. This ambivalence is exemplified in Mimi's articulation during our interview, in which she thematically questioned Canadian national identity and dominant narratives. When I asked Mimi what Canadian culture means to her, she stated:

What is my culture? Well I mean it was funny in one of my classes someone said, "What is Canadian culture? What being polite and drinking Timmy's?" Seriously, what is Canadian culture? We have so many different cultural groups here and everybody tries to hold on to theirs as well as do that whole hyphen thing: I'm Kenyan-Canadian, I'm an Aboriginal-Canadian person, I'm a Ukrainian-Canadian; sometimes I feel like the Canadian is only just geographic; I mean we live here, it doesn't mean a whole lot more. ...I thought well what is my culture? ...when you think of culture, you think of dress, food, customs, for me anyways. What did we do? We dressed like everybody else, it's not like we had any cultural costumes that we wore; no beaded jewelry or anything special like that.

There are numerous fascinating points made in this statement. First, Mimi refers here to the traditional definition of a modern nation-state when she suggests that Canada is a

nation perhaps only in the “geographic” sense, inferring that Canadians may not share a distinct cultural identity, but do occupy the same geographic territory. Drawing colonial borders, both spatially and ideologically, around a territory and the marked spaces within it, are central to the creation of an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 2006; Goldberg, 1993). Occupants of the space do not necessarily share a collective identity, but that they “settled” the same land, theoretically sets the premise for a national ‘culture’ and collective identity to form. This is facilitated in part through the creation of a state bureaucracy, national symbols, and nation-building narratives, to foster a sense of shared consciousness (Mensah, 2014; Tettey & Pupilampu, 2005).

Thobani (2007) posits that the Canadian national identity has been defined in relational and spatial terms through a “triangulated relationship between whites, Aboriginal peoples and immigrants” (p.248). This relationship is structured by key societal institutions, including the judicial and immigration systems. Canadian white settler mythologies have been relatively stable throughout Canadian history, and these narratives instill the triangular identities, which define the nation. The Euro-Canadian white subject (aka the ‘true’ or “old stock” Canadian⁵¹) is juxtaposed against “the Others”—Aboriginal peoples and negatively racialized immigrants, who threaten the white subject from within and outside national borders. In Canada, one wonders how much the traditional definition of a nation-state will be challenged and transformed by increased immigration, growing young Aboriginal populations, and declining national birth rates. Within these conditions, people’s primary identifications and relationships to space and place may not be Canada at all, or at least the tolerant “settler colony-cum-liberal democracy” Canada is imagined to be now (Thobani, 2007).

Mimi defined ‘culture’ as fixed and represented through specific identifiable aspects of the material world when she refers to “dress, food, and customs.” Within dominant multicultural discourses, which many Canadians of her generation were

⁵¹ During a leadership debate for the 2015 Canadian federal election, former Federal Conservative Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, used the term “old stock Canadians” to differentiate between Canadian subjects. This caused significant reaction, illuminating the deep tensions that characterize the fundamentally inequitable triangular relationship of the Canadian nation (e.g., Gollom, 2015; Hopper, 2015; Oved & Otis, 2015).

socialized into, these forms of 'culture' can be imagined as 'consumable culture'; the objects for purchase and consumption at world music festivals or folk festivals where majority Canadians enjoy 'culture' (St. Denis, 2011; Fleras, 2014; Thobani, 2007). When I asked another participant, Azania, about what Canadian culture means to her during our interview, she responded:

Tricky, I thought of this question many times before. It's tricky to define our culture I think because in a way our culture is almost the fact that there isn't one, that it is a mosaic of different cultures, because what other place can you go to that you have a Chinatown and a Greek area and an Italian area; in a way that's amazing too. I love that about here, and that's something you wouldn't find everywhere.

We witness here a collective form of the colonial self-other relationship, wherein the collective Canadian cultural identity is constructed as ambiguous and ambivalent, in juxtaposition to or binary opposition to the collective cultural identities of "Others." As Azania illustrates, presence of different ethno-cultural communities, spatially organized within predominantly urban spaces, come to define the absence of (and at the same time the anxious presence of) Canadian culture. In other words, it appears that within dominant multicultural discourse, the definition of Canadian culture is dependent on the presence and practices of "racialized others," and Canadian cultural identity is defined by tolerance and celebration of "cultural differences" (Thobani, 2007).

During our interview, Miranda problematized the multicultural celebration of "cultural differences" in relation to her experience of "diversity" growing up in Toronto:

You know at my public school they'd always have some nod to Jewish holidays at the annual Christmas event. One year they got us to dance some sort of Hora, quote unquote, sort of traditional Jewish dance, that obviously none of us had ever done before, but they decided they had to do something Jewish for the Jewish kids. So all the Jews and the random quarter Jews had to do this Hora dance for the festival.

Well I mean who doesn't like a latke? (laughing) I mean you take these easy, likeable things of people's cultures, you know in the same way that sure, I would love to go to Diwali-I've never been to a Diwali festival, but it sounds really cool. It doesn't mean I am highly tolerant of Sikh people, it doesn't mean I know anything about their belief system; it means I know a bit about their holidays...just like we enjoy going to Caribbean festivals, because we know we're not racist, they've got awesome music and

awesome parades. That's what multiculturalism is in Canada right? The appreciation and enjoyment of other people's parties and food, for the most part...I think everyone's sort of happy so long as everyone's celebrating their holidays and food, and things don't get too political, or divisive or religious.

Miranda provides a succinct 'tongue and cheek' explanation of multiculturalism, which is partly informed by her subjectivity as a majority white Euro-Canadian and as a Jewish woman. She first describes her experience being grouped together with "the Jews" and "the random quarter Jews" to perform their religious and ethnic identity in 'token multicultural form' during the Christmas celebrations at her elementary school. As she noted, this seemed very "random" to her, and symbolized a token gesture of acknowledgment, or a "nod" to Jewish children in her school, which was sufficient to deem the celebrations "multicultural." As Miranda states, this acknowledgement and "appreciation" of cultural differences is superficial in nature; it merely involves a gaze into cultural holidays—a small, neatly packed performance for consumption—much like the Caribbean festival or Diwali festival she referenced. These spectacles do little to generate critical awareness and understanding beyond "parties and food," and they do not address issues of racialized power and segregation. Miranda is positioned as both a 'cultural outsider' (and some might argue racial outsider) with respect to her Jewish identity, as well as a 'cultural insider' as a white majority Euro-Canadian. As the former, she is part of the spectacle to be gazed upon, yet as the latter, she represents the principal audience of multicultural consumption. In her statements above, she demonstrates her experiences in both respects.

The official intention of the original multiculturalism policy (1971) was to encourage ethno-cultural diversity, break down cultural barriers, and to provide official language learning support for newcomers to Canada (Fleras, 2014). This policy established the English and French as founding nations and "positioned" Aboriginal peoples and racialized others as external subjects (O'Connell, 2010; St. Denis, 2011; Thobani, 2007). Many scholars are critical of official multiculturalism for maintaining, and reproducing racism and asymmetrical power relations by placing emphasis on 'cultural differences' over antiracism (see chapter 3). To challenge this dominant multicultural discourse is to not only threaten Canadian national identity, history and 'culture,' but it is

to force a remembering of a colonial and genocidal past, and to bear witness to ongoing colonialism, racism, and oppression in the present (O'Connell, 2010; Tucker, 2005).

Liberal Individualism – “The poverty of spirit”

For seven participants, discussions of Canada and Canadian culture also involved thematic references to liberal individualism. For instance, in her interview Azania stated that Canadian culture is defined by its individualism: “it’s more individual, I think that’s something that identifies us from other cultures, that we do have that individualistic need to further yourself and your family, almost in competition with other families and other people in our culture.” This is the only instance Azania uses the collective pronoun “our” to describe “our culture.” Unlike her previous articulation that Canadian culture is characterized by the fact that there “isn’t one” due to the diverse ethno-cultural groups in Canada, here Azania addresses the competitive nature of liberal individualism as central to Canadian culture. For many of the women, liberal individualism was discussed with respect to predominant cultural norms and values. For example, in their interviews, Maya and Mimi both describe what they see as “the typical Canadian mentality.” When I asked each of them about defining Canadian culture, they respectively responded:

Maya: [describing a “typical white Canadian”] Conservative, closed, judgemental, you know, their heart isn’t shown. I think that’s kind of what I think is the typical and I don’t like that.

Mimi: I don’t do well in the Canadian mentality of you know don’t look at anybody and walk really fast and hopefully nobody will stop and try to make conversation with you. I have always thought it’s very sad to me.

Both Maya and Mimi use emotional language to describe what they understand to be the characteristics of dominant Canadian cultural norms and social practices. It is interesting that both women seem to allude to a sense of social individualism and social alienation. Maya states that the typical white Canadian is “closed” and “their heart isn’t shown,” while Mimi depicts the everyday experience of walking down the street avoiding social interaction to describe a typical cultural social behaviour.

These behaviours exemplify what Imogen defines as “the poverty of spirit” in Canada. It was evident to me that Imogen had thought extensively about Canadian culture and identity. During our interview, she described what she defines as “the poverty of spirit” in Canada.

Imogen: The poverty of spirit just seems to be constant desire; being driven by want, or not being good enough or something like that. So there’s a lot of people who are on their own; there’s a lot of on your own here. You’re alone and being alone and struggling cuz you’re on your own, but on the outside you look like you’re independent, but really we’re interdependent, and the interdependence is like a weakness, so it makes people really disconnect; so that’s where the poverty of spirit lives, versus like Africans....I see so many people alone, lonely, so I didn’t really see that anywhere in Africa; I didn’t really meet anybody who’s lonely (laughing). They all have friends, I mean there are people who are lonely, but it didn’t seem that way to me. There’s always people around, they always know their neighbours, they always know everybody’s business, there’s always somebody to call on to ask for help, or take your child or share their food with you or whatever.

Here, Imogen directly speaks to what can be interpreted as social and psychological alienation. Her repetitive use of the words “alone” and “lonely” to describe the social conditions of many Canadians is quite profound. She links this alienation to what she terms the “poverty of spirit,” characterised by “constant desire” and self-doubt. She addresses a central tenet of neo-liberal ideology in her suggestion that the individual is considered sovereign and independent in nature; to recognize the inherent interdependence of human societies is a “weakness.” The emphasis on the sovereign individual liberal subject results in a “disconnect” between people, and as Imogen suggests, can lead to social alienation and loneliness.

In the articulations above, we see these contrasting binary generalizations of ‘Canadians’ and ‘Africans’, the former are characterized as individualistic, self-interested, and alienated, while the latter are social, integrated, and happy. This is a similar juxtaposition to the participants’ descriptions of ‘Canadian’ and ‘African’ cultures in that there appears to be disenchantment, and perhaps disillusionment with Canadian society, while there seems to be a romanticization of “African cultures” (Mayer, 2002). As we see in Imogen’s statement, she begins to laugh after her claim that in contrast to Canadians, Africans are not lonely. She then qualifies this argument by stating that there are people

who are lonely, but based on her experiential knowledge that was not the case. How can we understand this disillusionment with Canadian culture and this enchantment with “African cultures”? What does this have to do with whiteness? I found that the romanticization and exotification of “African people” and “African cultures” is rooted in the colonial ideologies I have described above (Bhabha, 1994; Dei et al., 2004; hooks, 1992; Said, 1993). This is premised on the colonial relationship of self and other, wherein the other possesses ‘race’ and ‘culture,’ while the self is ‘raceless’ and ‘cultureless’ (Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 1992). At the same time, I believe this speaks to the distinctions in intersectional identities I noted between the women, as well as the profound crisis of “modern” life in western advanced capitalist societies (see below).

I noted that like seven of the women in the study did in the interviews and the group workshops, Imogen juxtaposes Canadian culture with “African cultures,” which she identifies as fundamentally social, interconnected, and supportive. Maya also contrasts the “typical white Canadian” with “African people” during our interview when she stated: “...generally I just found that African people are so much more open, or so much more wanting to engage with you or something, instead of more looking away or looking down.” It is important here again to note that the use of generalized identifications, such as “Africans” and generalized concepts, such as “African cultures” exemplifies how we can at once disrupt dominant discourses and employ racial ideologies at the same time. Again, this illustrates the contradictory nature of racial ideologies, which remain important to acknowledge and address in antiracism practice (Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Intersectional identities

The critiques that Azania, Imogen, Mimi, Maya, Simone and Zanadu in particular, make of Canadian culture as deeply alienated, can be attributed in part to their experiences in different cultural relationships and cultural contexts, which allowed them to witness, and in several cases incorporate, other ways of knowing and living into their social worlds. For instance, Imogen’s “poverty of spirit” analysis is based on her experience growing up with Irish immigrant parents, the time she spent living in Ghana and South Africa, and the travelling she did in other parts of Africa and the world. Her

formidable experiences and her intersectional identity, have arguably cultivated her critical consciousness regarding the society she lives in, and where she is situated within it. As such, it is Imogen's unique subjectivity as a first-generation, middle-class, Irish-Canadian woman in a transracial/cultural family with a background in antiracism education, which informs her understanding. For participants of first-generation immigrants, such as Imogen and Simone, many of whom have distinct ethnic, cultural, and/or religious affiliations, I noted several differences. Like Imogen, I observed that their characterizations of Canadian society were mediated by how they distinguished themselves from dominant Anglo-Saxon European-Canadian society. For instance, during our discussion in her interview, it seemed that Imogen did not feel comfortable self-identifying as a "long-term white Canadian." She addresses this below:

I don't know, I don't really know what's Canadian. I mean I think I'm Canadian, I just don't identify with what people say is a Canadian, but yet I know I'm Canadian....no I don't. I identify as white...I don't know what a white Canadian is. It's hard, I don't know. White yes, I identify myself as white, but I would also probably add other tag lines onto that too, like I would say white, Irish, Canadian, middle-class when I identify because I think they make a difference; um for instance I distinguish myself between being a long-term white Canadian family versus a recent immigrant family. I do not have that identity-I don't say Canadian...I don't feel comfortable saying Canadian....I think that there's all kinds of identities as Canadian; mainstream white Canadian, no I don't think I am.

Imogen's contemplation of Canadian identity and her discomfort stating she is a Canadian is quite curious. Although she identifies as 'white,' it appears to be important to her to distinguish between newer immigrant Canadians and "long-term" settler Canadians. As Imogen spoke, it seemed that this conscious disassociation related to white settler narratives and histories that she did not identify with, nor wanted to identify with, as a first-generation born Canadian to Irish immigrant parents.

Several of these participants, Imogen, Miranda and Simone in particular, appeared to have a form of "double-consciousness" (Upegui-Hernandez, 2009), wherein they were integrated into Canadian society, and socialized into dominant discourses, and yet lived other cultural, ethnic, religious, and linguistic practices and discourses in their natal homes and communities. For instance, in her interview, Simone spoke

extensively about her family environment and how important her familial relationships and cultural practices are to her:

We were brought up very Portuguese, like with lots of family-so I'll just compare that to friends: we always eat dinner together, that was something and we always had Portuguese food, like we would have a big whole fish with the eyeballs goggling at us (laughing)...I consider myself Canadian, but I also feel Portuguese. Like when people ask me what I am I feel like they're asking because I look different, so I say Portuguese...I feel Portuguese because I relate I guess more with the culture, when I am with people from there I feel like that sense of belonging.

Simone self-identifies as Portuguese, and draws a clear distinction between the white Canadian culture of her father's side, and Portuguese culture of her mother's side; the latter of which was a much more significant influence in her life. In contrast, she defines her dad's side as: "typically Canadian":

...if I compare it to the way my father was brought up where they're very quiet, they don't eat dinner together, nobody knows anything that's going on, very kind of separated from each other; and so my family on my mom's side of the family is very close, and anything that happens, everybody goes through it together, whereas that's not the same on my dad's side.

Simone's cultural belonging and home environment was contrasted within her own family (her father's side versus her mother's side), and the Portuguese cultural values and practices separated her from what she defines as "Canadian culture." This duality is something she appears to be very cognizant of and is central to her identification as Portuguese, and less as Canadian.

For Imogen, part of growing up in a new immigrant Irish family was the level of political discourse in her home regarding Irish political and religious conditions, as well as other political and social issues. In our interview discussion about cultural identity and belonging, she talked about her parents' engagement with political discourse and their storytelling about "back home."

Imogen: My mom is from Northern Ireland, so we heard all those stories all the time; like she's Catholic, she talked a lot about discrimination that she witnessed and experienced. So she would talk too about the difference of poverty...we always go the Irish-English dichotomy, like that

was really relevant...I remember being really young and knowing my parents were from Ireland and there were these things going on there.

For Imogen, her parents' status as Irish immigrants and the politicized conditions from which they came were part of Imogen's early identification and political and social consciousness. In this way, her status as a first-generation Canadian with immediate Irish heritage created a certain world for her, one she describes as a form of "double consciousness":

You live two lives when you have immigrant parents: you have a home life and you have an outside life; and as young people you navigate that on a daily basis and I remember navigating that...I can only imagine how difficult it is when you add on other things, like you look different, your parents dress completely differently, they practice a religion that nobody knows except for you...yes racism is totally alive and present, well yeah I guess I can see that versus starting way over here where I don't even realize there's two world going on in an immigrant family's life.

This sense of "double-consciousness" appears to directly shape the women's ideas about the world, and provide them with a sense of self (individual and national). For Imogen and Simone, this directly mediated notions of whiteness in that they appeared to be more cognizant of the delineation between whiteness and Canadian identity. Their "double-consciousness" also facilitated greater awareness about issues of race and difference. I interpreted their understanding to be part of their identity-making processes, as women with intersectional "minority" ethnic, cultural, and religious identities. For instance, Simone's identity is also related to how she has been socially constructed as both "white" and "non-white" throughout her life. When I asked Simone if Portuguese culture felt like a part of her identity during her interview, she responded:

It did because I think for me mostly because I look more like my mom with the way I look, like my skin colour, whereas my sisters are very much my father, like paler skin tone, blue eyes, so whenever people look at me, like I'm white, but people will be like, "Oh, what are you?" because I don't look like your typical white person...like I'm darker than a white person (laughing), but then I'm still white like people who aren't white, describe me as white...everyone thinks I am native actually; when people ask me they always think I am First Nations.

In contrast to the other participants, Simone's racial identity is fluid in the social world, and in her interview she described many times she has been negatively racialized by

police and others, as well as incidents in which people of colour assume solidarity with her. Simone demonstrates the situated nature of whiteness, and how its boundaries have and continue to change (Backhouse, 1999; Frankenberg, 1993). This discussion once again reminds us that whiteness, "...is also a relational category, one that is co-constructed within a range of other racial and cultural categories, with class and gender" (Frankenberg, p.236).

In the case of Miranda, she told me that she identifies more strongly as Jewish than Canadian. During her interview, she described Jewish identity to me in relation to our discussion about Canadian identity and culture.⁵² Below is an excerpt of our discussion:

M: I mean I think like with many Jews around the world, you know the Jewish identity is probably stronger than the national one....

WA: It sounds like you had a Jewish community and you worked at the JCC, so did you grow up with a sense of Jewish identity?

M: In sort of a secular sense...I was turned off at a pretty young age from the quote-unquote "Jewish community." It's a huge community-there are many Jewish communities in Toronto, but the one I was exposed to, I was turned off by....I mean I had Jewish friends growing up, but that was more the random Jews who were in public schools with me. And a lot of them are still my friends to this day. Yeah it's funny of the male friends in high school; basically all of them are Jewish. I don't know that any of us really talked about it a lot, but it can't just be coincidence that we were all friends, but we probably had similar sense of humour and similar reference points.

Miranda firstly asserts that Jewish identity for many Jews tends to be stronger than their national identity. While Miranda said she was "turned off" by the Jewish community she

⁵² Miranda is Ashkenazi (of Eastern European descent) on her mother's side, and Sephardic on her father's side. Sephardic Jews are of Spanish and Portuguese descent and their Jewish traditions and practices differ from Ashkenazi ones. Within societies such as Canada, Israel, and the United States, Sephardic Jews are constructed as "people of colour," particularly Ethiopian and Indian Jews (Train, 2006).

was involved in, upon reflection she realized that her social world was still predominantly Jewish, regardless of her formal engagement with a Jewish community.

My interpretation was that for the four women, J, Julia, Liana and Mimi, who predominantly identify with an Anglo-Saxon European-Canadian identity, the relationship between 'whiteness' and 'Canadianness' was more naturalized, and their conceptions of Canadian culture and identity may be experienced differently. I observed that two of the women, who most closely modelled Anglo-Saxon whiteness and did not directly identify with a particular cultural or ethnic group (beyond a heritage identity), appeared to feel the greatest sense of *un*belonging and be most troubled by what they perceived as a lack of Canadian identity as this was their primary identification. For instance, during the interview discussion about her concept of Canadian culture, J noted: "...growing up as a Canadian we didn't really have much to identify with other than McDonald's...I just feel like as Canadians we don't have that much to make us who we are other than what society tells us to be. So I think that's why I love culture." Here, being Canadian is synonymous with being of Anglo-Saxon European descent. This marks whiteness with nationality and reflects specific power relations as this assumption "relegates other racial groups as not Canadians and marginal to Canadian life" (Deliovsky, 2010, p.82). We witness the sense that Canada is 'cultureless' and that in turn as a Canadian, J herself is 'cultureless.' It is interesting that J mentions McDonald's, an American fast food corporation, as a form of collective Canadian identification. This association with consumer capitalism, national identity, and (white) culture speaks to the corporatization of "culture" and the hegemonic nature of American consumer capitalist 'culture,' something that arguably defines Canada as much as it does the United States in many ways. Within liberal multiculturalism discourses, "other" racial groups in Canada become visible at the margins through their "unspoiled" traditional cultures (Frankenberg, 1993). This is illustrated when J states why she "loves culture." Culture in this conception becomes an identifiable object, and to be 'cultureless' (yet civilized, modern and progressive) as a (white) Canadian can be remedied through the consumption and affiliation with other 'cultures' (hooks, 1992; Thobani, 2007).

While it is necessary to challenge claims that white culture is "cultureness" by examining the broader conditions of white supremacy that makes such statements

possible (Frankenberg, 1993), these women's articulations indicate to me that we cannot reduce claims to 'no culture' as simply manifestations of white invisibility. Such claims underlay racial ideologies, which must be interrogated, but they also illuminate what can be understood as an existential "crisis of whiteness" manifest in struggles over national identity, belonging, and social affiliation in western liberal consumer capitalist societies, including Canada (Doane, 2003; Thobani, 2007). The women's articulations regarding rigid individualism, social isolation, and a lack of social and cultural identification, seem to reflect a cultural malaise, a deep disconnection, and a sense of *un*belonging they witness and they feel in their society.

Current conditions in western individualistic capitalist societies, including: high levels of unemployment and political disenfranchisement, increasing levels of economic disparity, rapid environmental degradation, and more, are conditions which "can be manipulated by cultural strategies that offer Otherness as appeasement, particularly through commodification" (hooks, 1992, p.25). When people are constructed as consumers (the self), and as the objects of consumption (the 'Others'), this creates dominant social relations, which are premised on consumerism. This objectifies individuals, and further alienates and segregates people from one another, as citizens and as racialized subjects. As such, in addition to cultural practices, we must analyze the economic and material practices that sustain the binary colonial relationship between the white self and racialized Others, and which in turn, maintain social alienation and racial segregation. The women's contemplations then also appear to be part of a bigger malaise within a society that has not faced its past; a society that continues to bury its colonial histories, and to live by its white settler narratives (Thobani, 2007; O'Connell, 2010). These narratives may no longer be convincing as Canadian society continues to diversify, and the "crisis of whiteness"—the perceived threat of the increasing presence of 'Others' to the "white settler-cum-liberal democracy"—make the possibility of real racialized violence in the future tangible (Thobani, 2007). If we are to create equitable social, economic and political change, we must move beyond the western obsession with consumption (Ewen & Ewen, 1992).

Conclusion

When we allow ourselves to explore notions of 'culturelessness' with respect to and beyond the invisibility of whiteness, we can deepen our understandings of ongoing identity-making (collective and individual), shifting positionalities, and new possibilities of disrupting whiteness. This study makes evident that when we consider the lives of white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families, we see the value in expanding our conceptualization of culture as a dynamic process, which shapes everyday material life and transforms as new life experiences and relationships develop (Frankenberg, 1993). As the participants navigated new cultural, relational, and racialized contexts as part of their ongoing socialization into 'difference,' they demonstrate how their early conceptualizations of race and difference can be challenged, as well as their own self-understandings and self-identifications as white female Canadian subjects. By uniquely drawing on decolonizing methodologies and antiracism methods in my study, I created relational spaces of inquiry in the interviews and workshops, in which participants shared personal experiences and perspectives. These spaces of critical engagement helped several participants in particular (Maya, Miranda and Zanadu) to make connections between whiteness, power, and colonialism, as well as demonstrate critical reflection on national discourses and cultural norms.

Within the triangular relationship of the Canadian nation (Thobani, 2007), these women-as transgressors of racial boundaries-exist between borders. They embody the white Western self, and simultaneously exist in intimate connection with, and are transformed by, their relationships with negatively racialized others. Do they or can they disrupt this triangulation? The social alienation that six participants thematically problematize directly relates to their changing subjectivities, particularly in relation to their 'whiteness.' By exploring white Euro-Canadian women in families with black African partners who were socialized into dissimilar histories and ideologies of difference, we gain insight into how conceptualizations of and identifications with whiteness can change, as well as how learning can take place within intimate relationships and through transgressions into new postcolonial environments. This can further contribute to whiteness studies and studies of multiracial families by examining how whiteness and power are negotiated within transracial/cultural families.

For five women in particular, Azania, J, Imogen, Mimi and Zanadu, their transforming relationship to ideologies of difference has altered their sense of 'place,' of self, and of belonging. In turn, these women have consciously chosen to move (relationally, culturally, and ideologically) into other 'diasporic spaces' (Brah, 1996). In chapter seven, I explore how white Euro-Canadian women and their transracial/cultural families, experience, negotiate, and embody complex and competing ideologies of difference in these spaces of belonging and *un*belonging.

Chapter 7. Diasporic spaces and literacy practices

To change one's geography-not only to move from but equally to transform one's spaces and its representations-may well be to change one's world. (Goldberg, 1993, p.205)

I argue that as the white Euro-Canadian women in this study move away from the rigid borders of the white patriarchal world, they move into new spaces, where the women negotiate, reproduce, and resist manifestations of racial ideologies, and engage in what can be understood as "racial literacy" practices (Twine, 2010). I contend that these spaces women and their transracial/cultural families occupy can be imagined as spaces of "inbetweenness." They are places of restriction and of possibility, in which multiple dominant discourses are negotiated and resisted, and new ways of being and knowing the world are explored and practiced. In this chapter, I respond to the second key research question, "How can and do white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families contend with and challenge discourses of race and difference in their lives?" I examine the nature of diasporic spaces, and in this case, their situation within Canadian discursive, political, economic, and social contexts. I discuss the thematic manifestations of racial ideologies that the participants identified, and the "racial literacy" practices the women can and do participate in as part of their own ongoing learning, and to facilitate the racial socialization of their children. This chapter is divided into two major parts: 1. diasporic spaces and 2. racial literacy practices.

Global conditions and diasporic spaces

Global conditions

As noted, from the 1980s onward, there has been an increase in global migration for a multitude of reasons, including: economic disparities in different regions, war, famine, political instability, and migration to improve life chances, and pursue education

and employment opportunities. While there are official categories of migrants for immigration purposes, we can no longer separate economic and political migrants, as the complexity of current global conditions and the nature of the global capitalist economy, likely mean reasons for migration are influenced and dictated by both economic and political circumstances (Brah, 1996; Mensah, 2014). The international political processes that dictate global conditions are shaped by racial, class, and gender inequities. We witness this for instance with respect to the increasing reliance on female labour to drive the 'new world political economy' (e.g., factory work and home care). As "multinational capital" seeks new methods of production, technology, and lower wage labour, we see the rise of new migrations, and in turn new diasporas (Brah, 1996). All of the participants' relationships reflect the conditions of global capitalism and the creation of new African diasporas (Okphewo & Nzegwu, 2009; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). With the exception of Zanadu who met her husband in Kenya, each of the women met their partners in Canada after their partners had migrated to pursue educational and employment opportunities. Their migrations were informed by many variables, including local political, economic, and social conditions in their countries of origin, which are shaped and influenced by historical colonial and present-day neoliberal/neocolonial global economic systems (Andreasson, 2005; Mensah, 2014; Okphewo & Nzegwu, 2009; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005). For example, Liana met her husband after he immigrated to Vancouver to pursue employment opportunities, Miranda met her partner from the Congo while she was teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL) at a community-based organization in Montreal, and Imogen met her husband while they both worked for an international youth organization in Vancouver. As international migration and immigration continue to define the current epoch, we see this universalizing interaction of the global and the local, as people, ideas, goods, and services (both physical and virtual) move through new spaces. Major technological transformations in this era create less conceptual, social, and geographic space between peoples; with the proliferation of global aviation, and telephone and internet usage, living in/being of "two worlds" is much more tangible. Notions of 'here' and 'there' can become more fluid and ambiguous as travel and integration is multidirectional in nature (Loewen & Friesen, 2009; Mensah, 2014; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005).

Diasporic spaces

There are many ways to conceive of these new spaces of “inbetweenness,” in which an increasing number of people are coming to dwell as a result of new migrations; for instance, we can imagine them as third spaces (Bhabha, 1994), borderlands (Andalzuza, 1999), or diaspora(s) (Brah, 1996). Although each of these imagined spaces are unique and distinct in their conceptualization, situation, and articulation, what all these iterations have in common is the notion of transgressing/transcending borders, of fluidity, and possibility. Most significantly, they are all places of necessary ambiguity and uncertainty, in which there is potential to create new social relations, identities, and ways of being and knowing the world. Spaces of “inbetweenness” represent an opportunity to theorize about the complicated nature of identity outside the traditional binaries of identity politics, which continue to constrain our understanding of multiple identities and positionalities, such as those articulated and lived by transracial/cultural families (Luke & Luke, 1998). In these spaces, identities can be multiple and fluid, interconnecting local and global economic, social, and political conditions. Multiple identities exist, “in a state of immanent and permanent morphology” (Luke, 2003, p.381), and can foster new consciousness and political change, as new cultural processes develop, new practices are performed, and as subjectivities transform. This can provide important insight into the diverse ways in which difference and power are negotiated (Brah, 1996).

For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to conceptualize these spaces as ‘diasporic spaces’ defined by Avtar Brah (1996) as, “...the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes. It is where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed...” (p.205). Diasporic spaces are, “the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are contested” (p.205). For white Euro-Canadian and black African transracial/cultural families, diasporic space is created through multiple transgressions, as both partners transgress numerous racialized, gendered, and classed boundaries and borders of inclusion and exclusion. Informed and defined by experiences of travel, immigration, settlement, identity, belonging and displacement, diasporic spaces are places people call home, yet also represent a displacement *from* home. For African immigrants to

Canada, displacement from home can be geographic, psychic, cultural, social, political and more, while for white Euro-Canadian women, this can be displacement, disassociation, or a sense of unbelonging from home spaces (and settler nationalist ideologies) of whiteness that she may no longer relate to in the same way. We can imagine then that although these white Euro-Canadian women have been socialized into Canadian mythologies, and may identify with discourses of Canadian nationalism (to varying degrees and most particularly to multiculturalism discourses), simultaneously they may also constitute diasporic subjects in their own country, through their permanent transgression and identification with racialized otherness, with 'them' (see chapter 6).

In fact, unless one is Aboriginal or First Nations in the socio-political context of the nation-state identified as Canada, one is of 'the diaspora' or "diasporic" (Berns-McGown in Mattar, Marley, & Flear, 2015). We can imagine that all spaces can be diasporic in a sense, particularly within the present-day conditions of the global capitalist system, wherein more and more people are displaced, seeking refuge, crossing borders, and occupying new spaces. This begs us to consider how we define diasporic spaces, and who we define as diasporic subjects. How we understand lived and performed space, particularly in relation to nationalist discourses and immigration policies and practices, needs to reflect these ever-changing realities.⁵³

For black African and white Euro-Canadian transracial/cultural families, diasporic spaces are principally defined by experiences of belonging/unbelonging (e.g., migration, immigration and situated identity (re)making). They are restricted and bounded by dominant discourses, such as Canadian nationalism, immigration and multiculturalism,

The displacement of peoples seeking refuge around the world is only predicted to increase in the future due to worsening environmental, economic, and political conditions (Nordland, 2015). This brings forth once again not only theoretical debates of citizenship and belonging, but political and legal implications as to how nation-states define themselves in relation to who belongs and who does not (e.g., how do immigration systems function, how are borders policed, who can gain entry, access services, and ultimately "belong"). As the Canadian socio-political climate changes, there are mounting calls to reimagine and to reshape the colonial order of the state. Public calls for and political commitments to a 'nation-to-nation' relationship with Indigenous peoples in the country also necessitates a reimagining of relationships to space, nation, community, and to one another. Perhaps part of this is for majority "settler" Canadians to reimagine themselves as diasporic subjects, to see the migrations of generations that came before them, and to resituate/redefine themselves in relation to the nation, and to the 'national others'(Berns-McGown in Mattar,Marley,& Flear, 2015; also see Berns-McGown, 2007/08).

which intersect with complex bureaucratic systems of delay and disorder, and must be negotiated on a daily basis (Razack, 2010). At the same time, diasporic spaces are also sites of possibility, as white Euro-Canadian women and their families build their own diverse communities, and create and perform new practices (Luke & Luke, 1998).

Unbelonging: Immigration and racialized immigrants

To situate black African and white Euro-Canadian transracial/cultural families within diasporic spaces, it is necessary to address dominant discourses of immigration, and constructions of blackness and belonging within the Canadian national imagination. It is this imagination, and the economic, social, and political conditions informed by it, that come to shape how these families are constructed, and how they live and engage in the social world. For black racialized 'Canadians' and new immigrants to Canada, foreign status/marking does not disappear, for "to be black and at home in Canada is to both belong and not belong" (Walcott, 1997, p.50).⁵⁴ A sense of simultaneous belonging and alienation reflects "the racialized structure of citizenship" (Razack, 2010, p.89) in Canada, wherein racialized people are always suspect and must be closely watched and controlled outside of and within the country's borders. This further speaks to the threat that immigrants and in particular racialized immigrants pose to the imagined 'white settler society' that Canada knows itself to be (Razack, Smith, & Thobani, 2010).

Within Canadian discourses of multiculturalism and immigration, the Canadian state controls borders to determine who is a 'good' immigrant and who is not. A good immigrant's job is to "make it" in the society, in part by providing cultural diversity (food, song, and dance) for the dominant Canadian population to enjoy (Fleras, 2011; Razack, 1999), and by contributing labour to the Canadian economy without demands for equitable access to Canadian resources. In other words, 'good' immigrants find a low wage job, are grateful for it, and do not challenge Canada's benevolence; on the other hand, 'bad' immigrants are those who try to expose these hypocrisies. Trying to

⁵⁴For an interesting example of the relationship between blackness and Canada's imagined community, see Walcott's (1997), discussion in *Black Like Who? Writing Black Canada* on the control and containment of the Somali community in Etobicoke, Ontario by local community and police.

“succeed” in Canada, and the many barriers enacted to ensure one may never feel completely confident or comfortable they “belong,” can create great disillusionment with the official discourses (and promises) of multiculturalism, human rights, and diversity that Canada is meant to embody. For immigrants and refugees to Canada, diasporic spaces or spaces of inbetweenness are dominated by bureaucratic processes, which identify and control their bodies, movements, and opportunities (Okafor, 2009; Razack, 2010). The arduous and oppressive bureaucratic processes, which leave many peoples who come to Canada in “states of limbo,” can remain hidden from many native born majority Canadians. The implications of this can be dangerous, as Canadian national myths are comfortably recycled, and dominant negative constructions of immigrants and refugees are reproduced in popular media and everyday discourse (Fleras, 2011).

For black African new immigrants, such as the partners of the women in this study, discourses of immigration are connected to colonial ideologies about blackness, ‘Africa,’ and ‘Africans,’ which inform how black African immigrants are constructed within the Canadian national imaginary. These intersecting discourses have comprehensive implications on their opportunities and bounded choices.

Intersecting discourses: Everyday manifestations

As I detailed in chapter 4, during the two group workshops participants engaged with three texts to discuss key issues. One of the texts was the documentary titled, *True Love or Marriage Fraud?* (Interfilm Productions, 2011), which aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s well-known documentary program, *The Passionate Eye*. The film addressed the issue of marriage fraud (and immigration fraud) in Canada, and it featured three couples, all comprised of white Euro-Canadian women and negatively racialized African men. Two of the women were going to sponsor their husbands to come to Canada, while the main woman in the documentary, Lainie, had already sponsored her husband, who had since left her. I selected this visual text to facilitate a group dialogue regarding immigration and multiculturalism in Canada; in particular, I asked the participants how the issue of marriage fraud and the ways in which the couples were depicted in the film related more broadly to Canadian ideas about immigration, multiculturalism, and diversity. The pursuant dialogues in both workshops were quite interesting, and paralleled discussions in the individual interviews. The

subjects discussed were very thematic, reflecting the many similar experiences the women had, and the dominant hegemonic discourses that framed the ways they navigate the social world and societal institutions. It is significant to note that in the Saskatoon workshop every participant had or was in the process of sponsoring their partner as a spouse or common-law partner under the permanent residency process for Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and in the Vancouver workshop three out of four participants had also done so. As such, the participants could relate to the issue of sponsorship, and the popular assumptions about the relationship dynamics in these processes. After reviewing short clips of the film together, Mimi and Zanadu had the following exchange during the Saskatoon workshop:

Mimi: It [the film] pertained a lot-I don't know if you're experienced it yet, but I know there's people who are going to be like, "He only married you to stay in the country." Guaranteed.

Zanadu: You know what I realized in watching it-cuz it wasn't our situation at all. And our agreement was when we got married that we live in Kenya, but watching it I realized I always make a point of saying that. It's like my disclaimer...so that they know cuz we had so much judgement.

Mimi: And they make you feel like shit, "Oh your husband doesn't really love you, he only married you to stay in the country."

The other participant in the workshop, Maya, was in the process of sponsoring her husband, who had been in Canada as a university student for many years before they met. She also recounted experiences of being questioned about her relationship and her husband's motivations (see below). The documentary primarily focused on how "foreigners" (racialized African men in the case of the three main couples featured) were 'taking advantage' of Canadian citizens (white Euro-Canadian women) by forming romantic relationships with them to "gain entry into Canada" (Interfilm Productions, 2011). Instead of reproducing the hegemonic national, anti-immigration, and colonial discourses represented in the film, all of the participants in both workshops consistently questioned the motivations and relative power of the Canadians involved, and more broadly highlighted the vulnerability of the persons coming to Canada in such circumstances. The women filled in key gaps in the documentary, such as the premise and implications of the live-in caregiver program, and how that program, like many other

parts of the immigration system, are set up to benefit Canadians, and in turn leave many migrants vulnerable to work-based (and other forms of) exploitation (Galabuzi, 2006; Gonzales, 2015).

After the four participants in the Vancouver workshop reviewed clips from the documentary, they discussed how the relationships were depicted in the film. During the conversation, I asked the women to describe dominant assumptions about relationships between black men and white women. Imogen responded with the following:

I was thinking people might think about us that he's looking for something from me, taking advantage, wanting to come into the country, so that would be like what white people would think of it as he's trying to use me in some way.

In this statement, anti-mixing discourses intersect with anti-immigration discourses and colonial ideologies about 'Africa' and 'Africans.' When I seek clarification from Imogen to specify the racialization of black men, she stated:

I think the taking advantage of is probably an immigrant African...Africans would be the ones who would be taking advantage of us trying to get into the country; you know seeking out a Canadian passport and wanting to come to Canada to get better ahead in themselves, so that kind of stereotype about African men.

It was evident that the familial and public reactions to the women's relationships, and in particular the sponsorship processes they were going through, were directly related and informed by colonial ideologies about 'Africa' and 'Africans.' For all of the women, this was made clear by others through racialized inferences they recount experiencing regarding their African partners' country of origin, language ability, education levels, work ethic, morality, immigration status, and more.

Racialized inferences

Racialized inferences, which involve direct and active forms of verbal passive-aggressive behaviour, constitute a form of "everyday racism" (Essed, 1991), or what some refer to as "racial microaggressions" (Sue et al., 2007). "Racial microaggressions" can be defined as, "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to

people of color because they belong to a racial minority group” (p.273). These microaggressions manifest in numerous ways; for example: being followed by a security guard, being “randomly” stopped by police, being aggressively stared at or ignored (Essed, 1991). With respect to this study, the most common forms of microaggressions the women reported were racialized inferences about their partners, ignoring and staring behaviours, and the exotification of their children. Such inferences appeared to be one of the most troubling forms of “everyday racism” for several of the participants in particular, Maya, Mimi and Zanadu, who noted that these incidents take place on a continuous basis. Evident in the numerous experiences all ten of the women recounted during the interviews and the group workshops were the negative constructions of blackness, ‘Africa,’ and ‘Africans.’

For instance, during Maya’s interview, I asked her about common perceptions of ‘Africans.’ In response, Maya recounted her stepmother’s reaction to Maya’s new relationship with her future husband:

When I was first dating my husband...she [her stepmom] was like, “you better watch out, he’s from Africa and you better make sure he is not a scam artist, or he’s not going to do something horrible”...I think because he came from Nigeria, or he came from Africa, there are negative connotations to that sometimes. And from what is seen on the news, and how things are there, I do think it’s like, ‘people there are murderers, and they’re scam artists, and they all have AIDS.’

In her text, *Artificial Africas: Colonial Images in The Times of Globalization*, Mayer (2002) analyses imagery of ‘Africa’ through various cultural mediums. She argues that,

Africa is an artificial entity, invented, and conceived by colonialism. There is no such thing as an underlying cultural heritage that would pertain equally to Egypt and Namibia, Kenya and the Congo. Thus, the very notion of Africa, attests to the fact that at least in one respect the gigantic project of colonialism did work: forcing most diverse regions, traditions, and cultures in Africa into one symbolic system, colonial rule brought about an imperial framework of representation that is still effective today... (p.1).

We witness how 'Africa'⁵⁵ as "one symbolic system" is still represented through an "imperial framework," when we consider dominant depictions of 'Africa' and 'Africans' in popular culture and media, as well as everyday discourse. During the present "post-colonial" era, North American media still reflects the images and discourses of the imperial imagination.

In Bonsu's (2009) study of North American consumer responses to American and Canadian media depictions of African people and 'Africa,' he examines how, "post-colonial representations of Africa reify colonial constructs in global times" (p.3). He reports that participants in his study depicted Africa as a "primitive" land, where adventure is waiting "far removed from the mainstream of human progress" (p.11). His participants also drew on colonial discourses of benevolence in their characterizations of Africa as, "a site of war, famine, disease and poverty" (p.14). Africa and Africans were deemed to exist in a perpetual "state of helplessness" illustrated through the participants' use of terms, such as "diseased" and "war-torn." Moreover, Bonsu observed that whenever participants referred to positive representations of Africa and Africans, it was in relation to western philanthropic initiatives, such as the Christian aid organization, World Vision. He concludes that, "the presence of powerful ideological work renders consumers incapable of detecting their active roles in perpetuating potent colonialism clothed in globalization veneer" (p.20). What we see then is that consumers participate in the active reproduction of colonial discourses of western superiority and African inferiority (Bonsu, 2009; Mayer, 2002).

It is interesting to imagine ourselves as consumers and not citizens when we consider the reproduction of colonial ideologies. This identity is important in this context, because it also makes clear once again that our learning does not necessarily take place in formal learning environments, where we are constructed as students and citizens; instead, in the case of knowing and understanding 'Africa,' much like other ideological

⁵⁵ Again, I use single quotation marks to signify that for the purpose of my discussion regarding dominant colonial discourses, 'Africa' and 'Africans' are imagined and constructed. At the same time, these constructs are very powerful and have very real implications, as I address herein. I also acknowledge the significant existence of anti-hegemonic articulations and identifications of Africa (Ademoyo, 2009; Erbenraut, 2015; Mayer, 2002).

constructions of difference, learning takes place through popular culture and media, in which and through which, we are constructed as consumers. This ultimately leaves learning about difference to profit-driven interests. As Azania, Liana and Miranda specifically noted, they did not learn anything about Africa in school; and just as the women learned about constructions of difference and 'blackness' predominantly through abstracted visual images, music, and characters on popular television shows, it was through their consumption of media that they "were taught" what 'Africa' is and who 'Africans' "are." Every single woman in my study characterized predominant conceptions of Africa in similar ways. For instance, during our interview, Liana thematically addressed her unknowing about Africa, and her and her mother's shock about the conditions in which her husband grew up. Below, Liana recounts when she was first getting to know her husband.

I had a lot of questions because I had never heard of Ghana before. He's like, "You've never heard of Ghana in school?" I was like, "no, I had no idea about all these other countries," like I had no clue...I found our perspective in school growing up, Africa was little children running around with no clothes on, or maybe a diaper with a big stomach, and it sounds truly horrible saying this, but flies; and so when I first met him I thought, 'oh is this how he grew up?' And I remember my mom saying, "Did he live in a mud hut?" So he tried to explain to me certain things, like they didn't have bathrooms in the house, they're just like holes...like oh my god, just cuz I can't imagine. I grew up here, I was spoiled, we had the house, the running water; we had a toilet. I don't want to say it broke my heart, but it just opened my eyes and it opened my mom's eyes a lot as well...for instance she had no idea and I actually had no idea that there was rich people in Africa.

Here, Liana draws on common "postcolonial" constructions of Africa found in mainstream North American popular culture and media, which include imagery of young naked or almost naked children with bloated bellies and flies surrounding them in "primitive" living conditions: rural and dry landscapes, mud huts, and no running water. All of these images freeze the colonial African subject in time—the racialized, primitive, poor, desperate, diseased, and disordered black body. Every single one of the participants referenced these prominent depictions of Africa and Africans in charity organization advertisements and commercials, as a key medium through which such imagery is conceived and recycled. In our interview, J also drew on these depictions when I asked her about dominant ideas of 'Africa' and 'Africans.'

J: People think Africans live in huts, they're "jungle bunnies" or whatever...you have to be taught about other cultures in order to know what they're about, otherwise you rely on what you see on TV; you think every person in Africa is starving, because of the World Vision [commercials]. They look at all these commercials and if you don't know any black people, that's what you might think Africa is all about.

J demonstrates the fixity of colonial discourses when she makes reference to the term "jungle bunnies." It is almost shocking that such a term is still in circulation, but her casual and familiar reference to it signifies that it is, at least within the everyday racialized discourses she hears. She also identifies the danger of not engaging in critical learning about the world, and once again the influential medium of television as a default learning tool.

Bonsu (2009) argues that, "the persistently negative image of Africa is the result of a strategic, but perhaps unconscious, effort to socialize audiences into an identity construction process that casts Africans as inferior" (p.20). It is this "strategic" identification process that forms the basis for the work of western charity organizations. Although framed as promotion for a western benevolent organization "helping" "poor" Africans, World Vision, as a highly visible organization within popular media, is very dangerous in its depiction of 'Africa' and 'Africans.' This speaks to broader issues of western "development" theories and practices still premised on colonial ideologies, and based on "the implied moral obligation of the western world to help Africa...as 'the white man's burden'..." (Bonsu, p.16). In Azania's interview during our discussion of popular images of Africa and immigration in Canada, she noted,

I think these are kind of the impressions built up in people's minds about what life in Africa is, like babies bloated tummies and Congolese fighting...whereas if you look at a picture of Cape Town and it looks so much like Vancouver, it kind of wrecks that imagery for them...

This is a fascinating insight. Azania draws on the constructions identified above: babies with bloated bellies, and disordered and violent bodies. Yet, she troubles this by comparing the South African coastal city of Cape Town to the Canadian coastal city of Vancouver. By evoking the notion of similarity and not binary difference, especially in comparing large, modern urban-centres which symbolize the power and progress of western post-industrial success, she disrupts the single colonial construct. Quite

significantly, she also names the investment and commitment that people have to such fixity of African otherness, when she states that such comparisons and depictions of modern urban 'Africa' "wrecks that imagery for them." In other words, within the western imagination there is an investment and a commitment to maintaining Africa as a "colonial construct"; this is more than an ideological investment, it is a political and economic one "targeted rigidly at maintaining a geo-political global power relation that privileges whiteness and empire" (Bonsu, 2009, p.23).

I observed that the seven participants who had travelled, lived, and/or actively sought out educational opportunities to complicate hegemonic narratives of Africa and Africans had the most varied understanding and engaged critiques of common stereotypes and misconceptions. They also actively fought against and corrected others when these colonial discourses manifest in their daily interactions. I specifically noted that a majority of the women, especially Imogen, J, Julia and Mimi, challenged the assumptions about African immigrants, and Canadian superiority and benevolence. For instance, in our interview discussion regarding stereotypes of Africa and Africans, Imogen noted:

Well with African immigrants we always assume they're from a war-torn country, they're refugees, or they're really, really poor; they came here because they don't have any job at home. That it's just awful where they came from and how could they possibly want to ever go back there, and it's so much better here and everything must be so great now that they've come here (laughing). Their life must be so much better now that they're in Canada; there's a lot of that...so everybody's like, 'Oh how bad is it at home?'

Imogen challenges the predominant notion that Africa is a place of disorder, violence, and poverty, from which people are desperate to flee; while Canada is the ordered, civilized, and modern place that Africans are desperate to live in. Imogen laughs when she reiterates the common claim that new immigrants to Canada must be so happy because "everything must be so great now," when in fact life in Canada presents many new challenges, and for a multitude of reasons, numerous people choose not to stay

(Lupick, 2009; Roy, 2012).⁵⁶ She later notes that her ideas changed about Africa when she first went to Ghana and experienced a different sense of community and belonging, and observed what she saw as higher general levels of contentment. She states that dominant (colonial) depictions of Africa, such as those reproduced through popular culture and media, do not allow us to conceptualize Africa more broadly. Moreover, Imogen challenges hegemonic constructions of contentment and poverty, the former associated with wealth and modernity, while the latter with degeneracy and otherness. In our discussion during Imogen's interview, she went on to state:

I found people much more content generally with their lives. So that contentment doesn't come through in anything you'd ever see about Africa, it's always that everybody is always discontent and that they're so poor, when in fact there's actually a lot of contentment...so that doesn't come through when you watch a video about starving children or whatever the hell it is. So that is the thing that started to change my ideas about Africa, like it's not as poor as we think it is; like materially there's lots of poverty issues...there wasn't 'poverty of spirit' like I feel there is here.

In Mimi's interview, she also disrupts the dominant binary between 'Africa' as a disordered place to flee, and Canada as a benevolent place everyone wants to be.

Mimi: Everybody's all like, 'these people should be so thankful they're in Canada now and they got to leave their horrible life'-not everybody wanted to leave...a lot of people were perfectly happy, and then something completely out of their control lifted them up and threw them into another place. I mean can you even imagine what somebody coming from Congo or all these beautiful places and then they get chucked here in the middle of winter? Can you even imagine? People don't think about that, they think, 'Oh you should just be happy to be here.' And is Canada so great, really? If you went to somebody, 'we're going to let you come here, we're going to question your motivations, we aren't really going to give you a good job and if you do get a really good job, you might not get the best pay.' Show some of them exactly what they are going to face and some of them will choose not to come.

⁵⁶Several studies of new immigrant populations illustrate the tenuous and ambivalent relationship that some immigrants have to Canada and to the notion of remaining in this country. For example, in a 1994 study of Latin American immigrants to Calgary, respondents were critical of what they described as a focus on materialism and money in Canada and Canada's "shallow culture" (Loewen & Friesen, 2009, p.169).

Here, Mimi reminds us that the situated conditions in which people live are dictated by larger economic, social and political forces, many of which are beyond their control. Again, during a historical period defined by the massive and desperate journeys of displaced peoples around the world, it is necessary for subjects of western settler nations to be reminded of their diasporic histories, and similar journeys their families took not so long ago (Berns-McGown, 2007/08). Mimi also reminds us that for new immigrants and refugees, Canada is not necessarily the same Canada that is lived in by majority settler Canadians.

For Julia, her limited perceptions of Africa (also based on colonial ideologies) were challenged when she first worked on a health initiative in Angola. In her interview, Julia spoke of dominant ideas of Africa and her experience.

Julia: I think I did have a perception that it was poor and mostly rural (laughing). Yeah I don't think I had an extremely developed perception of it...actually I remember a few things surprised me-in Lubangu, the first city where we were based in the south of Angola, there were so many beautiful trees and wildflowers, and I didn't really think of Africa as lush and having lots of flowers.

Julia also noted that stereotypes about Africa as “poor” and “dry” drive her husband crazy and he is constantly telling people about the beauty and diversity of Africa. She stated:

Definitely [perceptions] that stand out to him are the World Vision commercials with the fly on the face and the desperation, all those representations of people having no-not that he would use the word agency-but no agency, they represent victimacy in his head and I think that's what he thinks...he likes to emphasize the hope for private investment and business and the vibrancy of economics and the fluidity and the potential. I mean the way that international aid and bilateral [agreements] all this has gone hasn't exactly emphasized that, so to kind of point towards those aspects that people don't often consider.

When I asked another participant J how she responds to people who employ racist stereotypes about Africans during our interview, she spoke about her practice of “calling people out,” and not allowing racist talk to go undisrupted. She made clear that she sees such moments as learning opportunities, in which she plays an educative role and draws on her experiential knowledge to provide counter-narratives:

It's almost fun for me to be able to educate them...so I like to tell them about what it's like in Ghana. Usually I'll start by talking about my husband's family and what it's like for his family, um he may be a bit more well to do than most Ghanaians...his dad was like the Minister of Education and his mom was a principal at a school....you know like he went to a boarding school...there's people that live in huts in the villages and stuff, but it's not like everybody lives in huts.

Here, J creates the possibility for counter-imagery to be imagined, which is crucial as these constructs rely on the visual gaze. J is particularly seeking to create a cognitive shift by building the narrative of a highly educated, professional, and wealthy African family, an image that is counter to the World Vision commercials of Africans as starving and living in abject poverty. She paints her husband's family as middle-upper-class, and most importantly as agentive, something that is profoundly divergent from the hegemonic colonial imagery and ideologies of Africa (Wainaina, 2005). The sense of disempowerment or lack of agency that characterizes the dominant colonial constructions in popular media are increasingly being challenged by counter-images and discourses of Africa, which decentralize western imperial constructions of Africans to disrupt the colonial and 'philanthropic' gaze (e.g., Nzegwu, 2009; Erbentraut, 2015; Westmacott, Apollonio, & O'Brien, 2014).

In our discussion during Azania's interview, she went on to say that these constructions get applied or transferred to ideas about African immigrants within the Canadian context, which she has witnessed first-hand through the experiences of her partner.

Azania: It's possible people kind of combine that with actual immigrants from Africa too...like my husband has definitely had to argue about his education before. People don't think he has a degree or that it's a good degree if it's from there; they don't necessarily understand that there's real cities with education and government and stuff.

Azania makes clear that the conceptions of Africa and Africans have material and economic consequences for her partner and her family, since when people draw on colonial tropes of Africa, they delegitimize and discredit the education and experience that her husband has. This, in tandem with the complex and challenging processes of credential recognition and acquiring 'Canadian experience,' compounds the

circumstances, which leave many needed semi and highly skilled and educated immigrants, like Azania's husband, unable to work in their respective fields (Galabuzi, 2006; Okafor, 2009; Tettey & Pupilampu, 2005).⁵⁷

Within Canadian dominant discourses, black African immigrants are negatively constructed as refugees using system resources, and people who do not share "Canadian values" or wish to integrate into Canadian society (Mensah, 2014). The consequences of these constructions directly impact the experiences black Africans have navigating Canadian societal institutions and social systems, such as immigration, housing, education, and more. For instance, in her interview Azania briefly recounted the challenges of getting her partner's visa to Canada:

It was really, really difficult to get his first visa to come here. They initially rejected it because they said that he didn't own a house, he didn't have kids, and he hadn't travelled anywhere else, so they weren't going to let him in the country because they were like, 'he'll probably want to stay.' I remember being really frustrated about that; it's kind of funny because most South Africans that I know that are black don't even want to be here (laughing).

Dealing with the economic, psychological, and financial burdens that one must endure while in bureaucratic immigration processes of obtaining visas, permanent residency and so forth, opened Azania's and other women's eyes to the states of limbo and unbelonging that many people face in Canada. Yet many majority white Euro-Canadians are not necessarily aware of these realities, as counter-stories, not told by the state but by individuals who must navigate these institutional processes, are often silence(d), especially when their legal status can be compromised by speaking out. At the same time, it is noted that counter-immigration stories, stories of individuals who go through

⁵⁷ As noted, although the African immigrant population is growing in Canada, little research has been done on this population. According to the 2006 census, there are 398,100 African-born immigrants, predominantly from South Africa, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and Kenya (Statistics Canada, 2008). Results from the National Household Survey (NHS) indicate that between 2006 and 2011, approximately 145,700 African immigrants came to Canada. This represents 12.5% of the total number of immigrants who came to Canada during that five-year period. This is approximately a 2.2% increase as compared to 2001-2006 (Statistics Canada, 2013). Unfortunately, within existing Statistics Canada census classifications, there is no way to specifically indicate how many African-born immigrants identify as "Black continental Africans," and therefore exact numbers are unavailable (Mensah, 2014).

these systems of bureaucratic delay, have been receiving more media attention in recent years.⁵⁸ This can enable an unveiling of reality versus rhetoric, which is extremely necessary for Canadians to consider alternative discourses. Counter-immigration stories can allow us to more broadly examine the “national self” and to engage in a deeper inquiry into the Canadian psyche—who is Canada as a nation and imagined community, and more importantly who does Canada want to be? What are “Canadian values” and who decides what they are? (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, The Sunday Edition, 2015).

Like Azania, seven of the women in the study referenced their partner’s challenges acquiring and maintaining professional employment, which were directly related to assumptions about their partner’s level of education, professional experience, and competence. For four of the women’s partners, this pertained to their volatile status as people without permanent residency status, and who therefore depend on the renewal of work permits to remain in the country. For Azania’s husband and others, this involved working in manual labour jobs, such as construction, and working in exploitative conditions “under the table” when work permits were delayed or denied. During her interview, Azania told me about when her partner first arrived in Canada.

Azania: When he first came here, when I was pregnant and had to stop working, he was under the table because he couldn’t get a work visa—and I was pregnant and we needed money—so he was working in different renovation jobs and stuff, but people would disappear and not pay, and he would end up working insane hours, early in the morning to twelve at night. And then people would give him a ridiculous rate, if at all. So many people disappeared and stuff, and even now I would say, even now that he is able to work over the table or legally, he still gets way less money than he would if it were a white person I think.

⁵⁸ Examples include two segments on CBC’s radio one investigative news program, *The Current*. The first involved a profile of couples going through the partner sponsorship process, who were waiting in “states of limbo” for their papers to be processed. This was a dramatic departure from the documentary the participants watched for the workshop, as *The Current* piece was framed as a much more sympathetic story (Nelson, 2015, also see Marchitelli, 2014). The second piece involved recent study findings on the economic migrant category for immigration. The findings demonstrate that contrary to dominant anti-immigration discourses, which construct the refugee as a “burden” to the Canadian system, it is in fact the capital(ist) class that manipulates the system to pay less income tax and benefit from capital gains (Apollonio & Colabrese, 2015; also see Wood, 2015).

The “states of limbo” that immigrants and refugees linger in, as they wait for legal work permits and other documentation, leaves them vulnerable to these forms of exploitation. As Azania stated, this vulnerability and exploitation does not necessarily cease when a racialized migrant gets their papers, because they are still governed by the ideologies which explain and limit their movements and opportunities (e.g., Galabuzi, 2006; Tettey & Pupilampu, 2005).

During the Vancouver workshop discussions, three of five participants realized that their partners’ worked in construction, which began a conversation regarding how racialized inferences were mediated by socioeconomic class. For instance, Miranda recounted to the group how her partner had recently started to work in construction where he witnessed a significant difference in the work culture and treatment he received by management and colleagues.

Miranda: At one of his jobs he was saying that people make reference to him as a monkey or these sorts of very old school racist comments. For the most part I think it’s more subtle, just in terms of expectations of him as a solid, reliable worker and that’s just the extent of people’s expectations that he can assemble furniture and move stuff...from how he describes it and considering how he encounters the same attitude -he’s worked at several of these companies now-and it seems that a lot of it is because he’s black. And a lot of it is because-now here’s me being or him being classist-but a lot of these other colleagues are people who don’t have university education and who have been working in manual labour jobs their whole lives, who are white people and I guess maybe in their circles, it’s more common.

Miranda attributes the overt and insidious racialization of her partner as being “because he is black,” and yet she also attributes the attitudes he encountered to socioeconomic class-based realities. The implication here is that the absence of a university education, and employment in manual labour such as construction, is an explanation for the discriminatory behaviours that her partner has to deal with. Herein then one can infer the opposite: these kinds of inferences and racializing practices would not occur in working environments in which people are highly educated and employed in high level professional positions. As addressed in chapter six, we are reminded that racialized discourses and attending behaviours are mediated by class, and their manifestations are governed by class-based social norms and protocols (Deliovsky, 2010; Moon, 1999;

Twine, 2010). It appears that Miranda is justifying racialized discourses by equating them with class status. Class-based rationalizations of racism as situated in and practiced by working classes is central to the evasion of racism in white middle-class racist talk. I observed that Miranda and several other participants, including Julia, "...do not appear to find the *realities* of white supremacy as disturbing as they do the 'crassness' of its *verbalization*, something that bourgeois whites are taught to do" (Moon, 1999, p.186). After Miranda's story in the group dialogue about racism in the construction industry during the Vancouver workshop, Imogen identified the notion that working-class racialized discourses are most "crass" by stating, "sometimes some of the most horrible and subtle racism is happening amongst the liberal elite."

To write of diasporic spaces is to write of the complex and sometimes contradictory concepts of belonging and unbelonging. For all of the participants in this study, these concepts were central to their lives in different material and conceptual/psychic ways. In material terms, this relates to the immigration status of their partners, the employment their partners could attain, credential recognition and educational opportunities, and the relationships the women and their families had with their local communities and their partner's community "back home." In conceptual/psychic terms this has to do with where one feels a sense of belonging in geographic, social, cultural, and political spaces, and relates as such to where one feels that they are 'home.' As illustrated, through the intersecting discourses that mediate the lives of transracial/cultural families addressed above, this is heavily determined and mediated by how the nation-state and the social world in which one exists define one's belonging, and whether one is "invited" or "allowed" to feel at home. It is also determined by how one chooses to create 'home' within diasporic spaces through the ways they live their lives, the practices they employ, and the communities they build. While we see that these spaces can be restrictive, they are also places of significant possibility, where Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families can utilize their agency to create and engage in new practices and ways of being. For seven participants, building inclusive communities seemed to be a very conscious and strategic commitment, informed by their own maternal family conditions, their travel and educational endeavours, and their transracial/cultural families. Through deliberate and

thoughtful commitment, the participants and their families appear to define and create their own sense of belonging.

Belonging: Community building

We do things our own way. – Zanadu

Home is not where the heart is': It's where the self might be differently desired, imagined, lived and experienced. (Walcott, 1997, p.128)

As I gathered data on white Euro-Canadian women and their families, it became increasingly clear that several participants in particular, Azania, Imogen, Mimi and Zanadu, were active in shaping their social worlds, through a proactive commitment to relationship and community building, and practices they cultivated and performed as part of their own ongoing racial socialization. In both the interviews and the workshops, the women's discussions involved the importance of interpersonal relationships and community building across differences. For example, during her interview Imogen stressed the importance of having "an open home" and developing a sense of community.

Imogen: I want that in my life. And I think it was like that in our house. We always had lots of people coming to our house; mom and dad invited everybody over...she [mom] hated that you couldn't just drop by someone's house, so you could just drop by our house...so I think that started from that age that I wanted that too.

One of the things that really struck me when I was in Ghana was a sense of belonging. I remember walking down the street in Ghana, and everybody's living outside and just thinking Africans must be so lonely in Canada; they must be so lonely because no one talks to each other and greets each other...it must be so isolated. Like my parents were isolated-I remember them going through depression. My mom would say, 'oh it's so cold here,' like emotionally cold like people don't-you can't just walk to your neighbour's house, you have to call them first. You don't see people in the neighbourhood, you don't rely on them the same way you do at home.

For Imogen, having an open and welcoming home is an important value in her life. As the child of Irish immigrant parents, this was a practice that her parents valued in

their home as well, and something that Imogen's parents and Imogen feel is lacking in Canadian society. This sense of alienation is something that Imogen directly connects to a sense of unbelonging within Canadian society. For this reason, she has to "work at it" to build community, by changing the local social norms around her and inviting people into the diasporic community her family is creating in Vancouver. Imogen went on to state:

People are not really confident that they belong anywhere. I feel like here you have to work at it, you have to let people know it's okay for them to do that, versus that being a norm, so I wanted someone in my life who would be okay with that.

Creating a sense of belonging by actively engaging in diverse community building is a value that Imogen and her partner are both committed to.

Imogen: Just knowing that the person who's my partner in life comes from that kind of framework and kind of automatically makes him that person; that doesn't mean he doesn't have selfish tendencies, but he's pretty much willing to drop anything-like if my family shows up they're welcome to stay. I find that attractive [having] the same value.

For another participant, Zanadu, her value of community building was also related to her open and inclusive childhood environment, and was greatly informed by her formative socialization in Kenya as a young woman and new mother. Like Imogen, commitment to relationship and community building is a core value she shares with her partner. During the interview, Zanadu spoke about the amazing community she and her family have built in their Saskatoon neighbourhood:

We do things kind of our own way here, and we've kind of found our own way....we are really big on community building, like our street when we bought our house, there were no families and stuff. We built a front porch, we ate on it, we were outside all the time, and then another family bought a house across the street, and then built a front porch thing, and then another and now our house is full of kids-it's like a Maasai *mara*⁵⁹ right there. And I know everyone says they wished they lived on our street cuz the kids have all different moms, they're all moving around; we're all the moms of all the kids basically, and we have potlucks every week. It's

⁵⁹ For the purpose of her discussion, Zanadu defines a *mara* as an area or community.

awesome, it's a huge community and we're building a big cob oven in front of one of the houses for pizza parties. We have parties where there's immigrants and just so many people come; it's a big community feel, so we create that really...it's from hanging out out front rather than the backyard, that's all it was....and we wanted everyone to feel like they were really part of it...so we're good at that, and that's doing from his culture.

It is fascinating that Zanadu and her partner created an inclusive diasporic “Maasai *mara*” on their quiet residential street in Saskatoon. Living and raising her first young child in her partner’s Maasai community deeply influenced Zanadu’s sense of belonging, and instilled in her community building and parenting practices that travelled across physical and conceptual borders with her, into the diasporic spaces she now shares with her transracial/cultural family (she now has five children). Zanadu and her family have incorporated those practices into their lives in their “own way,” and have in turn, shaped the lives of those with whom they have built community. Although Zanadu’s husband, like other diasporic peoples, still misses home (an ever-present longing), both Zanadu and Imogen illuminate how diasporic spaces not only change us, we also change them.

What similarly characterized the relationship and community building practices of both Imogen and Zanadu is their commitment to creating communities across multiple forms of difference. This commitment was in part influenced by their changed subject-positions living in diasporic spaces as Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families (recall the discussion of transgression in chapter 6), wherein their relationships to ‘difference’ and ‘belonging’ have been altered, and in turn, they seek out others who share “diaspora sensibilities” (Walcott, 1997). Imogen illustrates this well when she made the following statement in her interview as she unpacked why building community is so valuable to her.

Imogen: It's funny; I've thought about this a lot for a very long time. I think I feel more comfortable with people who are different, like really different, like I am more comfortable with the immigrant community, the African communities, people who come from different places. I'm more comfortable with difference than I am in similarity. Because when they're different, or when they're coming from difference, they already understand that there's a perspective that's different... they are already feeling different, so it's easier to connect with them. I find a lot of the friends I have, people I become close to, are always people who have lived with that element in their life somehow.

In a nation-state founded on the principle of “racial sameness,” and spatially (and cognitively) structured to maintain that sameness (think here of the perpetuation of racial and class segregation), to proactively and consciously build community across differences can be imagined as an act of reimagination, of redefining the terms of belonging-of resistance. Gilroy (2000) writes, “...diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location, and consciousness” (p.123). As these women have transgressed racial, class, ethnic, and geographic boundaries through their lived experiences and their relationships, their sense of self, community and nation, and ultimately sense of belonging, has changed. The disenchantment and disillusionment many women expressed regarding Canadian cultural norms and discourses (see chapter 6) has led them to actively create new places of belonging, which disrupt the traditional relationship and identification, “between place, location and consciousness,” and which defy the ideology of the nation-state.

Multiculturalism policy and practices simultaneously mark the belonging and unbelonging of cultural others, who perpetually exist in tenuous relationship with and outside of the national imagination (Walcott, 1997).⁶⁰ Diasporic spaces can defy and redefine the boundaries of belonging. Within diasporic spaces, belonging can be fluid and “diaspora sensibilities resurrect all that communities and nations destroy, foreclose and prohibit in the dominating narratives of collective belonging. Diaspora sensibilities are methods of overcoming the problem of locating oneself solely within national boundaries” (Walcott, p.22). In a nation built on sameness, is there another way to conceptualize a nation based on communities established across differences? If a nation-state is an imagined community, we must be able to conceptualize the nation and the community *together* (Chatterjee, 1993). Diasporic communities, such as those Imogen and Zanadu and their transracial/cultural families create, are built across

⁶⁰ I think here of the racialized politics of division during the last federal election campaign in 2015 by the Harper conservative government, in particular: the supreme court case regarding the niqab, the act against ‘cultural barbaric practices’, the proposed hotline for individuals to report them, and the attacks on women wearing niqab (e.g., Walia & Olwan, 2015). In such a political climate, it is made clear for negatively racialized peoples that national belonging is an impermanent and tenuous state of being.

boundaries of difference. These communities have much to teach us about what community and nation-building could be beyond traditional conceptualization of the modern nation-state.

Racial literacy practices

Racial literacy

A predominant theme in the participant narratives and group workshop discussions was the educative role that six women in particular play engaging issues of difference with their children, other people in their lives, and as part of their own self-directed learning. I observed that within diasporic spaces, these women are cultivating practices that allow them to exercise agency and feel empowered, as they contend and challenge discourses of race and difference. We can imagine as white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families now learn to navigate the everyday manifestations of difference in their lives, a new form of literacy—a way of reading, engaging, and knowing the world—can develop. These practices can be imagined as what Twine (2010) terms, “racial literacy”: “...an analytic orientation and a set of practices that reflect shifts in perceptions of race, racism and whiteness...a way of perceiving and responding to racism that generates a repertoire of discursive and material practices” (p.92). According to Twine (2010), white people in transracial relationships can cultivate racial literacy skills in order to resist and combat racism in their everyday lives. Racial literacy involves the development of the following critical skills: 1. recognition of racism as a present-day phenomenon, not only as a historical condition; 2. understanding the intersectionality of ideological constructs (race, class, gender, sexuality, and more); 3. comprehension of whiteness and white privilege, 4. recognition of race and racial identities as socially constructed, 5. employment of language in which to address and discuss racism, and 6. capacity to critically interpret manifestations of racism and racialization. The development of racial literacy is not an “automatic” result of being in a transracial/cultural relationship, nor do all of the women consistently possess each of Twine’s (2010) list of critical skills. The cultivation of racial literacy is a “dynamic and dialectical process that involve[s] ongoing negotiations and strategies” (p.112), and an emotional and intellectual investment in learning. Like any form of literacy, racial literacy is cultivated on a

continuous basis and is informed by critical incidents, everyday life experiences, and different stages of development in one's life. For example, as noted, seven women in the study had young children who were not yet school-age, and therefore in many cases their children had not experienced certain forms of racism/racialization. Participants also varied in their critical understanding and engagement with issues of difference, and displayed varying degrees of 'racial literacy.' For instance, while all of the women possessed varying levels of racial consciousness, with respect to recognizing racism as a present-day phenomenon and the socially constructed nature of race and racial identities, it was only three women, Imogen, Mimi and Zanadu, who appeared to have comprehension of whiteness and white privilege. Again, it was through dialogue in the individual interviews and especially in the group workshops, that whiteness as structural power and privilege became more visible and connections between self and society were formed (see chapter 8). At the same time, thematic amongst seven of the women was the informal (and in some cases more formal) educative role they play in the lives of their children, as well as taking on the responsibility of actively educating others and themselves. Part of this educative role can be interpreted as distinctly gendered; for instance, the socialization and literacy development of children, the preparation of traditional foods, and hair-care practices, are central to mothering discourses of caretaking (Luke & Luke, 1998; Twine, 2010).

The women in the study who appeared to have high levels of racial literacy had several distinct commonalities. Imogen, Zanadu, and Mimi had lived and had formidable experiences (e.g., marriage, birth of a child) in their African partner's community, and as such they had experienced their whiteness in different geo-political and social "postcolonial" environments. There were critical formative experiences that Imogen, Zanadu, and Mimi all recounted as part of their ongoing racial socialization and awareness with respect to their own whiteness and relationships between white privilege, racism, and colonialism. For instance, we can think here of Zanadu's experience in Kenya and her familial history of missionary work, Mimi's lived experience as a white woman in Kenya, and Imogen's critical incident working with an international youth organization and bearing witness to the personal and structural realities and implications of racial ideologies through interpersonal relationships (also see below). As evidenced in examples of the women's experiences above, their movements, whether

intentional or initially accidental, pushed them into new spaces, outside of the Canadian mainstream society they were socialized into. These experiences and others can be understood as critical and often disruptive learning that largely took place in informal interpersonal, community-based, and/or self-directed forms. Formative experiences led each of the women to further pursue ongoing learning in formal and informal capacities. For instance, during her interview Mimi stated that her experiences in Kenya directly informed her decision to pursue a degree in social work:

My whole career path, and why I chose it, and where I'm going with it, is all based on my hatred of racism and discrimination...I mean helping people overcome the different things that come of racism, I mean that's something right. You know survivors of residential schools, or political refugees or things like that, so that's kind of where my passion leads now.

In Mimi's statement, one can sense her resolution, conviction, and passion for social advocacy and antiracism work. Like Imogen and Zanadu, Mimi appears to feel a sense of social responsibility, that it is part of her personal and professional role/trajectory to fight against racism and discrimination. Part of this responsibility for Mimi and others seemed to be a commitment to ongoing learning, in part through engagement with literature, and being aware of current political and social issues.

Imogen, Zanadu and Mimi are also all involved in social, political, and community building work in some capacity, which informs their personal and professional lives. Imogen has a Master's degree in antiracism education and works in immigration and multicultural affairs for the provincial government, Zanadu is a sexual wellness educator, and involved in numerous local and Kenyan community-based initiatives, and Mimi is employed as a social worker and is active in social advocacy work. Through formal and informal ongoing learning in their personal and professional lives, Imogen, Zanadu and Mimi have developed and continue to foster critical consciousness. In the remaining part of this chapter, I will identify five main categories of racial literacy practices that Imogen, Zanadu, Mimi, and other participants perform in their daily lives, as part of navigating and challenging discourses of race and difference.

Racial literacy practices

In the study data, I identified five main categories of 'racial literacy' practices that participants perform in their daily lives: 1. multiliteracies and narrative/storytelling, 2. language deconstruction, 3. socio-spatial navigation, 4. negotiation of racialized discourses, and 5. cultural and linguistic education.

1. Multiliteracies and narrative/storytelling

Five participants identified racial histories, particularly the history of slavery, as a subject by which they taught themselves and their children about racism. As discussed in chapter 5, the history of slavery was the conceptual framework within which the participants thematically referenced their early learning about what racism "is" based on their formal schooling experience. As adults, it is significant that three women have come back to this framework to expand their own learning, and to engage in informal educative practices with their children. The emphasis for these women was the use of literary texts, specifically texts that privilege marginalized voices in order for their children and themselves to "bear witness" to racism and other forms of oppression (Berlak, 2004). I noted that six participants consciously sought out books and resources that address issues of race and difference, and/or demonstrate positive and agentic representations of blackness. For Zanadu in particular, self-initiated learning about slave histories was a fundamental aspect of her racial literacy development, and a literary medium through which she facilitates discussions about race, difference, and human oppression with her children. For Zanadu and the other women with high levels of racial literacy, this is directly related to the power of narrative/storytelling, something they feel very passionately about, and which seemed to provide them with a sense of agency and empowerment with respect to their own learning and that of their children. During their individual interviews when we were discussing racism, both Zanadu and Imogen referenced Canadian author, Lawrence Hill's (2007) historical novel, *The Book of Negroes*, and the powerful visceral and long-lasting responses they had to it.

Imogen: That book hurt me; I cried. It physically hurt me, for days afterwards I was thinking about it. I don't think I would have empathized as much if I didn't know people, or think of them. When I hear people say stuff about black people-that hurts me. But you can't get that if you don't have that connection, so it's kind of like a "catch 22," because people live

in separate places, in order to be friends you've got to meet each other somehow...

Imogen uses emotive language to make important linkages between broader racial histories and the local racialized discourses she hears in daily life. She has connected to this powerful text about histories of slavery and racial oppression relationally, through her own intimate relationships with negatively racialized people. Imogen makes clear the significant influence of close relationships on learning about racial ideologies, and that discursive literacy practices, like other forms of learning, must be performed within a relational context. She also alludes to the profound dangers and challenges of race and class-based segregation.⁶¹

For Zanadu, *The Book of Negroes* was the catalyst or “critical incident” that began her ongoing self-directed learning journey about slavery. During our interview, Zanadu thematically spoke about her interest in histories of slavery and her engagement with literature.

Zanadu: I'm really, really interested in slavery and with my children I teach them a lot. And I've read tons of books on slavery...not just understanding how the slaves felt, but also understanding the role of the slave owner and stuff. I am really teaching my children of putting yourself-like history isn't just facts and events, it's taking somebody else's story and putting it in yourself so that you make sure that never happens again.

As evidenced in the women's articulations, literary texts such as Hill's, demonstrate the power of textual engagement. Since literature is perceived as “disconnected from reality,” “...it invites the performance of bold and subversive acts within its pages, the testing of new possibilities of being. These fictive scripts may be seen as preparation for transformative and life-altering moves in the real world” (Najmi & Srikanth, 2002, p.15).

⁶¹Despite the mythologies around our “melting pot” and “mosaic” societies in the United States and Canada respectively, we see that intimate and meaningful engagement across racial, cultural, and class differences is quite oppositional to the ways our societies have been spatially structured within the framework of colonization (Goldberg, 1993; Razack, 2002). In fact, as social justice scholars Sensoy and DiAngelo (2013) note, communities and schools in the United States are becoming more racially segregated, and white people in particular, “are the racial group that lives the most racially segregated lives” (p.110). As noted, some participants in the study alluded to the troubling nature of these conditions, and several of the women, including Imogen, discussed their proactive interest in and approaches to creating intimate personal and professional relationships across multiple forms of difference.

What started as Zanadu's own learning process through literature, resulted in the transformation of her mothering/educative practices when she began to critically "read" literary works with her children. For Zanadu, connecting to human histories of oppression takes place through narrative, and engaging with literary texts is an intellectual, as well as an emotional experience (Berlak, 2004; Felman & Laub, 1999; Kumashiro, 2000; Tupper, 2005). For both Imogen and Zanadu, emphasis is placed on emotional engagement and investment, and that one must feel difficult emotions of discomfort and sadness to "empathize" and to gain insight. Zanadu acknowledges that this kind of learning can be disruptive. When she read, *The Book of Negroes*, with her teenage children, she recognized it was upsetting for them, and yet she argued, "I know it's upsetting, but it happened to real people. We need to acknowledge that they existed...it's okay for our kids to get upset, we need to."

In both of the group workshops, participants also emphasized that dealing with issues of race and difference should not be constantly negative in a defeating way, or too intense, but should seek to empower children. During the Vancouver workshop participant discussions about how to address these issues with their children, Miranda made the following statement:

I think it's more powerful to be using the medium, whether it be movies or books or what you have that aren't so heavy...positive normalizing such that they internalize. Like we were saying the books don't have to be about messages to teach, I think the best way to show that your kid is beautiful no matter how they look is showing pictures of beautiful kids that look all different as opposed to the book that says everyone can be beautiful.

Miranda makes an important distinction here between learning tools that actively demonstrate or "show" positive and agentive discursive and visual representations, and tools that normatively instruct or "say" that there should be positive and agentive representations. By demonstrating the validity of counter-discourses, as opposed to addressing them, Miranda suggests that children can internalize and normalize these discourses. This is ultimately a more powerful learning practice. Further to this, during both workshops, the participants discussed the significance of sharing counter-histories, narratives and images to foster a positive sense of self. In the workshop discussions, I

noted that the participants thematically referenced the following passage, written by parents, from the antiracist parenting text:

We are also careful not to dwell on the fact that our ethnic group is considered inferior, cuz we don't want them to become self-conscious of other people's biases that it limits their ability. We want to choose to focus less on racism and more on the accomplishments of African Americans that is written out of standard curriculum (Van Kerckhove, n.d., p.10-11).

In response to this, in the Saskatoon workshop discussions, Maya linked the importance of counter-histories to an educative parenting role her partner can play teaching their children about his Ibo history.

I like how they said don't just focus on the bad parts of their history, focus on all the accomplishments. So for my husband to tell them about their Ibo past and all the accomplishments they've made.

During the Vancouver workshop, Imogen also responded to this passage:

It doesn't take much to kind of you know internalize negative imaging, but it takes a lot more for positive, so you need to do a lot more of the positive enforcement than we do negative stuff...we want to be conscious of showing those [positive] images, but at the same time not playing too much into [it]. One of the things I don't like about some of the slavery books is that it makes it sound like that is every black child's life is all about overcoming slavery. You don't want to ignore the legacy at all, you don't want to minimize the legacy at all, but there are also black families that are completely middle-class; their kids are going to college, university, they've got good jobs; they're doctors. Yes they are kind of dealing with the legacies, but they live their lives like we do. They have simple stories of just going to school and figuring out the first day of school, that's also a concern for them—not that they wake up and go, "Oh I have to fight oppression" (laughing).

What Imogen elucidates here is that while we must educate ourselves and our children about constructions of difference, and histories and ongoing conditions of oppression in order to cultivate critical literacy skills, we must also understand that this alone does not necessarily disrupt the binary colonial self/other relationship, nor does it disrupt neocolonial dynamics. Instead, this can perpetuate the dehumanization of 'others,' by focusing on responses that render racism as something of the past and offer as appropriate responses, "feeling sorry for" or "needing to help" 'Others.' Counter-

discursive practices, such as counter-storytelling, are central to antiracism pedagogies, and must be actively sought out and engaged as part of literacy practices (Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004). Such practices can disrupt single stories, reproduced through hegemonic discourses (e.g., colonial ideologies of 'Africa' and 'Africans' as discussed above), and can express other epistemologies, such as Indigenous and African ways of knowing. During the Saskatoon workshop Mimi identified the significant value of storytelling in this way when she commented: "...that will tie into Aboriginal culture, because Elder storytelling, and African culture is the same, storytelling is huge, so you're honouring that."

To be effective, these practices must be performed within a relational context. In conjunction with literary engagement, four women identified the importance of having positive role models in their children's lives to directly empower them. For example, in the Vancouver workshop Imogen stated,

I think that's important cuz they need to be around positive people. I just think in our friend group we've got lots of guys doing good things, so there's good dynamics, lots of role modelling...and seeing other minority groups too...so if you want them to believe that yes black people are valuable you need to show them that, so that when they come to a negative place, they can believe it, that they have something to believe.

2. Language deconstruction

Because language frames everything. Language creates everything.
Mimi

For racial ideologies to grow and reproduce, they rely on language as their medium, which imagines and disseminates them. That being said, language itself is more than a medium, it can be a form of oppression or a source of agency (Bailey, 2000). For the participants, language appeared to be a medium through which they can deconstruct ideas/discourses themselves, in their social relationships, and most significantly in their educative practices with their children. Language use and deconstruction were especially thematic discussions in the Saskatoon workshop, and represented a distinct form of agency and resistance in daily life. Language seemed to be a site in which these women can problematize and disrupt "everyday middle-class discourse" (Hill, 2009), dominant in popular media and everyday speech that enables the

reproduction of white racism without “being racist.” For instance, during the Saskatoon workshop there was a discussion regarding the use and appropriation of the “N word,” a topic on which two of the participants have conducted self-directed research. As part of their racial socialization, Mimi told the group how she prepares her children to face such oppressive language use.

Mimi: I told the kids there’s a possibility that someone is going to use that word, either in a bad way against you, around you, whatever, and it’s going to be up to you to choose how you react. You could do any number of things. If someone in school calls you or says something horrible, like “you’re just a dirty n word,” then you can look at them and say that’s absolutely horrible language, you can’t say that to me and then walk away and go report that, because that is hateful, hurtful, abusive language, and you aren’t allowed to say that. If you hear it way over there, not directed at you as an abusive slur, you can choose to ignore it, or you can choose to walk up to them and say, “I heard you choose to use that word, it’s not really a good word to use,” and risk the chance you might get into a verbal issue with them. If they’re jerks, you might get into it with them, so it’s up to you to decide what you’re doing to do with that.

In such interactions with her children, Mimi is pre-emptively, as opposed to reactively, attempting to address racism that her children will face. Unlike several other participants who stated they had not necessarily thought about racism being an issue for their children, or that they were not sure how they would react if such a situation arose, Mimi recognizes that these racialized dynamics will likely occur. By having discussions like this one, she is building their racial literacy skills by cultivating their racial consciousness, which will assist them to identify manifestations of racial ideologies in the everyday discourse of their peers and others. She also provides them with multiple responsive behaviours, so that when (not if) such situations present themselves, her children will already have worked through how to react. She specifically creates two hypothetical scenarios for them: one in which they are the direct recipient and one in which they are a bystander. Part of thinking through and discussing these potential circumstances can allow them both, as parent and child, to develop racial literacy *together*. This gives her children a sense of agency in conditions where racialized language is used to disempower them, and hopefully creates a space for her children to come speak to her in the future when similar situations occur. Through these educative practices, Mimi is constructing her self-identification as an anti-oppressive woman and parent, something

she has articulated is important to her, and she is modelling this for her children and other people in her life.

In the Saskatoon workshop dialogues, Zanadu immediately made sure to state that *unlearning* language use needs to take place premised on the fact that the majority of individuals are “completely ignorant,” and not intentional in their discursive reproduction of racialized discourses. This is something Zanadu makes clear to her children as well, and she also encourages them to play an educative role in their interactions with others. She shared with other participants how she does this with her children.

Zanadu: I really encourage them to educate the person on the word, where it came from; so to me, I'm less angry at the person saying it, cuz nine times out of ten, it's complete ignorance of what the word means and where it came from.

Here, Zanadu is cultivating her children's racial literacy by mentoring them to take a proactive educative role when racist or discriminatory language is articulated. Zanadu also reminds us that the discursive manifestations of racial discourses are not about individual actors, but the historically and socially constituted ideologies they reproduce (Martinot, 2002; Wetherell & Potter, 1992). Zanadu further notes that she wishes there was institutional educational support to deconstruct language use; she further stated, “I always say there should be one class in school for just dissecting words and the root of words and understanding where they come from, so you'd be more conscious when you speak them.”

3. Socio-spatial navigation

Existing studies illuminate the importance of geographic and social location on how white women of European descent in transracial families navigate discourses of race and difference (see chapter two). Navigating socially constructed space is something Imogen is very cognizant of, and as part of a transracial/cultural family, she feels that space is bounded and restricted for her. She was clearly something that Imogen was aware of as a central dynamic in her life, evident in our discussion during her interview.

Imogen: Certainly selecting communities because we don't really want to go to rural B.C. because we don't really want to-and I actually know from my work that actually most immigrants rate rural communities higher as being welcoming, which is actually an opposing-but I still feel that way. That really stuck out to me, like moving spaces and travelling-that sense of fear that something bad might happen, where I never had that before being in this relationship.

.so that's something it's limiting, which I recognize like I'm limited in my relationship that there are limitations; whereas, if I was not in this relationship, [but] with a white man, that would not be. It wouldn't be something I would fear.

WA: It sounds like it [fear] informs your movements?

Imogen: Yeah, and I would say it limits them.

There are moments in which seemingly invisible privileges are made visible. As Imogen articulates above, this visibility takes place in part through her relationship with the socio-spatial world. She now carries a different kind of fear-a fear that negatively racialized peoples have no choice but to feel. Carrying this fear around, her privilege to navigate spaces-to live and to travel where she desires-is "limited," and she feels restricted by the relationship in that way, which she makes clear by her comparisons to being with a white man. The point she makes evident is that these conditions are relational, and ultimately it is her socially constructed individual identity within a white supremacist society that gives her the *choice* to be "limited" or not. Like other participants, Imogen delineates between rural and urban space, the former constructed as uncertain for her and her transracial/cultural family. Although she is aware of the evidence to suggest that immigrants are generally more satisfied with certain aspects of small-town life, she is weary to ever reside in such places. In group discussions during both workshops, the participants also spoke positively of urban spaces, which they associated with diverse populations and access to more cultural (and other) resources. Specifically, they addressed the need for their children to be with other non-white children in their schools and neighbourhoods.

Overall, I found that for the participants in this study, emphasis was much less on physical, geographic space, as it was on conceptual space; the conceptual and cultural space they actively and consciously seek by cultivating diverse social networks. For

participants including Miranda, Azania, Mimi, Imogen, Maya and Julia, this included looking for other transracial/cultural families to have a sense of connection, searching out professionals of colour, and selecting diverse learning environments for their children. During a discussion in the Vancouver workshop regarding navigating space and place differently after becoming part of a transracial/cultural family, all five of the participants stated that they considered the demographic makeup of the students in their children's learning environments, (particularly as they did not want their child to be the only non-white child in the class), and the instructors' receptivity and curricular content on diversity and issues of difference. For instance, Imogen chose a daycare in East Vancouver for her son that has a diversity of students, and where the curriculum incorporates Aboriginal educational content, while Azania also chose to take her children to her workplace at AIDS Vancouver Community Outreach, as an informal learning opportunity for them. In the Vancouver workshop, Azania and Imogen discuss this in the following exchange:

Azania: I wanted my kids to be where there was a lot of diversity. I wanted them to be surrounded by a bunch of different kids with different backgrounds and different languages.

Imogen: Me too. I think that's a big value in our home and one of the things we think a lot about is exposure and access to First Nations, because I feel like you want to talk about racism that's like the number one hundred percent racism that's everywhere about First Nations. So my son is currently at a daycare...there's actually a fair amount of First Nations children in the daycare...there are other values and other lessons I feel that are going to come from being in a diverse environment, which are important to us.

Like four other women in the study, Imogen names anti-Aboriginal racism as the most pervasive racism in Canada. Imogen and her partner have made a conscious decision to send their son to a program where he will learn with many First Nations children about Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning.

It is necessary once again to name the social locations of these women. We see that all of the women's choices and practices are mediated by their gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, ability, and of course, by their whiteness. The choices they make for their children are dependent on the forms of capital and resources

they have access to. Decisions on where to live and what community to be a part of are significantly mediated and bounded by the women's relative social locations and marital status. It is imperative to consider in particular how class structures the reproduction of racial and gender discourses in the lives of these women and their families. "Seeking out" diversity is a representation of class and race-based privilege in itself. This is reflected in a tense exchange that took place between Imogen and Miranda during the Vancouver workshop. Imogen sends her son to a subsidized day care, where the majority of spots are reserved for "families in need." Based on the historical and present-day neocolonial conditions I address throughout this study, the majority of these families in Imogen's East Vancouver day care are Aboriginal. Below is Miranda's response to Imogen's decision.

Miranda: Can I interject here? That is huge white privilege purposely putting your kid with the disadvantaged kids. Every single working-class or disadvantaged family is like, 'I want my kid-if I could I would send my kid to WestPoint Grey, but I can't right? And we're the opposite, like we want you to be exposed to First Nations people that are struggling.

It is fascinating that Miranda takes this opportunity during the discussion about creating more diverse communities to name the very privilege evoked in having such choices to exercise. She identifies that it is their race and class-based positions in the society that allow them to determine if and how they will engage with 'diversity'; this speaks to the structural dynamics of multiculturalism "in practice," wherein the majority white Euro-Canadian population defines the terms and boundaries of 'intercultural engagement' that ensure their economic, political, and social power remain intact. It does not appear to be Imogen's intention to exercise these forms of privilege in her decision to send her son to the selected day care; in fact, she frames her intention as quite the opposite. She understands that she is utilizing her agency to create new learning and social engagement opportunities for her son. This relates to the anti-Aboriginal racism she stated is pervasive in this country and her interest in resisting it. Yet, as Miranda posited, it is necessary in this kind of discussion to name those structural privileges, and how they inform the relative choices and decisions of the women and of others. At the same time, the women's attempts to create more diverse communities is also an important and necessary practice in a society where racial and class-based forms of segregation are entrenched and normalized within the colonial mapping of the state (Goldberg, 1993,

Razack, 1999, 2002, Thobani, 2007). As such, one must make conscious decisions about moving outside of these boundaries to create communities. This is a significant form of agency for the women, and can be imagined as a form of resistance if the kinds of relationships and communities they are trying to create do not reproduce or reflect inequitable power relations. That being said, once again I observed that nine participants presumed more diversity in population is correlated to less racism and discrimination. All of the participants, with the exception of Simone who is informed by her own experiences of racialization in diverse social environments, articulated the belief that if their children were surrounded by “diversity,” they were less likely to experience forms of racism and racialization. This logic, central to the multiculturalism paradigm, presumes that exposure to ‘difference’ provides the remedy to intolerance (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) (see chapters 3 and 8).

4. Negotiation of racialized discourses

As I noted in previous chapters, existing literature on white women in multiracial families has identified “overt” forms of racialized discursive, social, and material discrimination against women and their families by immediate family members, friends, and others in their lives (see chapter 2). In this study, all of the participants recorded their experiences of racism and racialization as more “insidious” or “covert” in their everyday social worlds. Learning to see subtle gestures: looks, stares, avoiding, tone and inferences, white women may never have had to decipher before, is a key part of developing racial consciousness (Luke, 1994; Wilson, 2009; Twine, 2010). One of the most thematic manifestations of racialized discourses that seven participants reported was the exotification of “mixed-race” children. The articulations people regularly made about their children’s physical appearance were something several women in particular, Maya, Mimi and Zanadu, directly problematized and felt strongly adverse to. In the Saskatoon workshop, Mimi expressed her frustration with the fetishization of black-white mixed-race children.

Mimi: I hate when people call my babies “chocolate babies.” It’s almost like they’re suggesting that I somehow, deliberately, genetically did this. “Oh mixed kids are so beautiful!” So what are you saying? Your white kid isn’t as beautiful as my mixed child?

It is in the exotification of 'mixed-race' children that we can explore the contradictory nature of racialized discourses of the body: the simultaneous fetishism and rejection of the body of colour. First, the use of the term "chocolate babies" objectifies and others her children. Here, and at other moments in the workshop, Mimi refers to a popular insinuation, central to anti-mixing discourse that white women seek out black men in order to have mixed children (Frankenberg, 1993). She then identifies the comparison and juxtaposition that is also invoked between "mixed kids" and "white kids," alluding to the juxtaposition of the body of the self and the body of the exotic/fetishized other. The contradictory nature of these discourses is exemplified by the 'benevolent' concern over the identity and healthy development of mixed-race children and how they may struggle to 'fit in' (see chapter two); yet, at the same time, these children are given what Zanadu sees as "too much attention" for their "exotic" beauty. For Zanadu, this form of racialized objectification is the most problematic manifestation of racialized discourses she experiences on a regular basis. Interestingly, she names the situated and specific iterations of this discourse in the Saskatoon workshop discussions.

Zanadu: I almost feel it's too far, like here [Saskatoon] if they were First Nations kids that would be more difficult, but because they're the token black kids here-they're almost too cute, too beautiful, like they always get that. If anything sometimes there's too much privilege with being a mixed-race kid.

It is curious that Zanada frames this exotification as "too much privilege" her children have. Is this a privilege for them? Here, Zanadu directly identifies how this exotification/fetishization applies to racialized bodies in different ways, which relates to historical and situated racialized femininities and masculinities. In this case, her children are of black-white mixed race, and for this they receive too much "positive" focus on their physical appearance. She problematizes this in relation to First Nations children, whereby, at least according to her, the manifestations of racial discrimination would be "more difficult" as First Nations racialized masculinities and femininities are not as fetishized/exotified within the colonial imagery in the current Canadian context. What we see is that this behaviour of exotification/fetishization reflects colonial discourses of the racialized body, and that while these ideologies change over time, the body is the key site of difference, and the site by which and upon which meaning and value are measured (Mohanram, 1999). In the workshop, Zanadu provides an example of the

strategy she employs in response to this gaze, a racial literacy practice she notes must be conscious and “constant.”

Zanadu: Like people are overly complimentary about their looks and stuff like that, and I just follow with, “she really loves art”—like I find a way that just made it not just about her looks. And then people catch on. I get it, I always think that about mixed race kids too, but when you’re always focusing on someone’s looks or whatever, it’s not good.

Although Mimi contends that her children will be constructed as black in the social world, she recognizes that they will develop their own racial self-identification as well. During the Saskatoon workshop, she told the other participants about her children’s racial and cultural identities.

Mimi: I try to teach the kids as much as I can about diversity and acceptance, and what to do if they are treated a certain way based on their skin colour... And my son is perfectly comfortable with his brownness, and he’s perfectly comfortable and I think proud of the fact he was born in Kenya. But my daughter hasn’t been there, she wasn’t born there, I don’t think she’s feeling as much of a deep connection, so I try my best with her....I will call them black on occasion for whatever reason; like you know what you’re a black girl, we can look up some hair stuff—[my daughter will say] “no I’m not black, I’m brown.” So I realize that everybody has a certain way they want to be classed or identified, and you have to respect that and appreciate it.

In Mimi’s interpretation of her children’s racial self-identification, nation, birthplace, and belonging appear to be the key variables in imagining their blackness or brownness. The racial identification of Mimi’s children is linked to their relationship to Kenya, Kenyan culture, and their location within situated racial ideologies in the Canadian context. Mimi noted that her son, who was born in Kenya and feels a stronger connection to that part of his identity, is “perfectly comfortable in his brownness,” while her daughter, who feels less of a connection, does not want to be classified as black. Mimi’s daughter seems to have a negative association to blackness, which Mimi attributes to her lack of affiliation and disassociation from Kenya; the place that represents her brother’s and her family’s blackness. Unlike her mother, father, and brother, she has no experiential knowledge to draw on to create a black Kenyan identity. In turn, Mimi’s daughter claims brownness, which situates her in Canada, and perhaps gives her a sense of her own belonging. Her daughter’s claim to brownness and not blackness can also be mediated by other factors,

such as gender (Mimi references “hair stuff”) and age, and the fact that racial identifications will likely change over time, and with new experiences. As evidenced in literature on multiraciality, racial self-identification is not fixed, and one’s identity changes over the course of their lifetime (see chapter 2). For instance, Mimi stated that she very much wants to travel back to Kenya with her children; if she does, her daughter’s relationship to Kenya, and in turn her relationship to blackness, could possibly change.

Another participant Maya talked about her concern regarding the self-identification of her child during the Saskatoon workshop:

I’m also wondering about what she will identify as. I don’t want her to have to be like, “I’m African,” or “I’m Canadian,” or whatever it is, or “I’m white,” or “I’m black”...like some of my friends that were mixed, and growing up, they were trying to identify with one more than the other, instead of just being themselves...I don’t know how to deal with people and they’re looking at us, like say I have me and my son [who is white from her previous monoracial marriage] and little baby out, instead of just saying like, “oh cute little baby,” if they’re going to be like, “so did you adopt?” or something?

Maya identified another common manifestation of racialized discourses regarding the belonging relationship between mother and child. At this point in the study, Maya had not yet given birth to her baby, and she was thinking through the new ways she will be navigating the social world. In the workshop when I asked Maya how she would address a situation in which she was asked, “so did you adopt?” like other participants, she reiterated the educative role that she would play.

I think, ok this is someone showing me-I don’t like using the word-their ignorance, so I’m going to help them, educate them....so I think that would be good to figure out, something to say, “you know what this is my daughter, I birthed her, I carried her”...and then just say I don’t know what you would say to someone, but instead of, “ok, don’t say those questions or something, just comment on the baby, you don’t need to know where they came from.” I don’t want to be rude about it, I want to help people learn how to be, because I know a lot of people are just curious and they don’t know how to say it.

The group workshop was particularly informative for Maya, who as mentioned was pregnant at the time, and who learned a lot from the other women in the group. Her interactions with the other women allowed her to reflect on how she might respond to

different situations, and what kind of racial literacy practices she wanted to cultivate. Above, Maya significantly states that instead of shutting down a conversation and policing someone's inquiry, "don't say those questions," she wants to firstly assert her belonging relationship with her daughter, and secondly, provide an opportunity for dialogue to take place by having a more open response, in order to "help people learn how to be."

5. Cultural and linguistic education

I noted that all ten participants deemed the transmission of their partners' language, cultural values and traditions as important, and seven women assumed an educative role in bringing these practices into their families' everyday lives as part of their own and their children's positive identity development. For example, during our interview J noted that her family incorporates aspects of Ghanaian culture and customs into their daily lives, and in particular through their approach to parenting, which for her centres on the principles of education and respect for others.

J: There are certain aspects we have just incorporated into our everyday life, like how we choose to raise our kids...like making education first and foremost, and teaching them about respect, and respect for culture and respect for other people's religion.

When I met J she was managing the first-ever Ghanaian cultural exhibit at the city's annual Folk Festival. Through this active involvement in the Ghanaian diasporic community, J is performing and representing this collective cultural and national identity to the broader community; and at the same time, cultivating her own sense of identification and affiliation with Ghanaian culture. She is also instilling cultural values and customs in her children and situating them within this community. J proudly stated that her children love Ghanaian culture and strongly identify as Ghanaian, which she attributes to a conscious celebration of Ghanaian cultural customs her family incorporates into everyday life, through simple language use (e.g., learning greetings) and adherence to cultural customs and social protocols (e.g., respect for your parents and Elders, and customary greetings). It appears that for J, and for other participants as well, there is a valued commitment to culture and language transmission to foster a sense of identity and belonging, and to form a solid foundation in the social world, for

both themselves and for their children. J also noted a common phenomenon that she has seen, in which many Africans immigrate to Canada and disassociate from traditional cultures and practices. This results in their children having no cultural affiliation, which she sees as highly problematic. In her interview she stated:

J: Cuz I know some Africans that have come here have completely abandoned their culture, specifically they have married outside to a Canadian or whatever; they have abandoned their culture for various reasons...and then their kids grow up knowing only Canadian culture, whatever that is. We've seen that happen and I just think how sad. I just think those kids are missing out on so much heritage and rich culture...

Here J attributes one of the reasons Africans she has known have “completely abandoned” their culture is because they have married a Canadian and assimilated into Canadian culture (though again here she questions what that “is”). In this discussion, J is addressing the importance of culture and language transmission, but like other conversations with participants about this topic, the broader dialogue is about diasporic space, and the complex negotiations and processes of place and identity-making, performance, belonging, and assimilation that take place within and between people.

It appeared that five women, Azania, J, Imogen, Mimi and Zanadu, played the most active role in the language and cultural education of their children within their families. Six participants, Azania, Imogen, Mimi, Maya, Miranda and Zanadu identified language and culture transmission as a source of stress, especially when they felt that their partners were not assuming an active role. Azania addressed the stress she feels during our interview.

Azania: I always love my husband to speak Xhosa, but he never does. That's a huge stress for him; I was so mad like, “Why don't you speak Xhosa to them, they're never going to learn!” and he's like, “They will learn,” which is so frustrating because I know that's not true, unless we're like embedded in it. There's not a lot of Xhosa speaking around, and I don't know enough or like I'll speak Xhosa and they'll understand mine as opposed to him, and they say broken stuff-so that's stressful, because I want them to have that language because I think you can't fully understand a culture without having the language.

Like Azania, five other participants expressed frustration that their partners were not teaching their children their language. Since seven out of ten participants reside in

places with very limited speakers of their partner's language (in this case Xhosa), the pressure is on the father to facilitate language learning. Similar to Azania's partner's response that "they will learn," other women also commented that their partners' assumed their children would learn, but did not plan or facilitate how that would take place. In Azania's statement, she also emphasizes the fundamental relationship between language and culture, inferring how necessary it is for her children's holistic identity development.

After her divorce from her children's father, Mimi continues to identify with Kenyan culture and assumes an active role in cultural transmission for her children. This was something she addressed in her interview.

Mimi: I consider Kenyan culture to be really important to me, and that's because my kids are half Kenyan and I want to keep that going for them, so I embraced it....I took on that responsibility because my ex-husband doesn't. He doesn't speak to the kids in Swahili, they've never learned Swahili. They've expressed an interest to me in learning Swahili, and I feel like I'm going to have to do this, because he's not going to. He makes food, but he doesn't call it Kenyan food, cuz to him that's just cooking, right? But I actually tell them about the different foods I tried there, and what's in the foods and how we grew these certain beans, so we could make these certain meals. I celebrate Jamhuri day with the kids, I had my son do his own research Jamhuri day and Kenyan independence and he wrote a little piece for his class, and he took mandazi for the class and taught them about Jamhuri day. Those are the kinds of things, that's holding on to the culture.

Mimi can draw on her experiential knowledge from living in Kenya to build a cultural and linguistic foundation for her children, and this is a responsibility she is committed to. At the same time, it is challenging for her that her ex-husband does not play an active role, and like other women, she worries about her children's racial and cultural identification in the future. As noted in chapter two, when white women become part of transracial/cultural families, they become responsible for the racial, and often cultural and linguistic, socialization of their children. While the participants had thought about these issues to varying degrees, it was clear that the majority of the women were concerned about having the necessary skills and tools to perform this role, including how to teach their partner's cultural practices and language (Frankenberg, 1993; O'Donoghue, 2004; Twine, 2010).

The tough stuff: Where difference 'gets real':

Seven participants articulated the necessity of intimate engagement and understanding of their partner's cultural world for them to truly understand one another. As noted, the majority of women had travelled (seven) or lived for varying periods of time (five) in their partner's home community with their partner's family for this very purpose. This situated experiential learning was a key point of emphasis for the participants in the workshop discussions, and several in particular, Imogen, Mimi and Zanadu, strongly argued that it is essential for such learning to occur in a successful transracial/cultural relationship. In the Saskatoon workshop, Zanadu expressed her ideas about this.

Zanadu: I think in any interracial marriage that is absolutely a necessity to understand where the other person comes from. If you haven't been there and lived it, I don't think you fully can; even if it's for a shorter period of time. Even just to really get why they are the way they are...yeah, and so for like life insurance. He's like, 'this is so bad somebody's calling and asking my wife for insurance for when she's going to die.' For him, that's the worst thing ever. But I can understand because in their culture, they don't talk about tomorrow at all, so I can understand why he feels that way, instead of being mad he feels that way. It doesn't mean we don't need life insurance, or that we can't have more of a discussion about it, but it's just an understanding of just where the differences come from that I think is just crucial in an interracial relationship... By living in Kenya, I got that.

Zanadu provides an illuminating example of how her experiential knowledge of her partner's cultural world enabled her to understand how her husband must negotiate being in a diasporic context. This can in turn inform she and her partner's situated cultural practices and negotiations of issues, such as life insurance.

The importance of experiential learning and cultural understanding was echoed by Mimi in the Saskatoon workshop discussion.

Mimi: I don't think it's fair for me to do, but I am a little bit more judgmental of intercultural marriages in which the other person hasn't experienced the culture of the one who's not where they're living...I think to myself, 'you'd better get there, or you're not going to understand each other,'... like well you're not really a Kenyan wife until you've been a Kenyan wife, and you've killed some chickens and you now carried some firewood on your head, then you can say you're a Kenyan wife (laughing).

The thematic subject women named as being the most contentious and challenging to negotiate with their partners was financial familial relationships and support. More broadly, these struggles reflect tensions between individualistic liberalism and more collectivist approaches to financial familial responsibility. Economic remittances play a crucial role in numerous national economies and are part of maintaining connections between the diaspora and 'home' (Tetty & Pupilampu, 2009). This can be challenging for white Euro-Canadian women to understand; for the women in this study, difference "gets real" when such diasporic negotiations/commitments become part of their lives. This is when one is forced to move beyond the intrigue of difference and diversity defined as what one gets/consumes, to what one is now meant to provide. In transracial/cultural families residing in what I have framed as diasporic spaces, worldviews, ways of life and practices can be fundamentally challenged—financial issues and child-raising in particular, can reflect deep epistemological and ontological differences. These issues are essential to negotiating these relationships. These negotiations were something that all of the women brought forth in different ways during the interviews, including Azania.

Azania: One thing that we don't really experience here in Canadian culture is our parents raise us and they're always kind of our parents; we kind of go off onto our own, but I find in my husband's culture and what we've dealt with here, is that he is responsible as the oldest son to financially support his family, so we're having to spend money a lot and because we live in Canada, it has this presumption that we make so much more money, so we can send back more money, which can be pretty difficult cuz that's not always the case.... Because his beliefs are ancestry, so there's a lot of ceremony involved in that, and appeasing ancestors and stuff, so often times we'll have to send money over to purchase a cow, so it can be slaughtered in different ceremonies, so that's always interesting too. And when you're here and full on western, it's kind of hard to be financially strained and be like, 'well we have to spend 500 dollars home because they need to buy their cow to do this ceremony to appease the ancestors.' So it's interesting that way, I love that, I think it's so interesting, but it has more a realistic take when it becomes financial, it's not just like, 'oh that's cool.' That's actually like that's very real, and same with the traditional healers, it's like very different from my beliefs and my understanding of the world. It doesn't matter it can be different, but it's one of those other things that have to be negotiated when you're in a multicultural family.

For Azania, financial familial responsibility represents the issue where her transracial/cultural relationship moves from interest and curiosity, which does not require her to change or challenges her in fundamental ways, to “very real” negotiations about her values and priorities. Her partner’s responsibilities and cultural practices disrupt her “understanding of the world,” and this is what she has to negotiate within herself as “full on Western” and with her partner. When I asked Azania how she negotiates that, she responded:

It was my choice to marry someone who’s from this culture and so I don’t think that I can say, “no we can’t send money back for this,” because that doesn’t make any sense to me. You know what I mean? In that regard I think you have to have an open mind and if he’s like, “we have to send money back so we can do this,” then you just have to kind of make it work because that’s one of the differences... Because if we didn’t, if I didn’t do that, then the relationship really wouldn’t work, it would be like probably religion/beliefs would get in the way of having a successful relationship.

This is something that J explicitly addressed also as part of negotiations for Africans living in the diaspora, and as a central issue for transracial/cultural couples. During her interview she noted that she and her husband have definitely “felt the pressures.” When I asked J what kind of pressures she was referring to, she said:

Because the African culture is that you know when you retire your kids take care of you...and there are no social services to go to if you don’t have enough money, so your family is supposed to take care of you....it was like a daily occurrence, like the phone would ring and it would be a call from Africa...everybody needs some money for something and everybody in Canada is millionaires don’t you know...that was hard to adjust to actually....one of the questions his dad asked me, he said, “are you prepared? There are going to be certain expectations of you and your husband, you know you’re going to have to help.” And I’m like, “yeah I understood it.” I was more than happy to do that...but I didn’t really know what that meant to its full extent...the expectations were a lot higher than I initially thought and it was either going to make us or break us.

J went on to state that she and her husband eventually reached a sustainable agreement, wherein they would provide financial support when it was necessary, such as the cost of school fees and family sponsorship fees to come to Canada.

The everyday: Structure and agency

In the discussion above we see that historical and situated discourses of race and difference intersect with colonial constructions of 'Africa' and 'Africans' to shape, mediate, and in many ways dominate, the lives of white Euro-Canadian women and black African transracial/cultural families. In diasporic spaces of "inbetweenness," these intersecting discourses and ideologies constrain the movements, opportunities, and choices of these women and their families. Yet, we see that for many of these women, diasporic spaces can be places of agency and empowerment, especially for those who are proactively building communities, and engaging in educative practices with their children, others, and as part of their own learning. As such, we can imagine that white Euro-Canadian women in this study can contend with and challenge discourses of race and difference through direct and indirect forms of constrained agency, as the ability to act and the ability to resist are constrained by historical and situated structural conditions and one's subject position within them. The participants can choose to be reactive in their responses to daily manifestations of racial ideologies, and they can choose to be proactive as parents to children and mentors to others in their lives, by drawing on antiracism and anti-oppressive practices (though with varying degrees of consciousness) (Dei et al., 2004; Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; Essed, 1991). They maintain their racial privilege, which gives them greater agency to resist dominant ideologies; at the same time, as women they are restricted by patriarchal social institutions (Deliovsky, 2010). As men, their partners may have forms of male privilege, yet they have relatively more constrained agency as black African men with immigrant status in this country (Galabuzi, 2006; Mensah, 2014; Okafor, 2009; Tettey & Puplampu, 2005; Walcott, 1997).

While structures⁶² exist which constrain human agency, including societal institutions (most notably Citizenship and Immigration Canada in this case), such

⁶²I employ Deliovsky's (2010) definition of structure here as, "the ways in which human life is concretely organized through the socio-economic order, the state, social institutions (family, media, etc.), organizations and governments" (p.10).

structures are not beyond human creation and control.⁶³ Humans reproduce the structural conditions that enable institutions to be maintained, and the relationship between individuals and institutions are in constant and dynamic reproduction (Martinot, 2002). The manifestations of racial ideologies the participants thematically brought forth, such as racialized inferences and the exotification of their children, are powerful social actions that have real psychological and material implications on their lives. Such actions are granted acceptance and legitimacy at the individual social level and institutional level. People can demonstrate agency when they resist hegemonic ideologies through their everyday discursive, material, and spatial practices, including the practices discussed above. We must acknowledge, “structural constraints on human agency and, on the other hand, that within specific boundaries individuals can make their own choices. They chose how to act. They either uncritically accept a dominant representation of reality or seek alternative views” (Essed, p.46). This is premised on the recognition and understanding of “processes of domination,” central in this case to cultivating racial consciousness and literacy (Essed, 1991; Twine, 2010). For any systemic change, antiracism and social justice initiatives must address the interrelated, dependent relationship between the individual and the institution (Essed, 1991; Martinot, 2002) (see chapter 3).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examine diasporic spaces of inbetweenness, which I contend are defined by notions of belonging and unbelonging for white Euro-Canadian women and black African men within the Canadian context. I argue that by investigating the multiple transgressions that both partners make, we can consider these spaces and the transracial/cultural family itself to be micro socio-political sites, reflecting broader global and local demographic changes in what are increasingly transnational societies (Essed,

⁶³ This statement begs the question, do all people have agency to construct, maintain, and reproduce dominant societal institutions? Clearly this is central to who has the institutional power in a given society. Within the Canadian context, the asymmetrical power to create and control central societal institutions (e.g., the political, judicial, economic, and educational -systems) has been and remains disproportionately occupied by white middle-upper-class men of western European descent (Deliovsky, 2010; Twine, 2010).

2007; Twine, 2010). When we imagine the transracial/cultural family within these spaces, we can begin to consider how new/transforming ways of being, embodying and living difference are possible; this is particularly necessary to consider in the current period of advanced global capitalism and mass migration (Luke & Luke, 1998).

Employing the concept of 'racial literacy' (Twine, 2010), I contend that part of how the women can negotiate and resist ideologies of difference, and intersecting situated discourses and practices of immigration, multiculturalism, and nationalism is through their racial literacy practices. The community building and racial literacy practices women in the study perform within the diasporic spaces I have described above demonstrate the powerful role that women, as (bounded) agentive subjects, can play in shaping their immediate worlds and building communities across differences. An analysis of the kinds of important labour that women perform, such as the white Euro-Canadian women in this study, can allow us to more broadly explore white women's possible roles in antiracist and feminist efforts (Comeau, 2007; Frankenberg, 1993; Moon, 1999; Twine, 2010). I now turn to the final chapter of study findings, in which I examine the notions of mothering and activism and antiracist parenting, and what implications these forms of labour, and this research study process, can have on antiracism and anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices.

Chapter 8. Labour of the everyday: Motherhood, antiracist parenting, & implications for antiracism

Introduction

How can we imagine motherhood, activism and political labour? What is antiracist parenting? In the following chapter, I shall address my final key research question, “How can white Euro-Canadian women and their transracial/cultural families inform antiracism pedagogies?” To respond to this question, I have divided this chapter into two broad sections; in the first, I explore the notions of activism, motherhood and antiracist parenting. For the latter, I discuss how this study, with respect to the study process itself, and the data the study yielded, can inform antiracism and anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices.

Part 1: Activism, motherhood and antiracist parenting

What is activism anyway? Mothering as political labour

Geographers, Martin, Hanson, and Fontaine (2007) ask, “What counts as activism?” They posit that activism relates to one’s relationships in the various spaces they occupy, which include: home, local neighbourhood, city, country, virtual space, and so forth. Localized actions within these spaces are not generally considered to be formal activism due to their small geographic influence, and yet they can significantly impact people’s lives. They thus define activism as, “everyday actions by individuals that foster social networks or power dynamics...small acts [that] transform social relations in ways that have the potential to foster social change” (p.79). These “everyday actions” must be situated in place, and be examined within the context of everyday life. Martin et al., further write, “activism entails an individual making particular kinds of new connections between people that alter power relations within existing social networks”

(p.80). We can imagine then that activism at the localized level does relate to broader community building for change; for, “reworking social networks can reconfigure existing power relations and thereby transform everyday life, even where such actions do not challenge the overall political-economic structure” (p.81).

To ask “what *counts* as” and not “what *is*” activism is a very important distinction within the context of this study regarding labour performed by women within traditional mothering practices, in the informal learning environments of home and community. Within this discussion, (and more broadly within a discussion of community organizing, which especially applies when addressing negatively racialized women and communities), to ask what “counts” as activism is to question which kinds of individuals, practices, and communities have legitimacy, value, and visibility in their efforts to create social and political change. It enables us to question by whom and for whom does it “count,” and to consider more expanded definitions of activism, political engagement, and mothering. For instance, can we imagine the relationship and community building practices across differences in diasporic spaces that four women in particular actively participate in, as “everyday actions” against what hooks (1984) calls, “white supremacist, capitalist patriarchy” (p.118)? By pushing against racial, ethnic, religious, and class-based forms of segregation that structure and maintain this system, can these women be practising a form of activism by setting the stage for broader forms of social and political transformation? While these practices may not directly challenge larger oppressive structures per se, they can change interpersonal relationships and communities, which can make possible, “new connections between people that alter power relations within existing social networks” (Martin et al., p.80). These communities, such as Zanadu’s diasporic “Maasai *mara*” (the ‘area’ or ‘community’ that Zanadu and her family have established on her Saskatoon street), include individuals, especially children, who can be impacted and subsequently engage in more expanded forms of activism. If we conceptualize activism as localized “everyday actions” reflective of the interconnectedness of people and place, then while activism may take place locally, these interconnections mean that no action is confined to the local level; rather, social and political actions are moved into new spaces and carried with people across time.

Understanding how women's activism functions at the local level to create social change is essential, for "recognizing these often-invisible forms of activism in embeddedness and social relations provides an analytical framework for better understanding the social basis of political action, and to recognize otherwise-overlooked actions that create social change" (Martin, 2007, p.91). Throughout history, women, especially negatively racialized women, have been shut out of formal political spaces. Women have historically performed localized, community-based forms of important labour in homes, religious organizations, schools, and community organizations (see chapter 2). When we examine women's community-based labour, we speak to the question above regarding what counts as activism, and by extension *who* counts as activists. Part of considering what counts as activism is to reconceptualise what counts as legitimate and valuable labour. Within global capitalist and patriarchal conditions, women must negotiate multiple (and often conflicting) forms of labour.⁶⁴ So-called informal or unpaid work, such as mothering and caretaking, can be "sites of power," yet these forms of critical labour do not receive the legitimacy and value they hold. Within a capitalist, patriarchal system, the subject is principally an economic one—a body in the production of profit—yet, this is counter to forms of labour based on love and nurturing, in which value is not monetary. It is the paid labour of men, particularly middle-upper-class white men of European descent that is most highly valued. As research on pay equity and other determinants of gender equality continue to demonstrate, women's labour, bodies, and lives are valued less than their male counterparts (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2014; UN Women, 2015). What does this say about the perceived value of women and women's labour?

The notion that the practice of mothering *is* political has been taken up by numerous scholars (e.g., Collins, 2000; Comeau, 2007; Fuentes, 2013; hooks, 1990; Naples, 1992; Wing & Weselman, 1999). Naples puts forth the notion of *activist mothering* to provide, "a new conceptualization of the interacting nature of labor, politics and mothering" (p.446). The concept of *activist mothering* recognizes social activism in

⁶⁴It is also these structures that dictate the conditions at the local level these women must fight against, such as, school funding and resource allocation, neighbourhood infrastructure, social services, and child care (Fuentes, 2013; Naples, 1992).

the community, while addressing how constructions of race, ethnicity, gender, and class shape ideas about motherhood (e.g., which mothering practices are considered “good” or “bad”); this especially applies to women whose “motherwork” is marginalized, erased, or “pathologized,” such as African American and Latina women (Naples, 1992). This conceptualization allows us to analyse the multiple forms of labour that women perform as integrated and interconnected, in contrast to traditional academic inquiry, which compartmentalizes them. *Activist mothering* expands and liberates the traditional “essentialist interpretations of mothering practices,” (p.458) by acknowledging practices beyond the nurturing of biological children, to include other children and individuals more broadly. This urges us not to falsely separate unpaid community-based work, family-based labour, and formal paid labour, and to move motherhood out of the “private” sphere of the home into the social and political world. Once again, we can recall Zanadu’s description of the community she has created with local families, neighbours and others in Saskatoon; in particular, she recounted the mothering practices of the women on her street, and noted that all the women support each other, and participate in mothering practices. As she articulated during her interview, “we’re all the moms of all the kids basically.” This also relates to the thematic alienation that six participants expressed about Canadian society, and that four women connected to western constructions of motherhood as an individualistic and isolating experience. For Zanadu and Mimi in particular, this was reflected in their commitment to attachment parenting, which was highly influenced by their comparative and meaningful experiences as new mothers in the Kenyan context.

Like others, Wing and Weselman (1999), argue for “deconstruction and denaturalization of the [mothering] role” (p.259), and they contend that “race consciousness” is necessary to apply in this process (p.272). They address mothering as a form of “critical race feminist praxis,” integral to which is the act of nurturing that involves, “...providing individuals with the emotional and cultural self-esteem to survive in a racist, sexist, homophobic world” (p.278). As discussed in chapter 3, central to their mothering practices, black women in the “homeplace” and beyond teach their children how to survive in white supremacist society and to fight against these oppressive conditions. For hooks and others such as Collins (1991), the home can be a space of resistance and possibility for black women. It can be a place of empowerment and

refuge from the violence of a white supremacist society, and also a space of growth and freedom to imagine, and to create new social relations (hooks, 1990; 1992).

White women, mothering and antiracism

How can we relate this to white women, mothering, the home, and antiracism? As I have addressed in previous chapters, white European women have always occupied a strategic place within the western colonial imagination. In their role, as reproducers of the empire and a white supremacist order, they have been central to the historical and present-day forms of oppression that negatively racialized women and communities have been terrorized by, and forced to fight against. Najmi and Srikanth (2002) write that, “white women give racism a veneer of innocence and of family values; in doing so they invest themselves with a vulnerability that has easily been deployed to oppress men and women of color” (p.17). Thus, it must be immediately stated that home spaces, activism, and mothering for women *must* to be addressed with “racial consciousness,” but also critically analyzed within colonial relations, structures, and histories.

Familial histories of missionary work, particularly in the case of Zanadu and Julia, and the experiences of several women as white Euro-Canadian women in Kenya, South Africa, Angola, and other parts of Africa, remind us that connections to British imperialism are not part of a distant past. The riches that were accumulated from the slave labour of colonial populations created the “great cities” of “the West,” and established imperial lineages of wealth, power, and influence that are central to current global economic and political systems (British Broadcasting Association, 2007).⁶⁵ It can be uncomfortable to name how these national and global histories are connected to our own lives, just as it is difficult to acknowledge the present colonial conditions that exist in Canada. Although white European women may not want to address the discomforts of colonial pasts, this is not a choice that black women in Britain and elsewhere have, for

⁶⁵We continue to see the numerous ways that former colonial powers still maintain a degree of economic and political control over ‘postcolonial’ states. One of many examples is the French government’s continued taxation of former French colonies in Africa, which has been highlighted once again in the news media (e.g., World Bulletin, 2015).

“they are visibly and personally connected to the British Empire whether they wish to recognize this fact or not” (Ware, 1992, p.228). The same assertion can be applied to white Euro-Canadian women in the Canadian context, with respect to the role that white women of European descent have played in past and present day colonial crimes, and the fact that Aboriginal women remain directly connected to Canadian colonial policies and practices.⁶⁶

Within a global context, this relates to feminist debates about gender and race, including the notion that white western feminists need to confront their own whiteness (and colonial pasts), and give up notions of universalism premised on gender alone. It cannot be assumed that shared gender oppression will lead to automatic forms of collective understanding and solidarity when women are differently situated within patriarchal conditions directly mediated by race (Najmi & Srikanth, 1992)(see chapter 3). Ware (1992) contends that, “feminism actually needs to bring women together to take them apart” (p.253). She argues, “just as black women have had to identify and oppose racist definitions of their identity as women...white women can potentially open up new avenues of political strategy and alliance by refusing racist definitions of white femininity” (p.253).

For white women, including the women in this study, this responsibility involves interrogating their own historically constituted subjectivities as white women, and participating in antiracist and feminist efforts (Frankenberg, 1993; Najmi & Srikanth, 2002, Ware, 1992). Perhaps one of the possible “new avenues” for white women to confront their own whiteness, to reject “racist definitions of white femininity,” and to build meaningful coalitions with other women, is through the political labour of motherhood and parenting. White women should not be “paralyzed” by their privilege, but should use

⁶⁶ For instance, in 2015 a case was put forth against the Quebec police for the violent treatment and abuse of Aboriginal women in Northern Quebec (CBC News, 2015; Baum, 2015). This is not a new practice; systemic violence against Aboriginal women has been part of the long-standing colonial order and nation-building practices in this country (Anderson & Robertson, 2011; Carter, 1997; Razack, 2002; Rutherford & Pickles, 2005).

it to work against racial oppression and to work towards systemic change. This is a responsibility that Imogen identifies during the Vancouver workshop discussion about what it means to be a white mother and an antiracist parent in a transracial/cultural family.

Imogen: I feel like it's our responsibility; I mean if you're aware of something it is always your responsibility to be aware or knowledgeable or inform yourself, so I guess [as an] antiracist parent, there's one part that "never stop dismantling your own racist beliefs" [quoting antiracist parenting text]; of course just because you're married to a black man, and have children of colour doesn't mean you're not still seeped and embedded in that kind of system...and you might be more informed...but you know you just have to be aware or just never think you know everything. If you get challenged by your husband or your children in some way, like take a step back and think about it, continually have conversations; it's really valuable.

Here Imogen argues that awareness brings responsibility, yet awareness does not automatically lead one to be "antiracist." Being an antiracist parent is not about becoming a "non-racist" person, it is about remaining aware, gaining knowledge, and always being critically reflective of one's own "racist beliefs." Part of this responsibility as the white partner of European descent in a transracial/cultural family is to face oneself, particularly when manifestations of inequitable racial power dynamics occur within familial relationships. Comeau (2007), herself a white mother in a transracial/cultural family, argues that, "white mothers can and ought to claim mothering as a site where they can challenge and disrupt normative patterns of white racial superiority" (p.27). This can start in the critical early and ongoing learning space of the home. As noted, while it is necessary to engage in antiracist and antioppressive work in formal space of the classroom, we must also recognize and examine how such work can and does take place in informal learning spaces and within interpersonal relationships (Moon, 1999; Twine, 2010).

What is antiracist parenting?

When I asked Mimi what antiracist parenting means to her during the Saskatoon workshop discussion on antiracist parenting, she responded: "educating, educating, and practising what you preach." I found this succinct statement exemplified what many of

the women believed their role to be as white Euro-Canadian mothers and partners in transracial/cultural families. It seemed that the antiracist parenting text the participants read for the group workshop, was an excellent tool to mediate discussion on how to conceive of antiracist parenting in practical, everyday scenarios. Through the text and the dialogues it facilitated, the participants were able to imagine what being an antiracist parent could mean for them in their daily lives. Below, I discuss the key themes the women identified as the most important when facing issues of race and difference in their parenting practices. These include: 1. naming fear and developing critical thinking skills, 2. 'comfort in discomfort,' and 3. "checking yourself."

1. Be real: Naming fear and developing critical thinking skills

For Mimi, antiracist parenting is grounded in teaching her children that they should not be afraid of differences and engage in avoidance behaviours in response to fear. During the Saskatoon workshop dialogue on mothering and antiracist parenting, she stated:

I just keep telling my kids, body shape, body size, body everything, colour, hair, everyone is different. Why are you afraid to talk to a person who looks different? ...I always tell the kids not to be afraid of differences and to always ask if they have a question.

Mimi overtly identifies the underlying emotion of fear, which forms the basis for prejudice and discrimination of "Others" (Glass, 2009; Nienhuis, 2009). Rather than stating ways in which her children may not speak or behave, she is teaching them to name the emotion of fear, and to critically self-reflect on their own evolving understanding of difference in the social world. She does this in part by recognizing differences (not erasing them) in real and complex ways, and by encouraging her children to actively inquire (and thus not assume) about the world around them. Like Mimi, several other participants emphasized the value of asking questions, and of understanding where racism "comes from." Mimi also tries to identify intersecting constructions of difference and forms of oppression by employing examples that directly relate to her children's experiences. In the workshop dialogues, Mimi went on to state:

When I talk to the kids about it [homophobia], I relate it, I say, you know what there was a time when your dad and I wouldn't have been allowed

to get married, so it's the same thing that's happening for gay people today. And things have to change, and they will change, but it takes people understanding that 'people are people,' that black and white people are the same; they have different cultures, but they are both human and if they want to be in love then that's totally fine.

In this articulation, Mimi identifies the linkages between multiple forms of oppression (racial, gender-based and sexual), and she contextualizes their similarities within the past (mixed-race marriage) and within the present (same-sex marriage). She cultivates a sense of hope and responsibility in stating that, "things will change, but it takes people understanding"; she demonstrates this in her example of the eventual legalization of mixed-race marriage. By making the link between the children's parents' marriage and same-sex marriages, she instills a connection for the children, and a sense of responsibility for them to critically consider multiple and intersectional forms of oppression.

For Azania, naming and confronting fear involves exposing her children to multiple forms of difference, and also providing them with opportunities to critically inquire and learn. In the Vancouver workshop discussion on mothering and antiracist parenting, she stated:

I guess what I feel I need to do as a mom is expose my kids to as many different people and experiences as possible, and answer their questions. Like when they ask, "why does that lady have a veil over her head?" or different questions that are related to race, you can kind of sneak around because they [questions related to race] feel uncomfortable to talk about. Actually, I think bringing them up and talking about them, and even involving other people [is good]. This is hypothetical, like say we are on a bus and this lady is there, talk to her. I feel like these are probably the ways that I have to give my kids the experience, because we do have a kind of white colonial past, I don't want them to think white people are bad-it's in their blood too-but I want them to know they should think critically, and ask questions and never take things for face value. I guess that's how I would approach race.

Azania weaves together numerous key insights in her articulation above. Firstly, she names her responsibility as a mother to provide opportunities for her children to witness and inquire about differences in the social world. She also states that it is her role to answer her children's questions, and she names the fear that exists on the part of the

parent as well, when she acknowledges that evading such questions can easily take place, since issues of difference are “uncomfortable to talk about.” Azania provides a specific and common everyday example to relate how she can implement this antiracist parenting practice, and she addresses a relational approach to learning, with other people providing experiential knowledge for her children, not just her. It is quite interesting how Azania links a “white colonial past” to her children’s identity, and how she implicates this in her responsibility to not only teach her children about differences, but to complicate the individualizing pathological explanations of racism and discrimination. She does this by locating oppression within a historical and social context, and ultimately within the children themselves-“it’s in their blood too.”

This is similar to Zanadu’s commitment to challenge the “prejudice problematic” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992), or the notion that prejudice is isolated to the intentional and sovereign individual actor, in her critical literacy practices with her children (see chapter 7 and below). Zanadu wants her children to understand that everyone is implicated in racial ideologies. During the Saskatoon workshop, she shared her perspectives on teaching about “differences” to her children:

Zanadu: I also really want them to understand where the racism comes from, and like put themselves in the shoes of the person who is speaking in a racist way for them to understand why they would possibly think that way; because I think it’s easier to identify with the victim of the racism...yet the other person has their own story...that’s equally important because our kids and we have our own prejudices-really we’re not different, it’s just in different ways.

Like Mimi and Azania, Zanadu wants her children to engage in critical reflection and inquiry. She also problematizes and complicates the notion that racism and discrimination are individualized acts of prejudice by people, who are fundamentally different from themselves; rather, she states that, “our kids and we have our own prejudices-really we’re not different.” Most significantly, Zanadu turns the gaze on the “perpetrator” in order to analyze *why* they are behaving in the manner they are. In this way, Zanadu challenges the fixed binary of perpetrator/victim to suggest that we all exist within a continuum; we all hold “our own prejudices.” This is a marked distinction from the predominant tendency to adhere to this binary, by focusing on ‘the victim’ and maintaining distance from ‘the perpetrator’ (Herman, 2001; Tucker, 2005).

In the Saskatoon workshop discussion with Zanadu and others regarding the antiracist parenting text, Maya realized how antiracist parenting connected to her localized environment, the daily anti-Aboriginal racism she is surrounded by, and her responsibility as a mother and parent. During the conversation she stated:

...the Native population and there's huge racism there... and just the fact that you know when we're driving down 22nd and there is a visible Native family, not say negative things, or try to do everything you do, make sure what you're saying-I think cuz a lot of people easily can be like "20th" or whatever, and say all these things without knowing why the people are living like that.

Maya refers to the dominant naturalization of racialized and gentrified space in Saskatoon, and the specific bodies that are considered to belong to such spaces (while *unbelonging* to others) (Goldberg, 1993; O'Connell, 2010; Razack, 2002). It appears that Maya has also normalized anti-Aboriginal racism as part of the everyday discourse she hears around her. Yet, here she troubles this, and she identifies her responsibility as a mother and parent to not participate in the reproduction of anti-Aboriginal racism, and to critically consider and name the underlying conditions that exist.

2. Comfort in discomfort: Sex talk is like race talk

As Azania articulated above, discussing issues of race and difference can be uncomfortable and challenging, exposing the limits of knowing for the women in this study as white women of European descent raising mixed-race children, who may identify, and/or be identified, as black in the social world (Deliovsky, 2010; O'Donoghue, 2004; Twine, 2010) (see chapter 2). The workshop format and antiracist parenting text once again provided an opportunity for the women to reflect and discuss their limits of knowing, and their discomfort talking about race and racism with their children (and also others in their lives). In the antiracist parenting text, conversations about racism were framed as similar to conversations about sex: they are uncomfortable, and necessary to have on an ongoing basis; if you do not talk to your children about it, they are going to learn about it from somewhere else. The prevalent notion in the discussion was to find some kind of comfort *in* discomfort as a parent, and as a white parent in particular. One passage from the text that sparked discussion in both participant workshops is the following:

I think the best way to teach about racism is to approach it in a similar manner to how one might begin talking to one's child about other things that may (or may not) make a parent feel a little uncomfortable to discuss, like sex. Both topics are big issues...but simply a part of life. They are topics that will come up in a child's life, whether we want them to or not. Like the birds and the bees, I think there are some things that kids should learn from their parents before they get misinformation from somewhere else. (Van Kerckhove, n.d., p. 10)

Like sex, this parent frames issues about race as "simply a part of life"; in this way these discussions are not optional, they are mandatory. Similar to Azania, the parent in this passage identifies a parent's discomfort-not a child's discomfort-in having such conversations. As increasingly evidenced by research in early childhood development, children's awareness and reproduction of racial ideologies begins much earlier than previously thought (MacNaughton & Davis, 2009). Claims to childhood innocence or discomfort can lead to sheltering children from critical forms of dialogue that need to take place as part of early racial socialization in age-appropriate ways. Parental concerns about discussing issues of racism and oppression with their children can thus, in part, reflect their own discomfort and in effect serve to protect themselves from such conversations. This can be counter-productive to antiracism efforts, and act to reinforce silencing and erasure practices of white supremacy (Mac Naughton & Davis, 2009; Matlock & DiAngelo, 2015).

For women, such as Zanadu, Imogen and Mimi, issues of difference are regularly discussed in their homes with their young children. For instance, Imogen, who has a Master's degree in antiracism education and works in multicultural affairs and immigration in the provincial government, feels very comfortable addressing issues of difference with her pre-school aged son. She contends that he started to notice and inquire about differences from a very young age. In the Vancouver workshop discussion, Imogen commented:

The conversation of race is something I have on a daily basis at my work, so talking about it with my son, it's not something I feel really uncomfortable talking about; like there's lots I have to learn, I just feel like that it's a conversation I am kind of always having. And my husband and I are always having it too, and work too, so we're maybe well versed and that's really important.

The high frequency and comfort of such dialogues with children is the same for Mimi, who is also passionate about social issues and now working as a social worker. In the Saskatoon workshop discussion regarding antiracist parenting, she noted: "I think I probably bore the kids with how much I talk about stuff like this....they're like, 'mommmm' (laughing)." In these passages it is clear that issues of race are part of Imogen and Mimi's everyday discourse in their professional and private lives. Through their work, relationships, and other critical experiences, they have cultivated a literacy they continue to practice; like any other form of literacy, it is through practice and conscious effort that their level of 'comfort in discomfort' has grown. We see that Imogen importantly recognizes that she always has more learning to do, which speaks to the necessity of ongoing critical reflection and learning in antiracism and anti-oppressive pedagogies (Dei, et al, 2004; Dei & Kempf, 2006; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

In response to Imogen's assertion that she is very comfortable having such conversations, during the Vancouver workshop I asked what she and others thought about people who were very uncomfortable talking about these issues.

WA: It sounds like you feel comfortable talking about that. A lot of us don't, and maybe some people feel better broaching sex than race? What about when people feel really uncomfortable talking about it?

Miranda: I guess I just feel uncomfortable talking about any sort of-I have no problem having conversations about people's different colour of skin; and they come from different places, some people are born here and some people are not. Daddy and mommy are different colours, that's why you have this beautiful colour...I've just had 'there are differences in the world' conversations...I would be heartbroken and I don't know how to equip him to deal with that. It's the same thing with racism or anything else. Having those conversations, I am obviously going to need to as he encounters more kids.

Miranda shares her discomfort moving beyond multicultural framings of difference. While she acknowledges these conversations will be inevitable as her son interacts with more children when he enters the formal school system, she is uncertain how to provide her son with the racial socialization he requires, because she has never cultivated these skills. As noted, this was a very common sentiment amongst the women in this study, including women who felt they had some skills and yet still questioned their ability, as

well as women (especially Liana and Miranda), who had not necessarily considered how issues of race and difference might manifest in their children's lives. Remaining within the relative safety of multicultural celebrations of difference is easy to do considering how many children's books and resources are written within this paradigm, as well as the dominant engagement with multicultural policies and practices in major Canadian institutions; most important of which being the formal education system. Unfortunately, these celebrations of "surface culture" do not enable us to cultivate the skills we require or empower us to address real issues of inequity (Fleras, 2014; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Thobani, 2007). Miranda and many others are left to navigate the often insidious manifestations of racism and discrimination their children will face in everyday life, without experiential knowledge, skills, resources and support. Once again the participant workshops in this research study created a relational space where the women shared their ideas. For instance, in response to Miranda, Imogen asked if she ever talked about bullying with her son. I observed that for Imogen and several other women, the issue of bullying (a central concern in many schools) was an entry point for them to bring up larger issues of discrimination and oppression. Imogen explained to the other participants in the Vancouver workshop how she frames this with her son.

Imogen: I feel like I am educating my children, well, a. there's difference and so yeah you look a little bit different, and your family dynamic; you've got a white mom, a black dad, and you're brown and that difference is okay. And that we think you're beautiful, it's lovely and if someone tells you that you're not, you tell them, you stand up for yourself, you have the right to, you don't have to listen to them. That is kind of how I framed it, and just telling them sometimes people are mean. He's been interacting with kids enough that he knows about meanness...if someone says something about your skin colour, you tell them like this, you be strong, and be like, "No I'm beautiful" or whatever it is.

Like Imogen, Mimi uses the issue of bullying to address specific forms of discrimination. In the Saskatoon workshop, she told the group how she incorporates bullying into teaching her children about discrimination. She stated, "I'll always tie bullying to my own individual topic areas, which is: bullying ties into homophobia, ties into racism and those are the ones I'll always talk about, like constantly." While dominant approaches to bullying do not necessarily critically address larger conditions and power relations that shape individual acts of 'meanness,' this can be an effective way for parents to enter into critical and counter conversations about broader constructions of

difference and issues of oppression. It may also make the conversations appear less overwhelming for parents when they can work within a framing that their children are or will become familiar with in the school system. The impact of the Vancouver workshop discussions on Miranda's parenting was evident in her follow up correspondence to me after the study:

Miranda: Prior to my involvement in your study I hadn't really given much thought to how to approach the subject of race with my kids. I figured I would just answer questions as they arose, but now I am rethinking this approach (or rather lack thereof). Since the workshop I have tried to bring up in a gentle and relaxed way, conversations about different types of families and backgrounds. I am really going to make an effort to find other biracial/African families so my kids don't feel totally different from everyone else.

In addition to this, Miranda sent me another email after beginning to critically read with her son.

Last night I read [my son] a book called "nighttime noises" with all black characters (the book is just about a kid who is scared of going to bed; nothing about race, per se) and I tried to make a learning opportunity of it. "Look, this daddy has dark skin. Your daddy has dark skin. This boy's mommy also has dark skin. Your mommy has light skin."

Miranda makes clear the conscious shift she is making to cultivate new skills and engage in more critical and antiracist parenting practices with her child. Again, we see that this is facilitated by a children's literary text, which enables her to make the daily ritual of storybook reading with her child "a learning opportunity." These excerpts demonstrate the value and significance of creating critical relational spaces of inquiry, as I did in this study, especially when these spaces of critical engagement and racial literacy development do not often exist within daily life. For these women, there are not many spaces for them to engage in this kind of dialogue, nor are there many role models for white antiracist parents and activists (Matlock & DiAngelo, 2015; Thompson & White Women Challenging Racism, 1997).

During the workshops, participants also discussed the importance of remaining calm when in dialogue with their children (as well as with others including professionals), so that their children feel comfortable coming to them with issues. As Azania stated in

the Vancouver workshop discussion on antiracist parenting, “It requires your kid feeling comfortable coming to you so you have to deal with them coming to you in a certain calm way regardless of what they’re bringing to you, so that they keep coming.” The participants’ emphasis on remaining calm during uncomfortable or tense racialized interactions was highly influenced by how they witnessed their partners’ react to direct forms of racism. In this way, their partners acted as mentors, and demonstrated positive examples for the women of how to respond in productive and empowered ways. In the Vancouver workshop, Imogen told a story about her husband, which made clear how she admires his practice:

I remember the first time we really had something happen to us-my husband and I with some guy. And my husband’s really calm, he puts people in their place without getting emotionally-I don’t know he has a good way of handling it. He can really make fun of people, like turning it on themselves. I am still learning that thing...if someone says something if you can remain calm and collected, which is hard to do. It’s the most beneficial thing and just facing it off and learning how to do that is important I think.

Learning to communicate is part of racial literacy development and antiracist parenting practices. This is cultivated through practice, experience, and role modeling/mentorship. With respect to children, Imogen went on to say:

I feel like with kids when these things happen when a kid comes home, it’s really important-I always ask him [her son] and really stay calm instead of getting worked up in front of him, and really find the sources of what’s going on. “Oh where did you hear that?” “Did someone tell you that or did you make that up?” Just be calm and really talking to your children and really understanding what happened. Ask them, “how do they feel?”

Practicing effective ways to communicate with children also involves finding casual ways to bring up conversations, in order to make talking about race part of the regular discourse; in other words, race talk, like sex talk, does not always have to be intense and dramatic. Part of early (and ongoing) learning is to cultivate the language and the ability to witness the world through a critical lens (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Steyn, 2015).

3. “What did I just say?”: “Check yourself”: Self-reflective learning and implication

In addition to recognizing their own limits of knowing, during both the Vancouver and Saskatoon workshops, the participants discussed the requirement to “check themselves” by recognizing their own assumptions, and how these may be playing out in oppressive ways, especially in front of their children. Under the title, “never stop dismantling your own racist beliefs” in the antiracist parenting text, one parent shared their story about touring a college campus with her son Buster, and falsely assuming that another group of people on campus were black youth there just to “mess around.” After making a racist comment to her son to this effect-“What are those kids doing coming on campus to mess around at the duck pond?” they both realize that the people she was referring to were also prospective students of the school. After this realization, she and her son shared the following exchange:

He said, “I can’t believe you just said that. You think because they are black they don’t belong here?” I said “You are right. I can’t believe I said it either. It just came out of my mouth. How racist and ignorant! They are just like us, visiting the campus. I am so ashamed of myself.”

After she recounts this story, she reflects:

The thing about being an anti-racist parent is that you have to brave. You have to keep pulling out the roots that are embedded in your own heart. It’s like one of those garden weeds that you can’t smother or yank or poison. You have to keep turning the soil and taking it out piece by piece with great determination, honesty, and courage. With God’s grace your children will learn how to do that from watching you stumble and get up again to try to repair the damage. There is no chance they will grow up unaffected by racism. (Van Kerckhove, n.d., p.4-5)

I would venture to guess that unlike the participants in this study, this parent is white and has a son who is also white, which as demonstrated in this study, informs their own racial positioning and perspective as a person, partner, and parent. This passage still resonated with the participants because we are all “embedded” in racial ideologies, and like this parent, they could relate to experiences where the poisonous “roots” of these ideologies manifest from within them. Counter to claims of colourblindness, this parent, and the participants in the workshops, emphasized the need to check themselves and to

acknowledge their own biases and reproduction of racial ideologies. They addressed the need to do so with their children as part of their antiracist parenting, allowing them to “learn how to do that from watching you stumble and get up again.” In the Saskatoon workshop, Zanadu stated that for her, this is what antiracist parenting is all about: “I think that’s the antiracist parenting-teaching them that we are all human beings and we all have prejudice.” In reference to the parent story above, Maya also noted: “When you do something wrong, say, ‘I shouldn’t have said that, that totally came from a bad place,’ instead of just [brushing it off].” During the dialogue in the Saskatoon workshop, Zanadu made herself vulnerable by providing an example of a similar situation in which she used oppressive language.

Zanadu: I did that with ‘gay.’ I was like “that’s so gay.” My fourteen-year-old daughter is really big on homophobia and stuff, and I was like, “Oh I can’t believe that!” I haven’t said that in so long; we used to say that as teenagers and everything. But I caught myself and admitted it and everything.

There is a lack of literature on antiracist parenting, and antiracist parenting by white parents in particular (Matlock & DiAngelo, 2015; Twine, 2010). In their recent study, Matlock and DiAngelo explore how self-identified, white antiracist parents apply their antiracist principles to parenting their children. They found that there were distinct discrepancies between what parents say and were theoretically committed to, and what they addressed and practiced with their children. In fact, they noted that the key distinction between these parents, and parents who did not identify as antiracist, was their relative level of consciousness about racism, not necessarily their antiracist actions. Matlock and DiAngelo report that colourblindness was pervasive amongst the parents who displayed pride in their own children’s ability ‘not to see colour.’ As people socialized into whiteness in a white supremacist society, they are also shaped by racial ideologies, thus “there is no chance they will grow up unaffected by racism” (Van Kerckhove, n.d., p. 5). To acknowledge this, name it, and to “own it” when we reproduce these ideologies is critical, as several of the participants directly stated in the workshop discussions. While awareness is important, parents must directly model their antiracism in practice, not just talk; and this includes also working towards structural change (Matlock & DiAngelo, 2015).

The discussion above, including the women's reflections on mothering and antiracist parenting during the group workshops, illuminates the ways in which white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families can possibly be part of antiracist "action" by learning strategies to resist oppressive ideologies and create counter-discourses (Baez, 2000; Twine, 2010). Exploring how these women not only conceptualize, but actualize antiracist parenting practices may contribute to better understandings of how white caregivers, educators, and others can apply antiracist principles into everyday practices. This can also be very informative to broaden understandings of how whiteness and racism are reproduced and resisted within transracial/cultural families, and how issues of difference and power play out within familial relationships (see chapter 2).

I now turn to part two of this chapter, in which I address four specific ways that this study can inform antiracism and anti-oppressive practice: 1. making crucial connections and epistemological change, 2. challenging 'the blame/shame game' of multicultural education, 3. fighting segregation with an 'ethic of love' (hooks, 2001), and 4. situating learning in place. The ideas discussed below, reflect the participants thematic discussions and articulations, as well as my observations of critically reflective moments during the research process.

Part 2: Informing antiracism and anti-oppressive practice

1. Making crucial connections and epistemological change

First and foremost, it is necessary to make crucial connections between whiteness, racism, colonial histories, and the women's own lives. During the participant workshops, critical moments of dialogue and reflection emerged, which illuminated these interconnections. It is challenging to discuss white privilege and white supremacy, especially when many white people have benefitted from unearned privileges, and now have to reconcile that their efforts and successes were also based on structural conditions that unjustly favour them; conditions that directly do harm to others (Nakayama & Martin, 1999; Schick & St. Denis, 2005, Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). When we examine whiteness and not just racism, we enable an analysis of how white people

continue to maintain hegemonic forms of power, which is crucial to any systemic change (Wander et al., 1999). What is very illuminating in this study is that awareness of racism and intimate kinship relationships across multiple forms of difference do not necessarily disrupt the ideologies and structures of white supremacy. In other words, as I have noted, awareness of race and racism may increase, but this does not automatically create cognitive linkages between conditions of oppression and one's own socially constructed identity, nor does it lead one to engage in antiracism efforts (Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2010). For instance, while the ten participants had varying degrees of racial consciousness, and engaged in various racial literacy practices with their children (see chapter 7), six women had not necessarily problematized their own whiteness, and the power dynamics that come into play based on their own subjectivity. In part, this is a reflection of multicultural education and diversity studies, in which racism is defined in narrow terms and constructed as individually-based; and the performance of "non-racism" allows the white self to remain unmarked, and not responsible for the oppressive conditions of others (Denman & Sparks, 1992; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). This was illuminated during the participant workshops as the women discussed the Peggy McIntosh (1989) text. This text provided a language for many of the women to make meaning of naturalized and normalized privileges they experience; it provided a means through which to articulate that which they could feel, but largely remains silent (Berlak, 2004). While the participants in the Saskatoon workshop addressed the notion of white privilege in relation to McIntosh's list of privileges, Mimi, who had read the article in several social work courses, reflected:

So I realize my privilege, and I didn't learn that there were actually words for that, right? Until you get into that education piece and you learn the sociology and you learn the worldview points and that there is white privilege; I saw it, but I couldn't identify it as that. I definitely see privilege and that I only learned by becoming educated.

Mimi stated that she "saw" privilege, but she could not identify what it was; she lacked the language, the historical framing and conceptualization, in order to *witness* it. For her, it was through her formal education, which included critical texts and an emphasis on self-reflective practices that enabled her to witness, and to articulate the power dynamics that she sees and is implicated in. Other participants noted that they

also had not thought about privileges they had or see within racial terms. For example, during the Vancouver workshop Azania noted:

I like reading about stuff I was not really aware of like when I was reading the unpacking I was like, 'oh yeah I didn't really think about these things,' like how we are privileged above...and to be more aware so when I'm raising the kids I can try to help them along as well.

As Azania's articulation illustrates, she enjoyed reading McIntosh's (1989) piece, and wanted to become more critically conscious, in part to support the racial socialization of her children. Like Azania, I noted that other women in the study were open to addressing their own privilege and racial positioning. This is dissimilar to many studies on white people and antiracism, in which student resistance and denial are key challenges to effective pedagogies (Berlak, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Schick & St. Denis, 2005).

In my study, I found that all ten participants were willing (to varying extents) to engage in challenging discussions about issues of power and racism, and to implicate themselves. I also noted that none of the women engaged in another common resistance practice of focusing on their own forms of oppression in response to discussing white privilege and whiteness (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). This distinction can be attributed to their lived experience, and to their transracial/cultural relationships and their children. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, these women are implicated in racial ideologies in different ways than white women in monoracial families, and they have come to bear witness to the racial ideologies they were socialized not to see, as well as been directly impacted by the material, psychological, social, and emotional implications of these ideologies in their daily lives. Moreover, unlike the self-identified white antiracist parents in Matlock and DiAngelo's (2015) study, all of the women in my study play some role in cultivating their children's distinct racial and cultural identities, and none of the women articulated that they wanted their children to identify with whiteness or colourblindness. To raise their children as 'colourblind' also differs for these women, for to do this would directly dismiss and erase their partner's cultural and racial identities. The findings in this study indicate that although intimate kinship relationships do not automatically disrupt racial ideologies or the structural conditions of white supremacy, they can be relational places of profound learning; but

this cannot occur without an interrogation of whiteness, a willingness to engage in ongoing learning, and a commitment to resist racial ideologies in one's family and life. This study suggests that making critical connections regarding how whiteness, white privilege, and racism function on systemic and interpersonal levels in local and global historical and present-day contexts is necessary for effective antiracism pedagogy.

I began the participant workshops by introducing the impetus for this study. I told the story about how my husband stated that he felt I was reproducing unequal power dynamics within our relationship (see chapter 1). The participants in both workshops were clearly surprised and perhaps shocked, evident in their gasps and “wows.” I reiterated that I told the story to illustrate that I too reproduce these ideologies, and that colonial power dynamics manifest in all interpersonal relationships (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001). As such, we need to ensure that we implicate ourselves, and directly address whiteness by demonstrating a willingness to be vulnerable, and to have uncomfortable conversations. In this study, I found that as a result of this narrative (shared vulnerability), the women's interactions, and the texts, the participants certainly did make themselves open and vulnerable in numerous ways. Below are two key examples of how we began to critically examine racism and oppression in relation to whiteness (as a social practice, a way of being, and a performance), and white supremacy (structural, systemic, ideological, global and historical) (Frankenberg, 1993; Mills, 2003).

I made reference to Zanadu's statement about “flying out” of Kenya in chapter 6, wherein Zanadu's ability to “fly out” of Kenya whenever she wanted to, something that her husband, his family, and community could not do, symbolically and tangibly represented her white privilege. Throughout Zanadu's interview, we spoke very openly about multiple issues: racism, oppression, gender, sexuality, and more, but when I continued to return to the question of whiteness, her familial colonial history, and her experiences in Kenya, the conversations continued to shift into other topics. At the conclusion of the interview, Zanadu surprised me by adding this profound insight onto another thought when she stated, “Anytime things got difficult I could just fly out” (see chapter 6). In the Saskatoon workshop several weeks later, she brought up the notion of “flying out” again in a group discussion about the concept of “reverse racism.” The idea that racism could be projected towards white people was something she referenced

several times during the interview when she talked about the discrimination she faced in Kenya, and yet during the workshop a shift took place. This is demonstrated in the following interaction I had with Zanadu during the Saskatoon workshop.

Zanadu: ...But also just you get this jaded thing like I feel like a lot of whites in Kenya are really jaded, very negative cuz it's the reverse racism and stuff-well reverse racism, is that reverse racism? That's not the right word.

WA: Some people would say that reverse racism does not exist because white people still have more power. It's discrimination.

Zanadu: They do have power, but everyone hates them. But you're loathed. But they suck up to you. They pretend to like you and stuff, but they absolutely loathe you. And it's hard.

Here, Zanadu is negotiating the negative consequences of white colonial rule in Kenya, and how she is being treated based on that historical legacy, as well as the current economic, social, and political dynamics between white and black people in Kenya (Fox, 2012, 2015; McIntosh, 2015; Uusihakala, 1999). The loathing she feels may reflect the power white people continue to have and exercise in Kenya (think here of the missionary lifestyles Mimi referenced in chapter 6). Zanadu speaks to the interpersonal manifestations of these structural conditions—"loathe you," "suck up to you," and "pretend to like you." The privilege of her whiteness, how it manifests, is still her structural power relative to those around her. What must be explicitly stated is that the negative dynamics she has with others does not ultimately limit her power, it does not ultimately take away her privilege; in fact, it manifests precisely *because* of it. After our interaction in the workshop, Zanadu went on to say: "And yet I get it. The thing is no matter what we can fly out whenever we want." This was a very powerful statement, especially immediately following her previous one. She reflected on the context of her comments, she analyzed her whiteness (as a privilege, a way of performing and being perceived in Kenya), and white supremacy (the structural dynamics that ensure she can leave whenever she wants to, and that the negative interactions she has reflect these structural conditions). Following this, Zanadu and Mimi had this exchange during the group discussion:

Mimi: You know I couldn't though really.

Zanadu: But somebody here would help if you really wanted to get out.

Mimi: If I was in a dire situation, probably.

Zanadu: Yes you could. We could, they couldn't.

Once again, this brief exchange powerfully demonstrates how within the relational space of the participant workshops, participants were able to unpack and work through the notion of white privilege, and to make connections between their experiences and larger conditions (Okolie, 2005). For Mimi, the privilege she had as a white western subject meant that ultimately, whether or not she had the perceived economic inability to leave, she could draw on structural, economic, material, and relational resources. She was still a white “expat” subject (not racialized migrant, refugee, or immigrant) in a postcolonial environment, where her whiteness and its association to empire, while perhaps loathed, still functions as power.

In another example, Miranda, like many other women, often framed racism as individual acts, frequently citing “ignorant” or “rude” behaviours. Throughout the study, Miranda questioned the conceptualization of racism as “overt” and “obvious,” arguing that racism manifests in more subtle ways. During the Vancouver workshop conversation, she stated that she liked the McIntosh (1989) piece because McIntosh frames racism with respect to more subtle privileges that certain people have. Miranda then stated:

My question is the leap-and she talks about being an oppressed race...I find it more tenuous the connection between white privilege and oppression. I am not saying it doesn't exist, but does the fact that this occurs is that white people in certain societies are still the majority? How does that translate into white people are being oppressive?

To this Imogen responded: “I think the connection is simply that when one of those things is that when somebody cries racism no one believes them, so that's oppression...” Imogen went on to say that when people are limited from participating in the society, that is oppression. I noted that through the participants' interactions with one another and key texts, the relationship between white supremacy, racism, and manifestations of white privilege were being unpacked. In the two examples above, both

women demonstrate a necessary-and yet challenging-willingness to be vulnerable, and to express the limits of their knowing. They also demonstrate an openness to question their own thinking and to engage with new material. As noted, this emotional and intellectual engagement is crucial for disruptive learning to take place; and certainly for any epistemological change to occur.

Following the workshop, Miranda sent me several emails, a few passages of which I have already shared above. One of the most powerful was in response to my narrative about colonial dynamics within my relationship.

Miranda: (To paraphrase [the researcher's husband]), we may perpetuate colonial relations in our own partnerships. As the Canadian born, white women in our relationships it is too easy for us to think we know how to do things the right way (or at least the right way for the particular Canadian context we are in). We probably all need to take a step back now and then (every day??). Our children see us in these sort of interactions and it is sending the message that mom (the white, Canadian born one) knows best.

After I told the story during the participant workshop, Miranda had quickly minimized the dynamics I was referring to were also gendered power dynamics that exist between monoracial Canadian couples as well. While there are undoubtedly gendered and patriarchal relationships of power between male and female partners, what I was describing implicated colonial relationships, which reflected much more complex power relations. Further to her articulations in the workshop, this statement powerfully demonstrated the linkages that Miranda began making between her socially constructed identity and positionality as a "Canadian born" "white" woman, and how this informs the neo-colonial power dynamics within her relationship. Again, this speaks to the power of implicating the self through shared experience and vulnerability on the part of the women, and of me as the embodied researcher. Note that this collective self and sense of shared experience and knowing is reflected in Miranda's use of collective pronouns, evident in her statements such as, "our own partnerships" and "we probably all need to take a step back." It is also interesting that Miranda directly questioned how this affects the children's perceptions of their parents, which is something very important to consider as part of their own racial socialization. Once again, we require critical relational spaces

to have these conversations, and we need to learn effective ways to cultivate the skills and language to make these critical connections, and to disrupt racial ideologies.

Frankenberg (1993) writes that racial cognizance or a critical level of racial consciousness takes place when the contradictions in the colour and power-evasive repertoires are clear, and when connections are made between the material conditions and discursive repertoires of white supremacy. How can these connections be made? How does epistemological change take place? We need to understand how epistemological shifts can and do take place. For instance, hooks (1994) makes reference to several of her professors in graduate school, who adamantly fought against addressing issues of race; and yet over time, these same women incorporated intersectional analyses on race and gender into their work. She asks, “what process enabled their perspectives to shift?” (p.54). hooks goes on to state that, “understanding the process is important for the development of solidarity; it can enhance awareness of the epistemological shifts that enable all of us to move in new and oppositional directions” (p.54). And yet, she notes that these same professors did not write about their own processes and how their perspectives have changed; in other words, they did not implicate themselves. Ultimately, “a persistent, rigorous, and informed critique of whiteness could really determine what forces of denial, fear, and competition are responsible for creating fundamental gaps between professed political commitment to eradicating racism and the participation in the construction of a discourse on race that perpetuates racial domination” (p.54).

We also need to consider what white antiracism means in identification and practice. When white women begin to bear witness and cannot reconcile “the contradiction that discursive repertoires on race” present, they can “get stuck,” especially when there are not necessarily many white antiracism leaders and mentors, nor do the women necessarily have a language and way of embodying whiteness that is not embedded in colonialism and oppression (Frankenberg, 1993; Thompson, 1997). We are reminded here of Maya’s stated discomfort with her whiteness, and her adamant assertion that she does not want to be “that kind of white.” This discomfort is real for many white people, who want to resist white supremacy, yet may not have a framework within which to imagine and to perform a different whiteness. This begs the question,

can/could antiracist and anticolonial whiteness exist? In fact, I wrote this question to myself many months ago when I began this writing journey; I do not intend to answer it now, but I think it is a pertinent question. Frankenberg (1997) asks, “what, or who, do white people want to be? Are there alternatives available to whiteness coded as national and racial dominance?” (p.16). Self-identified, white antiracist women activists, Thompson and White Women Fighting Racism (1997) contend with this in their piece, “Home/work: Antiracism Activism and the Meaning of Whiteness.” They write, “our key challenge has been to own and redefine whiteness simultaneously as we try to reject what it means biologically...our challenge is to seek ways to establish alliances with people of color that neither minimize their reasons for distrust nor require us to de-race ourselves” (p.358). Here, the women present this reimagination of whiteness as their challenge, and we could perhaps infer, their responsibility, as is the building of alliances with people of colour that recognize and respect the issues of power and pain between them. What is quite pertinent here is the recognition that reimaging whiteness should not be to “de-race” whiteness, because whiteness still needs to name itself; it still needs to recognize its power and privilege, which is not relinquished or absolved through antiracist activism. White people, including the women in this study, must be willing to move into spaces-internal and relational-that are ambiguous and that appear contradictory, where they do not have or necessarily require the answers. This involves ongoing “self-evaluation” and reflection to fight against their own internalized racism (Thompson, 1997; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2013).

2. Challenging ‘the blame/shame game’ of liberal multicultural education

Wetherell and Potter (1992) and others problematize dominant approaches to antiracism education, particularly the notion that prejudice resides in the individual, and transcendence or enlightenment from this “pathology” is facilitated by cross-cultural contact and dialogue (Berlak, 2004; Dei et al., 2004; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2013) (see chapter 3). Within this conceptualization, we can “get stuck” at the individual level of discursive reproduction, instead of analyzing the structural relations that create the very discourses being condemned. The “prejudice problematic” creates the notion of a ‘tolerant’ society deemed as rational, just, equal, and fair (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This is evident in talk about “diversity,” and Canadian national rhetoric about being ‘welcoming’ and ‘accepting.’ The focus is on projecting oneself as tolerant (not

prejudiced), and fixation is on making this determination. Yet, this polarization is much more complicated in practice, as people employ and manipulate various discursive strategies to perform in different ways depending on the social context. This involves strategies to address prejudice, but not appear prejudiced, exemplified in the use of disclaimers as such: “I am not racist, but..,” or qualifications such as: “I have a lot of Aboriginal friends...” (Dei et al., 2004; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

As I have discussed in previous chapters, the hegemonic nature of multicultural discourses was so prevalent in the participants’ articulations, as was the seeming contradiction of adherence to colorblindness and antiracism at the same time. Again, it is crucial to work within, and not against, these contradictions in antiracism and anti-oppressive pedagogies. In the participant discussions, I witnessed the tendency to seek ‘solutions’ to racism with appeals to multicultural strategies. A thematic illustration of this is how several participants, including J and Maya, believed that greater exposure to Aboriginal peoples and awareness of Canadian history would directly result in less or no anti-Aboriginal racism. This is illustrated in the following interaction I had with J during her interview.

J: But it’s really getting past the ignorance, like people really don’t know what they just don’t know. It’s just an education thing; if people took the time to learn about other cultures, we wouldn’t have racism these days.

WA: So you don’t think we would have racism if people knew more about other cultures? Let’s say people are learning more about First Nations cultures these days, do you think that has changed or that will change the amount of racism that there is?

J: Absolutely...people have to learn to have an element of empathy to know where they [First Nations] come from and how they have gotten to where they are. You know a lot of people think that Natives are drunk, they’re lazy, they don’t want to work; well that’s because of the situation they were forced into, right? ...so I think if people understood their nature, where they came from, how they got to where they are, there would definitely less racism towards First Nations.

While J identifies the prevalence of ignorance as a key barrier to antiracism efforts, in that “people really don’t know what they just don’t know,” there is an implication that if

people learned about other cultures, they would no longer be racist. This logic extends to First Nations people, wherein if people (read Canadians) learn about First Nations history, they would understand why “Natives are drunk, they’re lazy, they don’t want to work,” because hearing these histories would invoke “an element of empathy.” Unfortunately, this premise does not address these very colonial stereotypes—for instance where did these stereotypes come from? What purpose do they serve and why are they continuously recycled? How do they reflect Canadian society, and where is the culpability? Is empathy an indication of critical consciousness? As more information, knowledge, and teaching about Aboriginal peoples, histories, ways of knowing, and the conditions of Aboriginal peoples’ well-being in this country are addressed through multiple mediums, the claim that people are not being exposed to Aboriginal culture is more challenging to assert as the reason for the overwhelming anti-Aboriginal racism in this country. At the same time, if these issues are not taken up in critical ways and within situated conditions, this can be used to further rationalize and perpetuate racial ideologies. This can certainly be the case when students are not taught critical literacy skills, and provided opportunities to cultivate the ability to ‘read’ discourses within various texts; as well as to deconstruct language and its usage, particularly how language is strategically used to evade white guilt, shame, but above all, responsibility. Moreover, commitment or adherence to certain discourses is not necessarily conscious and deliberate, but can operate beyond ‘rational’ thought and individual ‘choice.’ We need to thus examine not only the manifesting individual behaviour we see (the cyclical spectacle (Hill, 2009)), but also the psychological and social processes that *inform* behaviour. This opens up an analysis of *why* discursive expressions of dominant discourses could be contradictory and discontinuous. This involves a paradigmatic shift from the liberal individualist ideologies through which we conceptualize and materialize the very concept of difference within our society (Goldberg, 1993).

The ambivalence created by the “prejudice problematic” is unproductive to antiracism efforts, for it can create conditions in which to blame and shame individuals (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This is something that Imogen feels strongly about as someone who has studied and worked in antiracism education. During her interview, Imogen problematized what she views as an unproductive tendency in antiracism education of shaming or blaming white people for ‘being racist.’

Imogen: A difficult thing to say because I am white, is um there's a lot of shaming white people for asking questions about stuff they don't know about, and I don't think that's a positive thing. I think it shuts the conversation down. It's not cool to shame the learners; I think it's counterproductive and I see a lot of antiracism education as just angry shaming, um not educating...I read a lot of stuff on the internet, like I read all these articles, and there's just a lot of "stupid white people." I find that stuff, like, "oh stupid things white people ask me about racism," and I find it's just a venting. If you want someone to learn something from your post-nobody's learning anything from this.

Based on her extensive experience with antiracism and social justice work, Imogen has identified a tendency to blame and shame white people, which is counterproductive to effective antiracism practice, and the disruptive learning necessary for white people to understand racism. As discussed, white people socialized into a white supremacist society are not taught to see colour, or witness racism as something they are implicated in, especially when a binary between being prejudiced ("bad" white person) and being tolerant ("good" white person) are the two options available, without an understanding that even self-identified white antiracists are racist (Mathieson, 2002; Thompson & White Women Fighting Racism, 1997). In these circumstances, Imogen argues that white people become defensive and no productive dialogue or learning can take place. In her interview, Imogen went on to state:

[Educators] don't get that white people don't know because they can't know...we all don't know other people's experiences and if you want to educate people about that, then you have to educate them in sound practice. It's not enough to just talk about, "oh you just don't get it." It's not their obligation as a person of colour, but if you are an educator, then you have made it your obligation. You have taken on that role to educate people, so it's not cool to shame the learners; I think it's counterproductive and I see a lot of antiracism education is just angry shaming, not educating.

Imogen has identified a highly problematic and counterproductive cycle that occurs in efforts to address racism through dominant liberal multicultural and individual-based antiracism methods. This cycle has also been problematized by many antiracism educators, and responded to in various ways (e.g., Berlak, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). I contend that based on the research process I undertook with my participants, it is clear that liberal multicultural approaches to difference are limited, and do not address the contradictory nature of ideologies of difference; in

particular, blaming and shaming individual behaviour is unproductive to antiracism efforts that seek fundamental structural change. It is evident that we (as educators and parents) need to foster relationship building across differences, and facilitate critical disruptive learning opportunities, in order to push against deep rooted forms of segregation.

3. Fighting segregation with an 'ethic of love'

Race and class-based segregation in multicultural western nations is a central concern for diversity studies scholars, policymakers, educators and others, as these societies contend with how to “manage diversity” (Vertovec, 2015). Borders between communities and individuals are spatial and psychological, and the lines created by colonial governments are sustained by ideological and spatial structures and practices; but they are also guarded by the populations that inhabit them through fear. We can think here about the women’s discussions in chapter 5 regarding their early socialization into difference. For seven of the women, this difference has been embodied in the ‘Aboriginal Other,’ whom they were spatially separated from, but most poignantly who they were ideologically and cognitively *removed* from. This segregation was significantly facilitated and policed through fear; through fear we become alienated from one another, which can lead to distrust, disrespect, resentment, and contempt of “others.” These borders are not meant to build bridges and create opportunities for learning, solidarity, and love, they are meant to regulate and control bodies (Goldberg, 1993; hooks, 2000; Nienhuis, 2009; Razack, 2002). To work against fear, we must firstly face it: the fear of not knowing, the fear of offending, and the fear of facing history and ourselves.

As illuminated in the previous chapters, participants spoke of fear in its many manifestations; for instance, we can recall Imogen’s fear to live and travel in certain spaces with her family, the fear that Azania’s father instilled in her about crossing the street to the First Nations reserve, and finally the fear of simply speaking to people who are considered “different.” As Zanadu stated in the Saskatoon workshop discussion on antiracism, “I think we stop so many conversations and miss so many connections because we are scared to offend...” She contends that we need to work past this, by first and foremost putting our efforts into relationship and community building: “building community is number one with everybody, no matter who they are, and teachers too.”

This priority, thematic in the study, sets a foundation for a ‘pedagogy of relationality,’ in which new learning through emotional and intellectual engagement and commitment is possible. In her interview, Imogen emphasized the profound learning that can take place through friendship.

Imogen: White people don't see racism, because it doesn't matter to them, cuz they don't experience it; they can only experience it through somebody else. So the unfortunate piece about racism is that those in power, or those of privilege, who are the white people, they have to be convinced that it exists, which is an everlasting debate over whether that should happen or not. I think from an educational perspective, it does have to...I think it's more effectively shared when there is relationship between that white person and that person of colour....when somebody actually has a friend or a personal connection with someone, you can't just walk away from that person anymore...you're more likely to listen to somebody that you care about...you have more invested in them.

Imogen's educational and professional experiences in antiracism and multicultural education, and her own profound moments of personal insight through her own relationships, have allowed her to witness the disruptive critical learning that can take place when there is a “personal connection” between people. Imogen identifies a fundamental challenge of antiracism education; that white people “have to be convinced” that racism is real, and the resistance and fear that can bring. Imogen is ultimately talking about disruptive learning that can take place through love; when we build relationships with others, and are “more invested” in others, we are “more likely to listen,” and in turn to work past fear.

According to hooks (1996), a ‘love ethic’ calls for us to look *beyond/outside* of ourselves, to create communities with others based on the recognition of-and not the dismissal or erasure of-differences. It requires the explicit recognition of the ways in which we are simultaneously oppressed by and complicit in oppressive systems, as well as the ability to see how ideologies and systems of oppression interlock with one another (Nienhuis, 2009). This kind of love is not a sensationalized, romanticized construct of love; it is a kind of love made of conviction, resistance, value, and respect of oneself and others. Is an ethical foundation of love what is missing from dominant approaches to liberal multicultural education, and some forms of individually-focussed antiracism education? When we learn about “different” cultures, and how ‘not to be

racist,' do we learn to see others "as subjects rather than objects" (Edelstein, 2009, p.194)? Do we learn to see ourselves implicated in systems of oppression? What if we imagine the so-called negative emotions of anger, pain, and sadness, which inevitably exist in response to oppressive and unjust conditions, as positive, transformative, and empowering within an approach to antiracism informed by an ethic of love? What if we reimagine that these emotions are necessary for critical learning and social change? An ethic of love requires us to face difficult emotions produced by hate and segregation. This study suggests that critical learning takes place relationally, and that fighting segregation by building relationships and communities across differences is necessary. This study also suggests that the principle of a 'love ethic' can create possibilities for disruptive learning and pushing past fear.

4. Situating learning in place

Thematic throughout this study is the primary relationship of difference that continues to characterize the women's understandings of race and space. We saw that as women including J, Julia and Mimi, moved through their lives, they began to have important insights about conditions for Indigenous peoples, which were erased or suppressed within anti-Aboriginal racial discourses for them as children. This in turn has caused some of the women to re-examine this formidable colonial "relationship" between self and other, and to begin to negotiate, and/or to reconcile it in various ways. We can think here of what Julia described as an "enlightenment" during her interview, in which she started to draw parallels between the postcolonial conditions in African states, where she has done development work, and the neocolonial conditions for Aboriginal peoples in Canada. She questioned her own role in these conditions, and decided to actively learn about Canadian colonialism, and how she might be a part of a different future. We also witness this in Mimi's choice to take up critical issues in social work, as well as Imogen's decision of where to send her son to preschool. Further to this, many of the women in the study identified anti-Aboriginal racism as "the number one" racism in Canada.

Based on the study process and findings, I posit that antiracism and anti-oppressive pedagogies must be situated within the specific economic, political, and social contexts where learning is taking place, and must be conceptualized within our

relationship to place, space, and one another. Within the Canadian context, we cannot have a discussion about antiracism theory or pedagogy without addressing the historical and neocolonial dynamics in this country; this means pedagogies must be taken up in relation to Indigenous peoples and issues of reconciliation (St. Denis, 2007). In Canada, we currently see issues of reconciliation play out in debates regarding the Indian Residential School curriculum, which has become a mandatory part of the K-12 curriculum in many educational systems across the country, and has been further emphasized by the educational recommendations in the Truth & Reconciliation Report (2015).⁶⁷ There is contention over if and how to teach children about Canada's history of *cultural genocide*, and although formally mandated, there is inconsistent and varied curriculum delivery (e.g., Pauls, Hampshire, & Allen, 2014; Reith & Stewart, 2015; Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2015).

Debate continues regarding when children become aware of racial differences and racial ideologies, and in turn what ages are appropriate to take up critical issues (MacNaughton & Davis, 2009; Matlock & DiAngelo, 2015).⁶⁸ As discussed, women such as Imogen, Zanadu, and Mimi have been addressing issues of race and difference with their children from a young age. Rather than shelter them from feeling anything “bad,” early intervention is essential to racial socialization, and to foster the critical skills and tools that children require to navigate, and possibly change, oppressive conditions. Children need to understand this history, and most importantly, they need to have the opportunity to unpack how histories of *cultural genocide* directly inform current conditions in Canada in age-appropriate ways. This includes making informed decisions about which texts to use, and how to address disturbing parts of history. Part of this

⁶⁷ Educational systems have been coming under more scrutiny following the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) report (2015). The report includes an extensive list of “calls to action,” many of which include educational and training components (62-65). See the full TRC report for details.

⁶⁸ Many educators challenge the notion that young children are not ready to learn about residential schools. For instance, early childhood educator, Kristin Webster, was highlighted in the news for teaching children as young as three and four about residential schools in a daycare setting. She does this primarily through storytelling, with storybooks such as, *When I was Eight*, about a young Inuit girl forced to go to residential school. As Webster states, “We’re doing these children a great disservice if we don’t tell them the truth. It’s about building community and empathy” (McCue, 2015).

critical engagement, as two participants specifically emphasized, is to delve into emotional and intellectual learning to understand all sides of a story. This is something Zanadu expressed during the Saskatoon workshop: “Just understanding all sides of it, and just understanding how people can treat people so badly and empathizing with them, empathizing with the slaves, all of them, the whole story.” As Zanadu makes clear, it is necessary to unpack all parts of a narrative to face painful histories, and to critically analyse current conditions as situated within said histories; this way, we can teach our children to bear witness. Referring to when she engages in literacy practices with her children, Zanadu also commented, “I love seeing it click in my kids, that they can really feel the pain of somebody else in their story, even if they’ve never met that person. That’s really powerful.”

Although it can be challenging to confront the violent colonial histories of Canada, existing in a state of “cultural and historical amnesia” will not lead towards reconciliation (Tucker, 2005, p.73). We are taught the “act of forgetting” when we omit, erase, and suppress other histories and ways of knowing from being taught in schools and beyond. Antiracism pedagogy informed by an ethic of love thus involves conscious remembering, or “making present the gaps and silences in official histories of the nation” (Walcott, 1997, p.69). It is about mourning, forgiveness, and letting go, in order to imagine a future of reconciliation.

Conclusion

In response to the third key research study question regarding how white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families can inform antiracism pedagogies, I separated this chapter into two sections. In the first section, I addressed the notion of everyday activism through mothering, and how antiracist parenting is conceptualized and practiced by the women in this study. There is limited literature on how white parents can and do participate in antiracist efforts. By engaging the participants in an antiracist parenting text and facilitating group discussion in the workshops, I analyze how the participants do or can trouble ideologies of race and difference in everyday life. I highlighted numerous examples of the women’s “everyday actions” to argue that their informal labour in the home and community environments can count as activism (Martin

et al., 2007). In the second section, I discuss four key considerations for antiracism pedagogy and practice based on the thematic issues addressed by the participants and the observations I made during the research process itself. These considerations include: the importance of disruptive learning based on making critical connections, and examining how epistemological change happens; challenging predominant multicultural approaches that can blame and shame learners; combating segregation and fear; and situating learning within histories and futures of place. In this study, I significantly noted that all of the participants were willing to face challenging conversations about issues of race, difference and power to varying extents, and that predominantly they did not resist or “get stuck.” I now turn to the final concluding chapter of this study, where I synthesize the dominant themes in my work and consider future lines of inquiry.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

I began this thesis with the question, how do we come to *know* difference? Now I ask: how do we *transform* our conceptualizations of difference? In this study I situate white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families with black African new immigrant partners, within the landscapes and discourses of their early and ongoing socialization into whiteness and difference to unpack how their interlocking identities are made, performed, and transforming through their kinship relationships and new experiences of difference in the social world. As white female subjects of Euro-Canadian descent, I contend that their racial life histories are also histories of colonialism and nation-building, particularly in light of the strategic role that white femininity and the nuclear (white) family have played as ideological constructs in these processes. For this reason, the first guiding question of this research was: how do white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families conceive of discourses of race and difference? As we can see from the research data, emergent themes reflect the women's early socialization into Canada's colonial history, foremost evident in the colonial relationship that shaped their formidable ideas of "otherness" and "self." In the women's narratives, as reflected in the collective white settler mythologies of the nation, Aboriginal peoples are the 'Others' through which the colonial white self is juxtaposed and mirrored (Thobani, 2007). The majority of participants grew up in predominantly white monoracial communities and their 'relationships to 'Others' were defined by separation and segregation. As the women learned in their homes and communities, 'Aboriginal Others' were cognitively, spatially, socially, and ideologically removed from their white worlds, while "black people" were largely only 'present' in their lives through popular culture and music they consumed in their homes and immediate social groups. The findings from this study can also provide insight into broader collective processes of socialization for white (settler) Euro-Canadians.

Many women recount overt forms of racist discourses and practices in their familial homes and communities, and discourses of erasure in their schools. In formal educational settings, their 'coming-to-know' difference, particularly race and racism, was officially defined by the American racial history of slavery and race relations, and the erasure of Canada's colonial past and present. Conceptualizing racism as something of the past and outside the borders of their worlds, allowed Canadian national mythologies of 'racelessness' and 'colourblindness' to remain intact, and situated Canada in juxtaposition to America, as a diverse, multicultural, and most importantly, 'non-racist' society (Backhouse, 1999). Discourses of erasure also maintain the invisibility of whiteness, while at the same time reproducing it. As white women of European descent, they were socialized to become "good white girls" and identify themselves as 'national subjects,' reproducing the forms of white femininity central to building, regulating, and maintaining racial divisions between white and non-white bodies (Carter, 1997; Deliovsky, 1999; Dua, 1999; Moon, 1999; Rutherford & Pickles, 2005; Ware, 1992).

As the women moved into their youth and early adulthood, their social worlds expanded and their relationship to ideologies of race and difference continued to transform through new relationships and experiences. As they navigated and transgressed 'colourlines,' they witnessed their own 'good white girl' status become tainted, stained, and 'dishonoured.' Thematic in this study is that white male patriarchal figures were amongst those who made most clear what the negative consequences of permanent transgression are for white women. For the second part of the first research question I asked: how do white women see themselves constructed within discourses of race and difference? Navigating the social world through new relational and spatial experiences, the majority of participants recounted greater awareness of how racial ideologies are reproduced in everyday interactions and spaces; they also reported a heightened consciousness regarding their own whiteness and how white privilege mediated their experiences relative to negatively racialized 'others.' My interpretation was that higher levels of consciousness and critical reflection were greater and often most profound for women who moved beyond their intimate spatial, geographic, cultural, and social worlds, to experience their whiteness in different postcolonial contexts. Half of the women described how their whiteness was re-scripted and remapped within the colonial histories and ideologies of the places they travelled and lived in African

countries such as: South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya. They witnessed how white femininity was defined, interpreted, and performed within colonial histories of anti-miscegenation, and they began to feel their own bodies and lives implicated in popular 'anti-mixing' appellations of white women in relationships with black men (e.g., white slut, "hoochie slut," and "that girl").

As their racial consciousness grew and particularly as they witnessed and went through complex processes of immigration and resettlement with their African partners, the majority of participants began to challenge their early understandings of Canadian culture and society. They were forced to bear witness to the contradictory discourses and practices of Canadian multiculturalism, immigration, and nationalism. Now directly implicated in bureaucratic 'states of limbo,' the majority of participants troubled dominant ideas of a benevolent, tolerant, and inclusive Canadian state. The women were now privy to some of the countless counter-narratives of immigrants and refugees to Canada, hidden below the surface of Canadian majority popular culture and discourse, where many majority Canadian-born citizens do not need to see them. In turn, the women in this study are and can now be part of the retelling of such counter-narratives, and involved in immigration sponsorship and resettlement of family and community members.

Debate regarding what Canadian culture "is" and how problematic, contradictory, and alienating individualistic liberal multiculturalism and consumer capitalism are, were thematic across participant discussions. While the women both rejected and upheld aspects of individual liberal multicultural discourses, several women in particular struggled with and challenged their identification to 'whiteness' and to the Canadian 'imagined (white) community' (Anderson, 2006; Thobani, 2007). We can imagine that the women's disrupted national and racial identifications and changing identities can potentially challenge their place as white female national subjects in a white settler society. For some, their critical dis-identification and disillusionment with 'whiteness' and Canadian national mythologies speaks to much broader changes within Canadian society and other diverse western liberal democratic states in the global north.

Within Canadian political discourse, there continues to be ongoing debate regarding the nature of Canadian culture, the definition of Canadian identity, and the future of Canadian multiculturalism (e.g., Fleras, 2014; Floran, 2016; Kymlicka, 2012). As the demographics of Canadian society change with growing Aboriginal populations and increased immigration, “crises of whiteness” become much more real, as liberal multicultural ideologies, policies, and practices fail to transform the structural and everyday racialized inequities in Canadian society. Spatial, social, cognitive, and ideological segregation are embedded in and central to the western individualistic liberal modern capitalist state, and divisions in the society are predominantly based on race, ethnic, and class lines (Goldberg, 1993). We see that segregation and alienation are maintained in part through fear (Bourgois, 2000; hooks, 1992, 1997). Crises of whiteness signify the inability of liberal multiculturalism to “contain” the transformation of Canadian society for the white majority Canadian population. This relates to, “the white backlash, resentment, and ‘me-too-ism’” and the notion that “whites, too, are unique; whites, too, must struggle to name their culture and retain their autonomy; whites, too, have a place in a multicultural [state]” (Frankenberg, 1997, p.19). The national fiction of “racial sameness” continues to be challenged, and we can no longer ignore the demographic, social, and ideological changes taking place in this country, significantly including the future of reconciliation with and sovereignty for Indigenous peoples and nations (Thobani, 2007; Truth & Reconciliation Commission, 2015; Walcott, 1997).

Throughout this study, the notions of segregation and social alienation in western liberal democratic capitalist societies were thematically addressed, and four women in particular, proactively sought to build their own relationships and communities across differences as a means of negotiating and resisting ideologies of race and difference. In response to the second research question regarding how can and do white Euro-Canadian women in transracial/cultural families contend with and challenge discourses of race and difference in their lives, I discussed the thematic manifestations of ideologies of race and difference, and how these ideologies converge with situated discourses of immigration, multiculturalism, and nationalism. I also examined dominant colonial representations of “Africa” and “Africans,” particularly to highlight how African immigrants to Canada are situated within these competing, contradictory, and oppressive discourses. I take up the possibilities and constraints of diasporic spaces, which I argue

transracial/cultural families occupy, negotiating and resisting constructions of difference. I posit that spaces of inbetweenness are places of belonging and unbelonging, allowing for the opportunity to explore new social formations and conceptualizations of difference beyond rigid liberal multicultural paradigms. Diasporic spaces can challenge and reshape the national imagination and boundaries of belonging. Diasporic spaces and sensibilities push us to consider what and where home is in the future of global capitalism and changing western states, and force us to reimagine belonging (national, collective, individual) (Walcott, 1997).

hooks (1995) reminds us,

while it is important that individuals work to transform their consciousness, striving to be anti-racist, it is important for us to remember that the struggle to end white supremacy is a struggle to change a system...for our efforts to end white supremacy to be truly effective, individual struggle to change consciousness must be fundamentally linked to collective effort to transform those structures that reinforce and perpetuate white supremacy. (p.195)

Evident in this study is that while racial consciousness can enable white women in transracial/cultural families to witness and negotiate everyday racism, they can remain blind to the larger structure of white supremacy and how they are situated within these conditions. It is therefore essential that critical disruptive learning takes place. A key contention in this study was to ensure that participants were making linkages between micro-level conditions of everyday discourses and practices, and macro-level systems of inequity. Evidenced in the participant interviews and group workshops, the women articulated many insights, in which they made connections between their individual experiences and larger structural conditions, particularly those who spent time in new geopolitical and socio-cultural contexts. This study suggests that employing critical and decolonizing methodologies and antiracism methods to examine the lives and experiences of white women in transracial/cultural families (and white individuals more broadly) can be very informative to our analyses of whiteness, race and power. Moreover, this study demonstrates that critical engagement with literary texts can help facilitate critical intellectual and emotional connections between large conceptual ideas and constructs (macro) and everyday life experiences (macro).

As critical whiteness scholars have argued, there is a significant risk in focusing on an analysis of whiteness, and yet there is more risk in *not* doing so (Frankenberg, 1997). Scholars of whiteness studies, critical race feminists, and antiracism scholars all note that whiteness cannot remain invisible in our analyses of racism, nor can whiteness remain unmarked in our interlocking analyses of gender. Based on the findings of my research, it is clear that in studies on race and difference we must directly problematize whiteness, and not just racism. We must interrogate whiteness *with* our participants. White Euro-Canadian women are directly implicated in white supremacy even when they are taught not to see themselves as racialized. Central to interrogating whiteness is to name the historicity of white supremacy as a system of domination and oppression (Mills, 2003). Part of that history, as I have addressed herein, is the strategic use of white femininity in colonial and nation-building ideologies and practices, but also the possibility of counter-constructs, for “the trope of ‘white’ woman, however, is a historical phenomenon and as such is capable of being subverted” (Deliovsky, 2010, p.123). To do this, we require a “conscious remembering” of history, in order to move into a different future, which includes a “remapping” of white femininity and an exploration of alternative ways to embody, perform, and resist whiteness, including whether anticolonial and antiracist whiteness could exist (Deliovsky, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993; 1997; Thompson, 2001; Ware, 1992).

White women in transracial/cultural families occupy a unique position within and relationship to ideologies of race and difference. They have a distinct responsibility to resist and disrupt white supremacy and they can play a key role in doing so (Moon, 1999; Najmi & Srikanth, 2002). They can also work beyond ‘anti’ to ‘pro’ visions of antiracism and feminist praxis (Essed, 2007). We see that the women in this study can practice bounded forms of agency through critical literacy practices they perform in the everyday diasporic spaces of their lives. While the politics of identity are central on any discussion on race and difference, in this study I move beyond the focus on racial identities and official classifications predominantly found in existing literature on multiraciality, to investigate how women’s labour in the home and community can be part of broader social activism. Drawing on critical race feminist and antiracism scholarship, this study makes evident that the gendered spaces and labour of the everyday *matter* and can be resistant and anti-hegemonic; especially within the context

of a white supremacist capitalist patriarchal order (Dua, 1999; Collins, 1994, 2000; hooks, 1990, 1992; Twine, 2010).

For the final research question I asked how white Euro-Canadian women and their transracial/cultural families can inform antiracism pedagogies. I engaged in a research study envisioned as a co-learning process. I witnessed how this study itself informs antiracism pedagogy, especially through the critical relational spaces created during the participant interviews and group workshops, and the analysis and shared knowledge construction mediated by the participants' engagement with specific texts. I also witnessed specific ways that women's perspectives, lives, and practices represent and embody the tenets, struggles, and promises of antiracism pedagogy and praxis. As white women who can engage in antiracist parenting practices, they have much to contribute to critical social justice and antiracism pedagogies, including: the requirement for emotional and intellectual investment, relationship and community building across differences, finding comfort in discomfort, and committing to lifelong critical learning and reflection.

In the age of 'pathological mixed-race multicultural celebration' multiracial individuals and families are heralded as the embodiment of liberal multiculturalism's success, and at the same time, they represent the deficiencies, challenges, and struggles that the imagined white settler state faces "dealing with diversity" (Mahtani, 2014). The existing literature on multiracial individuals and white women in multiracial families makes clear that we require a paradigmatic shift with respect to how we conceptualize and examine multiraciality. To envision how we can transform our understanding and relationship to difference, we must begin with new conceptual frameworks and language within which to investigate innovative, positive, and enriching ways to frame and conceptualize the notions of 'difference' and 'diversity.'

At present, we witness competing discourses of diversity: the potential of positive economic impacts of new migrations, the necessity and urgency of immigration based on trending low birth rates in western states, and negative discourses of fear regarding the threat new immigrant populations pose to state security, resources, and 'culture.' Social science research on diversity, much like multiraciality, tends to examine conflict and

controversy, even though there is much to learn from the successful and constructive processes and conditions taking place within diverse communities and environments. As Blom-Hansen (2009) writes, “we must look into how people, East, West, everywhere, actually deal with diversity and diverse categories of people both in their very private sphere and in all those concentric circles around your house or your home or your family” (para 9).

Understanding how “diversity” is practiced and differences are negotiated within everyday life can also inform policy-making to address deep-rooted forms of segregation (Phillips, 2015). Current efforts to facilitate integration and cohesion have not unhinged the profound forms of segregation and alienation between individuals and communities. If we do not address the underlying racial ideologies and inequitable power dynamics that permeate every day and structural interactions, segregation and alienation may just get worse (a manifestation of which are “crises of whiteness”). The women in this study and their transracial/cultural families represent *transforming* micro-level social formations in future transcultural societies (Essed, 2007). It is by exploring the intimate lives of individuals, families, and communities, as I do in this study, that we can gain unique insight into how people construct and negotiate their relationships to ideologies of difference, and most significantly, how they can possibly transform them. Herein, I employed the concept of *trans* to symbolize new familial formations and diverse societies, which moves us beyond monocultural fixed notions of individual and group identifications, and recognizes the migratory processes of “unsettlement and resettlement” that characterize an increasing number of families formed across differences. As Essed writes, “beyond ‘anti’ and beyond ‘racism’ are heterogeneous societies in which people engage in multilayered and shifting affiliations” (p.244). We *must* expand beyond traditional framings of difference because familial and societal changes demand it.

Future studies

As noted, much of the literature on multiraciality and white women of European descent in multiracial families focuses on ‘white-black’ heterosexual relationships, and women’s experiences in the American and British contexts. There is also a lack of

scholarship on multiraciality and transracial/cultural families in the Canadian context. Given the scope of my study, I did not consider other partnerships formed across difference beyond white Euro-Canadian women and black African men. With respect to future studies, I first propose that more research be conducted on a variety of partnerships and family formations across differences within the Canadian socio-political context. As transracial/cultural families are made up of multiple racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, and geographic origins and affiliations, an analysis of how different subjectivities mediate the ways families are constructed within and negotiate ideologies of difference would be very informative. For instance, how would the experiences of Indigenous women in partnerships with white Euro-Canadian men (or women) differ from the participants in this study? How might they differ from women of Asian-Canadian descent with men (or women) of South-American descent? How might they be similar?

Second, fathers' voices are missing from much of the existing literature on white women in multiracial families, including this study. When I asked my participants about what future studies they would like to see, several noted that including the fathers' perspectives would enrich the analysis, particularly to compare the fathers' interpretations of topics discussed during the participant workshops. For instance, during the Vancouver workshop Imogen stated: "If you were to do a follow up to this project, it would be to have the dads around the table to do the research from their perspective about the same conversations." Azania added: "And another round table with the guys to compare their experiences, what their thoughts compared to our thoughts on racism." Similar to several other scholars (Britton, 2013; Murad, 2006; O'Donoghue, 2005; Wilson, 2012; Twine, 2010), I suggest that investigating the perspectives and experiences of fathers in transracial/cultural families is needed to gain more comprehensive insight into these transforming social formations. Future studies can also include the voices of other family members, who can particularly enrich our understandings of racialized and gendered familial dynamics (Twine, 2010).

Third, many studies including this one, arguably reproduce heteronormativity by investigating partners who are or were in 'traditional' heterosexual relationships (with the limited exception of Deliovsky, 2010 and Frankenberg, 1993). More expanded interlocking analyses of difference are possible if we explore how constructions and

discourses of sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender mediate the lives of transracial/cultural families. Last, while this study is limited to the Canadian context, my research makes clear that place and space matter, as transracial/cultural families exist through many historical migrations influenced by situated discourses of the socio-geographic, cultural, and political spaces they originate from and reside in. For this reason, I recommend comparative analyses of white women in transracial/cultural families in multiple geographic contexts to examine how situated racial and colonial histories and ideologies of difference (including white femininity) shape the experiences of women and their lives. This would allow us to explore the question, “what role does the colonial history of a nation play in its contemporary attitudes toward interracial relationships?” (Deliovsky, 2010, p.125). For instance, how do the experiences and perspectives of white women of Euro-Canadian descent in Canada compare and contrast to those of white women of Euro-South African descent in South Africa, or to white women of Euro-Australian descent in Australia? I hope this study is just the beginning of my own long research trajectory into the lives and practices of transracial/cultural families in transforming transcultural societies.

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Appendix A.

Invitation Letter to Participate

Ethics Application Number: 2014s0253

Dear Prospective Research Participant,

My name is Willow Allen, and I am a PhD student in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. I am conducting a research study on white Canadian birth mothers in multiracial families with first generation African immigrant partners. The study is titled, *White Canadian Birth Mothers and Transracial/Cultural Families: Lived Experiences of Race and Difference*. I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

My research goals are: a) to examine how white Canadian birth mothers understand discourses of race and difference; b) how they address issues of racism and discrimination in their lives; and c) how white birth mothers and their multiracial families can provide insight into how we teach/learn about race and difference. This study contains four parts:

- 1. Short Initial Survey:** If you are interested in the study, I will provide you with a short survey consisting of three questions in order to give you a clear sense of what the research study is about, and to ensure that your consent is well informed. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and can be done in writing, verbally on the phone, or in person with me.
- 2. First Semi-Structured Interview:** I will conduct a one-on-one interview with you. The interview will be semi-structured, and will be regarding your ideas and experiences of race, racism, and difference. It will take approximately one to two hours. You are free to respond or not respond to questions, as you feel comfortable.
- 3. Workshop:** I will facilitate a workshop with approximately 4 – 6 white Canadian birth mothers to create an opportunity for women to engage with three short texts, and to share ideas with one another in an open environment. Each text is related to the themes we will be discussing: a) whiteness, white privilege and racial identity, b) immigration and multiculturalism, and c) multiracial motherhood and antiracism. I will provide you with an agenda of the workshop and copies of the texts before the session for you to read, and take notes if you wish. After the workshop, you are encouraged to take notes of any new or different ideas you have. The workshop will take place in a classroom setting at the University of Saskatchewan for participants in Saskatoon, and at Simon Fraser University for participants in Vancouver. Other locations will also be considered depending on where participants reside. The workshop will be approximately two to three hours in length.

- 4. Follow up Interview:** I will conduct a brief follow up interview with you in person or over the phone. The intention of the follow up interview is to: a) ask you open-ended questions regarding your experience of the research process, b) any new ideas or themes that came up for you during the first interview and workshop, and c) your perspective on ways to teach/learn about race and difference.

The four phases of the research study will take place between June 2014 and November 2014. The participants and I will establish convenient meeting times and locations during that period. The interviews will be audio recorded, and the workshop will be video and audio recorded. I will also be taking notes during all phases, and keeping a research journal throughout the research process. You have access to your interview transcript, so you can review it for accuracy.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time during the research process. Your confidentiality will be respected. All research data will be securely stored on my computer hard drive, and in a locked filing cabinet. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the study materials. By participating in this study, you will contribute to what is presently a small body of knowledge on multiracial families in Canada. Your participation will provide insight into how issues of race and difference are negotiated by multiracial families, and will provide consideration regarding effective ways to teach about race and difference.

If you would like more information or have any questions regarding the study, please contact me at [...]@sfu.ca or (306) [...]. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Dolores van der Wey at [...]@sfu.ca or (778) [...].

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at [...]@sfu.ca or [...].

If you would like to participate in this study, please review the enclosed consent form and contact me. This study can accommodate a total of twelve participants, and participants will be selected in the order signed consent forms are received.

Thank you for your consideration.

Take care,

Willow Allen, PhD Student

Faculty of Education

Simon Fraser University

Appendix B.

Public Participant Recruitment Flyer

- ✓ Are YOU a “white” Canadian woman in a multiracial family with a new African immigrant partner?
- ✓ Do YOU want to share your perspectives and experiences?
- ✓ Do YOU want to meet other women who are also in multiracial families?
- ✓ Do YOU want to contribute to greater understanding about multiracial families in Canada?
- ✓ Do YOU want to identify and potentially create some resources for multiracial families?

What? You are invited to participate in a study examining the experiences of “white” Canadian birth mothers in multiracial families with first generation African immigrant partners. The study aims to look at how “white” birth mothers think about and negotiate issues of race, racism and difference in their everyday lives. The study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of how women and families negotiate multiple forms of difference, and how issues of immigration and national identity are a unique part of that.

Why? The intended outcome of the study is to explore how these experiences can provide insight into new ways to teach our children and students about issues of race and difference. By participating in this study, you would be contributing to this very important knowledge.

How? Participation in the study would involve a short survey, two interviews, and a workshop with other “white” Canadian birth mothers. The total study time is approximately 4 – 6 hours over the period of three separate days between the months of June and November 2014.

Who? If you have any questions, and/or are interested in participating, please contact Willow Allen, PhD Student (Principal Investigator), Simon Fraser University at [...]@sfu.ca or (306) [...]. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at [...]@sfu.ca or 778-[...].

Appendix D.

Participant Consent Form

Title: White Canadian Birth Mothers and Transracial/Cultural Families: Lived Experiences of Race and Difference.

Principal Investigator: Willow Allen, PhD Student, Simon Fraser University

Phone: (306) [...]

Email: [...]@sfu.ca

Disclosure

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Willow Allen, a PhD student in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. This research study is being conducted as part of a PhD thesis, which is a public document. Your participation in the study is voluntary and confidential. You may refuse to participate in the study or withdraw your participation at any time. If you choose to participate, your name and identity will not be included or disclosed in any of the study information or findings.

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study is: a) to examine how white Canadian birth mothers in multiracial families with new immigrant African partners understand and negotiate discourses of race and difference in their lives, and b) to gain insight into how white birth mothers and their families can inform new ways to teach/learn about issues of race and difference.

Participation Details

There are four parts to this study, as detailed below. Please note this consent form covers all parts of the research process.

- 1. Short Initial Survey:** I will provide you with a short survey consisting of three questions in order to give you a clear sense of what the research study is about, and to ensure that your consent is well informed. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and can be completed in writing, verbally on the phone, or in person with me.
- 2. First Semi-Structured Interview:** I will conduct a one-on-one interview with you. The interview will be semi-structured, and will be regarding your ideas and experiences of race, racism, and difference. It will take approximately one to two hours. You are free to respond or not respond to questions, as you feel comfortable..
- 3. Workshop:** I will facilitate a workshop with approximately 4 – 6 white Canadian birth mothers to create an opportunity to women to engage with three texts and share ideas with one another in an open environment. Each short text is related

to the themes we will be discussing: a) whiteness, white privilege and racial identity, b) immigration and multiculturalism, and c) multiracial motherhood and antiracism. I will provide you with an agenda of the workshop and copies of the texts before the session for you to read, and take notes if you wish. After the workshop, you are encouraged to take notes of any new or different ideas you have. The workshop will take place in a classroom setting at the University of Saskatchewan for participants in Saskatoon, and at Simon Fraser University for participants in Vancouver. The workshop will be approximately two to three hours in length.

4. **Follow up Interview:** I will conduct a brief follow up interview with you in person or over the phone. The intention of the follow up interview is to: a) ask you open-ended questions regarding your experience of the research process, b) any new ideas or themes that came up for you during the first interview and workshop, and c) your perspective on ways to teach about race and difference.

The four phases of the research study will take place between June 2014 and November 2014. The participants and I will establish convenient meeting times and locations during that period. The interviews will be audio recorded, and the workshop will be audio and video recorded. I will take notes during the interviews and the workshop, in order to accurately capture, reflect and review what is communicated.

Participant Rights

Your confidentiality will be respected. If you choose to participate in the study, your name and identity will not be included or disclosed in any of the study information or findings. Each participant will have a pseudonym, and all identifying details will be removed to protect your identity and privacy. Access to your interview transcription will be available for you to verify accuracy. In the workshop, confidentiality will be strongly advised, and all participants and myself will sign a confidentiality statement to this effect. Confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with, and to the extent of Canadian law.

All research data, including: field notes, audio and video recordings, consent forms, interview transcripts, and any and all correspondence involving participants will be securely stored on my computer hard drive (electronic data), and in a locked filing cabinet (paper data) in my home. Access to all research study data, including audio and video recordings will be limited to my supervisor, Dr. Dolores van der Wey, and I. In order to protect the identity of the participants, I shall distort the voices in the audio recordings, and distort the images in the video recordings. The principal investigator shall use the video recordings for the purpose of data analysis. There is no other intended future use for the video recordings. Audio and video recordings shall be transcribed as soon as possible, after which, both audio and video recordings shall be permanently destroyed. The research data including field notes and audio and video transcriptions will be securely stored for a period of three years after completion of my dissertation, and the publication of other works related to this project. At that time, I will shred paper data and permanently delete electronic data.

By participating in this study, you will contribute to what is presently a small body of knowledge on multiracial families in Canada. Your participation will provide insight into how issues of race and difference are negotiated by multiracial families, and will

generate further consideration regarding effective ways to teach/learn about race and difference.

Minimal Risk

This study constitutes a “minimal risk,” wherein there is nothing in the study that will cause you harm or pose a risk to you. Some of the questions may be sensitive or personal in nature, since they relate to your personal experiences and may involve intimate topics, such as family and relationships. I intend to create a confidential, comfortable, and safe environment to discuss these issues. You are not required to respond to any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.

Reimbursement

The costs of transportation, parking and childcare will be compensated as needed. Coffee and snacks will be provided.

Study Results

Study results shall be provided to participants for feedback and comments through email, or another form of correspondence preferable to the participant. The results of this study will be used for the purpose of a PhD dissertation. The main study findings will be published in academic journal articles and books, and presented at academic and community conferences. Future use of the study materials may be used for educational purposes and future studies. You are welcome to contact me to request copies of my completed dissertation and the rights of reproduction.

Please contact me for more information, or regarding any questions or concerns you may have about the study at the coordinates above. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Dolores van der Wey at (778) [...] or [...]@sfu.ca. If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at [...]@sfu.ca, (778) [...]. For Saskatoon participants: This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office ethics.office@usask.ca, (306) [...]. Out of town participants may call toll free 1(888) [...].

STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT

Video recording

Do you wish to be video recorded? Yes _____ No _____

If you wish to be video recorded, do you want your image/voice to be distorted?

Yes _____ No _____

By signing this consent form, I acknowledge that I have thoroughly read and understood all the information on each page of this document. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions, and I have received satisfactory responses to said questions. I am aware

that my participation is voluntary, and can be withdrawn at any time. I understand my identity will not be disclosed, and my participation is strictly confidential. I understand what participation in the study involves, and the potential risks and benefits. I have read and agree to the immediate and future dissemination of the study results.

My signature below confirms my receipt of a copy of the consent form for my records. My signature below confirms that I consent to participate in this research study. I shall retain one signed copy for my files, and I shall provide one signed copy to the principal investigator, Willow Allen.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I have explained the research study to the participant and responded to her/his questions. I believe that she/he understands the information contained in this document and voluntarily consents to participate in the research study.

Name of Investigator

Signature of Investigator

Date

Participant Contact Information

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email: _____

Appendix E.

Workshop Confidentiality Agreement

Study Title: “White” Canadian Birth Mothers and Transracial/Cultural Families: Lived Experiences of Race and Difference.

Principal Investigator: Willow Allen

Phone: (306) [...]

Email: [...]@sfu.ca

For my participation in the research study, *White Canadian Birth Mothers and Transracial/Cultural Families: Lived Experiences of Race and Difference*, I will be participating in a workshop with other research participants. During the workshop, participants may disclose personal and confidential information of a sensitive nature.

I acknowledge the workshop is intended to be an open, inclusive and respectful engagement. I agree to respect and actively listen to the other research participants during the workshop. I understand that participants are strongly encouraged not to discuss the content of the workshop to people outside of the group; however, I acknowledge that we cannot control what participants do with the information discussed. I therefore understand that my confidentiality will be respected, and only limited confidentiality can be offered.

I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the other participants by not disclosing their identities, and by not discussing confidential information shared during the workshop. This confidentiality agreement pertains to all information: written, verbal, and/or electronic.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F.

Sample Guiding Questions for Participant Interviews

Objectives

To address how white Canadian birth mothers perceive and negotiate discourses of race and difference;

To assess how their relationship to such discourses have changed throughout their lives, and in particular after becoming part of a multiracial family;

To examine how white Canadian birth mothers understand the socially constructed identities of themselves and their family members.

Sample Questions

Part One: Personal History/Childhood

How would you describe the racial and ethnic make-up of the place you grew up in?

How would you describe the idea of race?

Can you tell me about when you become aware of race and racism?

Part Two: Identities

How would you describe your identity?

How would you describe the identity of your child(ren)?

Part Three: Multiracial Relationships/Negotiating Discourses of Race and Difference

How has being in your relationship and family changed your ideas about race and difference?

How do you think issues of race affect you, your life and your family?

Can you tell me about how you address racism and discrimination?

Appendix G.

Participant Workshop Guiding Questions

Theme 1: White privilege and white femininity

1. How does your whiteness benefit or hinder you?
2. Do you think people perceive you differently as a “white woman” in a multiracial relationship and family?
3. How has your idea about being a “white woman” changed, if at all, through your experiences?
4. What does being a “white woman” in a multiracial family mean to you?

Theme 2: Immigration and multiculturalism

1. How are interracial couples, the Canadian women and the African men portrayed in the film?
2. How do they represent any common stereotypes/assumptions you’ve seen or heard?
3. How does the idea of marriage fraud and the ways these relationships are depicted relate to immigration, diversity, and multiculturalism in Canada?

Theme 3: Transracial mothers and antiracism

1. What does the notion “anti-racist parent” make you think of or mean to you?
2. How do you think women/moms like yourselves could fight against racism and discrimination?
3. What kinds of resources and tools would help you and would help other parents like you?
4. What are some of the most important things we need to teach our children (in our homes and schools) about race and difference? Do you have any recommendations about how to do so?

Appendix H.

Follow Up Interview

Objectives

- a) To follow up on the initial interview and workshop, with a particular interest in feedback from participants regarding what new ideas the research process generated and if they have anything further to add;
- b) To create an opportunity to make linkages between their personal experiences and larger discourses of race and difference (Okolie, 2005).

Sample Questions

1. What kind of similarities and connections did you see between yourself and the other workshop participants? Why are they similar?
2. What has been the most beneficial/informative aspects of participating in this study for you?
3. How can this research most benefit other white birth mothers like you?
4. What are some of the most important things we need to teach our children (in our homes and schools) about race and difference? Do you have any recommendations about how to do so?