The power of storytelling is not black and white: A case study unpacking the tensions of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education

by

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B.S., Emporia State University, 2013
M.S., Kansas State University, 2015

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Department of Special Education, Counseling and Student Affairs
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Abstract

Storytelling is a powerful tool to be utilized within racial justice education. It humanizes our experiences, promotes empathy, and allows us to connect across difference. Existing literature illustrates the influence of storytelling being rooted in marginalized populations and its ability to transcend cultural contexts (Banks-Wallace, 1998; Bell, 2009; Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010; Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pyke, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). What is lacking from existing literature is narrative accounts of racially diverse college students' experiences with storytelling as a pedagogical approach in social justice, and more specifically, racial justice education contexts. Additionally, although some literature exists on how storytelling can disrupt the system of whiteness, there is a lack of narrative accounts of how whiteness can disrupt storytelling as a pedagogy.

In this instrumental case study, I utilize a Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) theoretical framework to highlight the narratives of five, racially diverse, undergraduate college students about their experiences with storytelling as a teaching tool for racial justice education within an intercultural leadership course. Through interview and document analysis data, I identified three overarching themes that illustrate how students of diverse racial backgrounds perceived storytelling as a teaching tool for racial justice education including: 1) Storytelling is a Powerful and Empowering Teaching Tool, 2) Hesitancy in Being the Storyteller, and 3) The Classroom Door is not a Whiteness Gatekeeper. Results from this study can increase our understanding of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education and the ways in which the pervasive nature of whiteness manifests in storytelling communities. While the power of storytelling was reflected in participants' experiences, the study also raises our consciousness about the considerations

educators should make in implementing a storytelling pedagogy in predominantly white

classroom settings. Based on these findings I provide implications for research and practice.

Keywords: storytelling, social justice education, racial justice education, Critical

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Whiteness Studies

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this work. You all hold a special place in my heart, and I'll forever cherish the relationships that resulted from the time and conversation we shared together.

Dedication

To my grandad, George Downing, my first role model of what it meant to be a feminist and social justice advocate, the person who told me from a young age: "This world would be better off if we had more women in positions of leadership," and the one who asked me time and time again, "So, Tess, when are you going to get that Ph.D.?" I dedicate this dissertation to you. In a society that tells young women that leadership is reserved for white men, thank you for setting a different example for me, and for instilling a belief in me before I could understand how it would shape and influence my future.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to the incredible students in the Developing Scholars Undergraduate Research Program and the Edgerley-Franklin Leadership Scholarship Program with whom I have had the privilege to work. Thank you for sharing your stories with me... stories of discrimination, hardships, and barriers, but also stories of resilience, fortitude, and triumph. Your stories, and our relationships, are my motivation and my inspiration to work to create a more equitable and just world.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

I am a white woman who grew up in rural, small-town Kansas. My high school was located in the middle of a cow pasture and my graduating class consisted of forty students. I am sure you can imagine the racial diversity that existed, or rather did not exist, within the education system and local communities in which I was shaped. Because of the racial homogeneity of the communities in which I was socialized, I grew up in a bubble with limited awareness about the world around me and the social and cultural inequities that exist within it. When I think back to my experiences in the education system and in my home life growing up, I do not remember talking about any issues of social injustice including conversations around race and racial injustice. I was taught to be kind and respectful to everyone, but specific conversations about race and the impact of racial identity did not take place in my educational experiences or in my familial and friend circles. While these interpersonal conversations were not a part of my socialization, I have come to realize that this does not mean I never received messages about race and racial identity. The messages I did receive were subtle, but pervasive, and came from media, books, well-meaning family and friends, and a white-washed education system. These messages consistently portrayed white people in a positive light, while simultaneously portraying People of Color in a negative light. At the time, I was not aware of the air of racism I was breathing in these systems and the ways in which it was influencing my biases and prejudices around race. I did not understand until much later in my life how it was shaping my ideas of white people as superior and People of Color as inferior. I share this as an important part of my story that shaped my perspectives and views of the world and the foundation from which this dissertation was born. As I engage in a dissertation focused heavily on the impact of racial identity, it is imperative for readers to know that I include myself in my discussion of white people and the

process of critically unpacking whiteness throughout my study. I will detail more of my personal story in the following paragraphs, but I first want to draw attention to my capitalization decisions around racial identity throughout my dissertation. In an effort to challenge the centrality of whiteness in this study I intentionally do not capitalize the terms "white" or "whiteness" in order to "reject the grammatical representation of power capitalization brings" (Pérez Huber, 2010, p. 93). At the same time, I do capitalize terms used to describe racially minoritized peoples, including "Students of Color" and "Participants of Color" as a "grammatical move towards empowerment and racial justice" (Pérez Huber, 2010, p. 93). I am choosing to follow these capitalization procedures in a personal, intentional effort to draw attention to and challenge the notion of learned white superiority with which I grew up. In the following paragraphs, I will further discuss the experiences in my life that forced me to confront my own internalized white superiority and drove me to pursue this dissertation topic.

It was not until I attended Kansas State University to pursue my master's degree in College Student Development that I had moments of critical dissonance that opened my eyes to injustices of which I had never before been aware. Working with underrepresented students at Kansas State University served as my "waking up" moment that created cognitive dissonance and prompted me into deeper reflection and action related to racial justice. I was fortunate to serve as a graduate assistant with two programs at Kansas State University called the Developing Scholars Program (DSP) and the Edgerley-Franklin Urban Leadership Program. These prestigious programs provided research and leadership opportunities for students from underrepresented backgrounds. I had the privilege of serving as a mentor and advisor to students within these programs. The first transformative learning moment came at a beginning-of-year

retreat with the Edgerley-Franklin Urban Leadership Scholars. Allow me to share the story of the first time storytelling deeply impacted my understanding of the world.

I remember sitting in a circle with the Edgerley-Franklin Leadership Scholars in the living room of my supervisor's house for our beginning-of-year orientation. There were about fifteen of us in the circle. We all had plates of barbeque and chatter amongst the students was filling the room. As I looked around, I quickly became aware that I was the only white person in the room. I felt out of place, maybe for the first time in my life. Did I belong here? Did they wonder why *I,* as a white woman, would be advising and mentoring them? What were they thinking about me? It was the first time in my life that I remember being conscious of the color of my skin. That was my initial "aha" moment as a I realized the way I was feeling was likely how these incredible students around me felt in most spaces they occupied on campus. Then, the storytelling began. My supervisor had asked all of us to bring an item that represented an aspect of our cultural identity. We went around the circle and shared stories about our item and what it meant to us. One student brought a photo of her family. As a first-generation, Latina college student, she shared that she had to go against her father's wishes to attend college. In her culture she was expected to stay home and help take care of her family after high school. She walked out of her home without the support of her father and significantly strained their relationship in order to pursue her dreams. A Biracial student shared about being adopted and raised by his white grandparents because of circumstances out of his control. The stories kept coming, one after another, stories of familial sacrifice, pressure to succeed, barriers, and stories of pride. There was not a dry eye in the room. In those two hours, I had been fundamentally changed, and the students found connection, community, and healing with one another.

While the students, and the relationships I developed with them, impacted me and my worldview in vast and transformative ways, I found it was these personal stories they shared with me that had the most impact. Their stories of hardship, racial discrimination, and resilience not only raised my consciousness of racial injustice, but also developed my awareness of white privilege and how it shows up in every aspect of my life. Their stories touched me and my emotions in a way that inspired me to action and are the source of passion and inspiration for this dissertation. After personally experiencing the deeply transformative potential of stories, I quickly became passionate about storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education. Having attended a conference workshop at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education (NCORE) on the power of storytelling in relation to liberation, my conviction was deepened that stories can change us. They can teach us. Most importantly, they can heal us. My life experiences have continued to lead me to contemplate the impact of storytelling as a mode of learning, not only my own, but also the learning of students in our institutions of higher education.

With our world becoming increasingly interconnected, it is imperative now more than ever that students participating in institutions of higher education learn how to have difficult conversations about tough issues of social inequity that plague our world today and be exposed to perspectives and experiences that differ from their own. Given the potentially divisive nature of these conversations, as educators, we should be intentional about the pedagogies we employ to facilitate them in a productive and transformative way. Paulo Freire (1970) advocated for the necessity of critical pedagogy within social justice education. That is, a pedagogy that encourages simultaneous reflection and action through dialogue. Storytelling as dialogue is an effective component of critical pedagogy due to its empowering and transformational potential

(Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). Storytelling challenges objectivity by helping draw connections between lived experiences marked by oppression, marginalization, and resistance (Delgado Bernal, Burciaga, & Flores Carmona, 2012). Furthermore, Lovell (2011) contended that one of the most accessible means for students to learn about race and privilege is through the sharing of stories. Through the sharing of students' personal experiences with race and privilege, the groundwork is laid for further in-depth analysis of racial issues (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). Because the phenomenon of storytelling is universal and familiar to all social groups, it provides a method for increasing cultural understanding that stems from a position of equality rather than one of power differentiation and encourages a "we" versus "us" and "them" mentality (Carter-Black, 2007). Additionally, a storytelling approach can be less threatening to members of all social groups because of its cultural familiarity. This decreased threat, when combined with an increased sense of common ground and safety, allows students to more deeply interrogate the complexity of subjects that have the potential to become highly charged (Carter-Black, 2007). For these reasons, storytelling can serve as a powerful pedagogy in teaching about tough issues of social injustice.

As I read, listened, and learned more from the literature about the inherent power of storytelling, and reflected on my personal experiences, I began to consider the further knowledge needed to truly understand how students experience storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education and how students' racial identities and the educational context at large may impact that experience. I became eager to allow students' stories about storytelling to teach me about its impact as a teaching tool. Thus, the birth of my dissertation.

Rationale

Existing literature illustrates the powerful influence of storytelling being rooted in marginalized populations and its ability to transcend cultural contexts. It is evident that the pedagogical approach of storytelling is valuable for teaching about issues of social justice (Banks-Wallace, 1998; Bell, 2009; Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010; Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pyke, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). For example, Chin and Rudelius-Palmer (2010) asserted that students of majority groups may lack the desire to be self-critical and to question those systems that afford them power and privilege. Sharing personal stories marked by oppression, and listening to the stories of others, can bring us closer to those issues that seem separate from us (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). Additionally, as a pedagogical tool, storytelling is informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT). It has been postulated that conventional forms of education often silence marginalized students' racial experiences in the classroom, but pedagogies informed by CRT, such as storytelling, encourage the experiential knowledge held by students of racial/ethnic minority groups in the learning environment (Harper & Quaye, 2009). What is lacking from existing literature is narrative accounts of racially diverse college students' experiences with racial justice education workshops or classes utilizing storytelling as a prominent pedagogical approach. Such narrative accounts are important to more deeply understand the effectiveness, impact, and nuances of using pedagogies rooted in CRT, such as storytelling, in working with undergraduate college students of diverse racial backgrounds. With this study, I aimed to fill that gap by collecting narrative accounts of the experiences and perceptions of five, racially diverse undergraduate college students who participated in an intercultural leadership course that utilized storytelling as the prominent pedagogical approach. Additionally, although some literature exists on how storytelling can disrupt whiteness, there is a

lack of narrative accounts of how whiteness can disrupt storytelling as a pedagogy. These narratives can increase our understanding of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education by illustrating the ways in which the pervasive nature of whiteness manifests in storytelling exercises and affects the storytelling community.

Research Purpose and Question

The purpose of this study was to understand how five, racially diverse undergraduate college students at a large midwestern university experienced storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education within an intercultural leadership course. The research question that guided this study was as follows: How do participants from diverse racial backgrounds experience storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice within an intercultural leadership course?

Significance of the Study

This study expands the ways in which we understand how storytelling can be used as a tool for praxis. It provides new insights into if and how whiteness manifests itself in a pedagogy, such as storytelling, rooted in CRT and how that manifestation or lack thereof affects racially diverse participants' experiences in racial justice education contexts. We often strive to understand how racial marginalization affects Students of Color on college campuses, but we less often turn our attention to the underlying circumstances that cause marginalization to occur. Drawing upon the theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), this study increases our understanding of the role whiteness plays in influencing the storytelling community within racial justice education curricula, and how that impacts the experiences of students from diverse racial backgrounds. Overall, findings from this study nuance our understanding of the

power of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education and provide important implications for research and practice.

Operational Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following operational definitions will be used.

1. **Race** is viewed as a socially constructed category of which people are assigned to by society based on skin color and facial features and about which people hold learned assumptions, biases, and stereotypes. Additionally, borrowing from Bell (2010), it is necessary to recognize that a person's racial identify powerfully shapes their lived experiences.

2. **Diverse racial backgrounds** refers to the differing racial identities of participants. While in many diversity, equity, and inclusion spaces, the phrase "diverse racial backgrounds" is used to refer to People of Color, this use reinforces the idea of white people as the norm and People of Color as different. Therefore, in this study, diverse racial backgrounds means different racial backgrounds, and refers to all of the different racial backgrounds represented in the study, including participants who identify as white. Specifically, in this study, one participant identified as Biracial, two participants identified as white, one participant identified as Black, and one participant identified as Hispanic.

3. **Racial justice education** is defined as an endeavor carried out through an ongoing process of critical reflection, dialogue, and action with others with the goal of critical consciousness raising on various, complex forms of systemic and internalized oppression on the basis of race and how they operate within our society and world (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Dewey, 2012; Freire, 1970). It serves as a framework through which we

give and receive new knowledge and perspective with the goal of a continuation of life that allows full participation of and amongst people of all races where resources needed for full participation are equitably available and accessible to all (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007).

4. **Storytelling** is defined as simply as relating to someone else something that happened (Senehi et al., 2009). This study also draws upon Carter-Black's (2007) concept of storying. Storying involves various components of storytelling such as how stories are told, who tells the stories, who they are told to, under what circumstances they are told, and for what purpose. It is also necessary to distinguish between storytelling and storytelling as a pedagogical approach. Storytelling in and of itself may not always be used intentionally to promote heightened consciousness around issues of racial justice; it can be constructive or destructive (Senehi et al., 2009). Storytelling as a pedagogy, or teaching method, for racial justice education involves inclusivity, fosters a sense of shared power and recognition, facilitates openness and dialogue, and brings issues of racial inequity to consciousness (Senehi et al., 2009).

5. **Whiteness** refers to a normalized system that privileges white people and marginalizes People of Color. It is not synonymous with white people (Cabrera et al., 2017). White people are a socially constructed group of people who benefit from the system of whiteness (Cabrera et al., 2017; Earick, 2018). Whiteness is 1) a system of structural advantage that affords white people race privilege; 2) a central location or a viewpoint from which white people base their views on themselves, others, and society; and 3) a culmination of cultural practices that have been normalized and usually remain invisible in the U.S. (Frankenberg, 1997; Hartmann et al., 2009).

Subjectivity Statement

      I identify as a white, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied woman. Over the course of my career thus far, I have come to understand the privilege many of these identities afford me. It was mostly through listening to stories of students from racially minoritized groups that my eyes and heart began to open to the reality of power and privilege in the world. These stories were the foundation of my motivation for this study. Stories have played a powerful role in my self-work and introspection that have been a catalyst to my development as a social justice educator. I have been researching and writing about the power of storytelling for the past three years. I have also engaged in deep personal work about my racial identity and the unearned privileges that are attached to that identity. I have come to understand that as a white person, my interpretations of the experiences of Students of Color in my study were made from an outsider's perspective and were interpreted through my own white lens.

      In this study, my positionality could likely have resulted in a lower sense of trust between me and Participants of Color that could have ultimately affected what they were willing to share with me and hindered my ability to fully understand and express some of the participants' experiences. While I felt that Participants of Color were very open and candid about their experiences during the interviews, it is quite possible that they withheld authentic feelings about their experiences because of our different racial identities and the power dynamics inherent in those differences. Secondly, as a white person who is no exception to the ways in which whiteness operates as a seemingly invisible force that affords me privileges, it is also possible that my interpretation of the ways in which whiteness showed up in participants' experiences was incomplete. In other words, I may have failed to fully recognize all the ways in which whiteness impacted participants' experiences since, inherently, it is meant for me to remain

oblivious to it. At the same time, I was in a unique position to connect with participants who identified as white. Due to the nature of an entitlement to racial comfort into which white people are socialized, our shared racial identity may have contributed to this sense of comfort and allowed them to share their authentic experiences freely without fear of judgment.

I also recognize that prior to engaging in this study, I had come to strongly believe in the power of storytelling as a pedagogy. Throughout my study, I was diligent to ensure I was seeking out and understanding both the positive and negative aspects of storytelling that exist within participants' experiences. Finally, my role as instructor of the course sections that bound the case study could have conflicted with my role as researcher. Participants may have been less likely to be fully open with me about their experiences, especially if they were negative, in an effort to save face. On the other hand, participants had developed a professional relationship with me which may have increased their sense of safety in sharing their personal experiences. In order to mitigate this risk, I surfaced this tension that may have existed for participants and communicated my desire for them to be as open and honest as possible with me about their experiences with storytelling within the class, specifically.

Researching how students experienced storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education was deeply personal to me. The role storytelling has played in my life and my understanding of the world has been nothing short of transformative, and I was eager to explore the ways in which it can be equally life-changing in the lives of college students. Literature suggests that storytelling is a powerful teaching tool that fosters inclusion due to its familiarity to all social groups and its centrality to the human experience. Through this research, I aspired to add to the existing literature by seeking out and understanding the experiences of racially diverse

undergraduate college students with storytelling as a teaching tool for racial justice within an intercultural leadership course.

Summary of Chapter One

In this chapter, I introduced my research topic of investigating storytelling as a pedagogical approach for racial justice education. I also shared some of my personal story and background that have influenced my interest in this topic and positioned me to contribute to this field of scholarship. I briefly discussed the power of storytelling as a teaching tool both from my personal experience and from existing literature. I provided a rationale for my study and outlined my research purpose and questions. I also detailed the significance of my study and provide definitions for key words that are used throughout this dissertation. Finally, I provided a subjectivity statement describing how my identity, specifically my identity as a white woman, influenced the design, data collection, and analysis I conducted and how it played a role in how I related to and understood Participants of Color versus white participants. In the following chapter, I will do a deep dive into the existing literature on storytelling as a pedagogy and outline how my study will add to the current knowledge base. I will also outline my theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) that framed and guided my study.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

In this review of the storytelling literature in relation to racial justice education, I aim to outline the power of storytelling as a pedagogical tool. In this chapter, I will provide a brief historical context in which storytelling is situated, discuss theoretical frameworks that inform storytelling approaches, review several ways in which storytelling has been implemented into racial justice education contexts, describe the relationship between storytelling and whiteness, and explore important considerations of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education. I will also provide a review of literature on the theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) that I used to guide this study.

Historical and Cultural Context of Storytelling

Storytelling is not a new concept. Storytelling for social justice has a long and deep history. In fact, in early times, storytelling was the tool available to share and to preserve culture and heritage (Abrahamson, 1998). The process of storytelling can be found in African culture as one of the most significant methods through which people preserved history and culture (Banks-Wallace, 1998). Enslaved Black Africans who, once surviving Middle Passage, found themselves in an alien land that was hostile and unjust, used stories to preserve African folklore traditions (Carter-Black, 2007). Thus, the practice of storytelling is deeply rooted in African-American culture. Today, storytelling continues to be used as a method for teaching values, building community, and resisting oppression, especially among people of African descent in the United States (Amoah, 1997). In addition to the presence of storytelling in Black culture, it can be found in oral cultures and Spanish tradition, as well as in human rights struggles of Latin America (Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Storytelling as an act of resistance is also prevalent in Indigenous communities. Historically, and to present day, Indigenous peoples have

utilized story as a valid way of knowing and as a method to pursue decolonization by challenging Eurocentric notions of objectivity (Sium & Ritskes, 2013). Furthermore, Indigenous peoples have long valued storytelling as a means to disseminate history and knowledge through their families and communities. In Indigenous communities storytelling is a foundational way of life that allows Indigenous people to preserve culture and identity, connect to the land, and engage in healing (Chan, 2021).

In this chapter, I describe a project working with Indigenous youth and young adults, whereby storytelling was an element of regaining a sense of belonging and identity, connection to the land, and a sustained a process for healing. In North American academia, historically, the experiences of women and racially marginalized groups have been ignored or completely silenced. Storytelling has been employed by those groups to reconnect with their personal and social history (Senehi et al., 2009). The power of storytelling lies not only in its historical roots in racially marginalized communities, but also in its support from various theoretical frameworks.

Theoretical Frameworks Informing Storytelling

Several theoretical frameworks provide the foundation for the concept of storytelling to exist and inform storytelling as a pedagogy for social justice education. One of the reasons storytelling is a powerful tool for liberation within social justice education is because many of the very theories and frameworks that inform storytelling were developed by individuals within oppressed communities. These theoretical frameworks include Critical Race Theory, LatCrit Theory and *Testimonio*, Black Feminist Theory, and Paulo Freire's praxis and consciousness raising. I describe each of these and their relation to storytelling in the following sections.

Critical Race Theory

   Critical Race Theory (CRT) was developed during the 1970's from the work of Derrick

Bell and Alan Freeman in response to their frustration of the slow progress of racial reform in the

United States (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT developed out of Critical Legal

Studies, a field that challenged the lack of awareness of the effects of race and racism in the

court system (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It focuses on the role race and racism play in perpetuating

social injustices and the extent to which racial disparities exist in the U.S. (Ladson-Billings &

Tate, 1995). CRT postulates that racism is part of everyday life in the United States. It asserts

that the voices of Communities of Color are legitimate and needed to challenge the privilege of

white people in racial dialogue (Harper & Quaye, 2009). It also contends that the idea of color

blindness or race-neutral ideologies must be challenged (Evans et al., 2010). According to

Hiraldo (2010), five tenets form the basis of CRT including counter-storytelling, the permanence

of racism, whiteness as property, interest conversion, and the critique of liberalism. CRT informs

storytelling in several ways. First, CRT challenges conventional forms of education that can

often silence students' racial experiences in the classroom, and encourages the experiential

knowledge held by students of racial/ethnic minority groups in the learning environment (Harper

& Quaye, 2009). Secondly, the very goal of CRT, providing students and educators with tools to

transform oppressive practices in the classroom, supports storytelling as a pedagogy. The

primary aim of CRT is the development of critical consciousness in a way that allows

racial/ethnic minority students to be actively engaged in the learning environment without having

to suppress their racial/ethnic identities (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Additionally, the tenet of

counter-storytelling, or the telling of personal narratives by People of Color, is essential in racing

consciousness about racial injustice. Storytelling as a racial justice education pedagogy provides an opportunity for counter-stories to be surfaced, valued, and validated (Hiraldo, 2010).

LatCrit Theory/Testimonio

LatCrit theory, born from CRT, responds to the long historical presence and invisibility of Latinas/os in the United States. It was designed to illustrate the concerns and voices of Latinas/os in social policy and legal discourse (Valdés, 2005). LatCrit theorists incorporate personal and social experiences into their praxis as important sources of analysis and insight (Valdés, 2005). The concept of *Testimonio* is built upon LatCrit theory. It has a deep history in oral cultures and the human rights struggles of Latin America (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). *Testimonio* was first used to convey the experiences and struggles of people facing persecution in Latin American countries incorporating cultural, social, historical, and political histories that are embedded within one's life experience (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). It involves participants in critical reflection of their personal experiences with the goal of bringing about change through consciousness-raising. In fact, *Testimonio* is deeply rooted in what Freire (1970) refers to as raising critical consciousness or conscientização, and an increasing number of scholars are using T*estimonio* as a pedagogical approach to social justice (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). This early method of storytelling known as *Testimonio* continues to be used in academia to disrupt silence, form connections, and invite solidarity. According to Delgado Bernal et al. (2012), it is social justice scholarship in education. *Testimonio* informs storytelling as a pedagogy as we know it today.

Black Feminist Theory

Black Feminist Theory involves recognizing and understanding race, gender, and class within cultural expression as a way of making sense of relations between one's self and others

(Amoah, 1997). It was developed as a result of a lack of attention to the reality of experience within other theories. Five elements form the framework of Black Feminist Theory, but perhaps one of these elements is most integral to the concept of storytelling as a pedagogy. That element asserts that, "Black women's commitment to the liberation of blacks and women is profoundly rooted in their lived experience" (Amoah, 1997, p. 99). To this end, narrative, or storytelling, is the basis of Black Feminist Theory and serves as both the theory and the practice. One's personal story, or narrative, is central to one's identity and sense of self (Amoah, 1997). Black Feminist Theory also embodies the importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), which illustrates how the violence women face is impacted by other identities they hold such as race and class (Crenshaw, 1991). While my study specifically explored the role students' racial identities played in their experience with storytelling, it was essential to recognize that participants held multiple and intersecting identities that impacted their lived experiences and to consider the role these intersecting identities played in their experiences and perceptions of storytelling as a pedagogy.

Paulo Freire's Praxis

Paul Freire (1970) refers to transformational praxis as the simultaneous existence of both critical reflection and action. One cannot exist without the other if true transformation is to take place. One of the goals of praxis is critical consciousness raising that takes place through dialogue with members of oppressed groups (Freire, 1970). Freire's work informs storytelling as a pedagogy. The central intended outcomes of storytelling reflect Freire's pedagogical framework. That is, storytelling creates the opportunity for dialogue in which voices of the oppressed are encouraged, validated, and affirmed. It also provides space for critical reflection that raises one's consciousness around issues of oppression as well as opportunity for building

coalitions across oppressed and oppressor groups. Storytelling as a pedagogy is transformational praxis, and that is where its power lies. All of the aforementioned theoretical frameworks inform the practice of storytelling as a culturally relevant and transformative pedagogy. The following section will further outline the power of storytelling as described in the literature.

The Power of Storytelling

Delgado (1989) asserted that, "stories humanize us" (p. 2440). As a universal experience shared by all social groups, storytelling provides a common ground from which to build new knowledge (Carter-Black, 2007). Although a storytelling approach to racial justice education may seem simplistic, it has the potential to transform the way we understand one another through connecting a diversity of lived experiences in order to build new understandings within a shared culture of human rights (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). Perhaps most importantly, storytelling provides a pedagogical framework out of which to fight oppression. As the system of oppression operates to disconnect and to disassociate us from our personal and social histories, or our stories, sharing experiences of our personal and social histories through story reconnects us to them and simultaneously raises our consciousness of social injustices (Senehi et al., 2009). As Delgado (1989) stated, the cure to the blindness of oppression is storytelling.

The primary goal of storytelling as a teaching and learning tool is to create a more meaningful learning process. Through the sharing of personal experiences with social inequity, students can develop increased awareness, understanding, and appreciation for the experiences of diverse groups (Carter-Black, 2007). Stories also foster connection and engagement as they allow students an opportunity to relate to those whom they assumed they had nothing in common, which builds the empathy skills necessary for the creation of a socially just society. According to Chin and Rudelius-Palmer (2010), "The basic power of stories lies in their

potential to connect people to one another in fundamental ways through uncovering basic themes that strengthen the common bonds of humanity and change existing systems of oppression" (p. 267). The humanistic approach and ability for connection through personal stories is what makes them transformational. Flanagan (2014) found that storytelling as a teaching and learning tool was especially powerful for undergraduate students early in their college careers. Specifically, storytelling exercises helped students make connections with other students and between material they were learning with real-world experiences. The emotion that was created through sharing personal stories served as a bonding agent between students (Flanagan, 2014). Additionally, storytelling was found to be a way to engage participants on a deeper level and to keep them mentally present (Sautner, 2017), which is especially important when discussing tough social issues such as race and racism. According to Bell (2009), stories inspire engagement in ways that dry presentations filled with statistical data cannot. It is evident that there is a power in storytelling as a pedagogy, and I argue that it can be a transformational tool for social justice, and more specifically, racial justice education.

There is also a power of storytelling in its ability to raise our consciousness about issues of social oppression. These issues can seem separate from us, or we may be afraid to see oppression as a part of our lives. Often times, oppressor group members do not recognize their positions of privilege, because the existing system of institutionalized oppression allows them to remain oblivious. They may lack the desire to be self-critical and to question those systems that afford them power and privilege (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). This is especially true for white students in conversations about race. DiAngelo (2018) coined the term "white fragility," which essentially explains that as white people grow up in a system in which we seldomly have to experience racial discomfort, we can become easily triggered and defensive in conversations

that ask us to critically consider our racial identity. Resulting emotions often include fear, anger, guilt, and shame, which can lead to behaviors like arguing, silence, and withdrawal from the conversation (DiAngelo, 2018). Sharing personal stories marked by oppression, however, and listening to the stories of others, can bring us closer to those issues that seem separate from us. The goal of storytelling, then, is to bring diverse narratives together in an effort to confront oppression (Lovell, 2011). As Bell (2009) explained, we all see the system of oppression differently depending on our varying positions around the table. However, we all have something to add to a developing story about who we are as a nation addressing social justice.

A Tool for Liberation

In addition to serving as a tool for educating others, storytelling serves as a powerful way of addressing deep socialization that we internalize about ourselves based on social identities (Bell, 2009). Pyke (2010) described how the interests of the oppressors are often presented and interpreted as reflecting the best interests of everyone. This leads to oppressed groups accepting the oppressor's interests as their own as a means of minimizing conflict. Internalized oppression results causing feelings of self-doubt and disrespect for oneself (Pyke, 2010). Amoah (1997) echoed this notion explaining, "Mainstream society exists within a margin, an outer limit separating power from powerlessness. Little attention of concern is given to those, who by virtue of circumstance, exist outside the margin" (p. 3). In the telling of one's personal story, people from oppressed groups have the opportunity to take ownership of their own theorized existence and the power to remove themselves from the margin (Amoah, 1997). The sharing of personal stories can help us grapple with painful experiences and lead us to a place of healing and liberation (Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Additionally, hearing stories that allow us to realize we are not alone is empowering (Amoah, 1997). Connecting with our own story, but

also others' stories of strength and resilience in the face of adversity and trauma can be a remedy for feelings of powerlessness, fear, and shame that can result from internalized oppression (Senehi et al., 2009). A sense of empowerment leads to oppressed groups forming solidarity, group self-empowerment, and ultimately working towards the transformation of society (Amoah, 1997; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). It is evident that storytelling as a pedagogy is powerful both in its educational potential and in its ability to serve as a tool for liberation from internalized oppression. In the following section, I will further discuss specific connections between storytelling and racial justice education.

Storytelling and Racial Justice Education

The goal of social justice education classes is to serve to trigger an awakening in participants that prompts them to consider and to evaluate systemic oppression of social identities (Lovell, 2015). Spalding et al. (2010) metaphorically apply the tools of a hammer, bell, and song to teaching for social justice. The hammer of justice represents theories, ideologies, and practices employed to combat social injustice (Spalding et al., 2010). In this section, specific implementations of storytelling as a hammer of justice, or as a pedagogy to be used to combat social injustice, will be discussed. Additionally, I will explain the ways in which storytelling can challenge the normalized system of whiteness and how whiteness can show up and serve as a disruption in racial justice educational contexts.

Keehn (2015) and Wray (2018) found that participants in two college-level diversity courses focused on race and racism valued personal storytelling and considered it interesting, enjoyable, and insightful. Listening to personal stories led participants to develop insights related to one's own unawareness, personal bias or the making of assumptions, systemic oppression, taking actions for social justice, the impact of racism on white people, and challenging

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oppression (Keehn, 2015; Wray, 2018). Wray (2018) found that participants of storytelling exercises were appreciative of having the time and space to discuss social issues and to engage in storytelling related to those issues, as opportunities for this dialogue were fleeting in their everyday lives. Further, Boske (2016) argued that humans are storytelling beings and found that storytelling through art-making was especially powerful. Participants, including an elementary school student, middle school teacher, and principal, were deeply moved through sharing their stories through art and expressed how storytelling allows individuals to challenge themselves and others about social conditions and inspire change (Boske, 2016). Similarly, Byron (2011) explained the role of stories and storytelling as more impactful than theories as he expressed, "The idea of theory being unpersuasive, or even sterile, emerges within my interview data" (p. 60). One participant described the difference between theories and stories as she questioned the value of theories and at the same time expressed her belief of stories as a "motivating force for change" (Byron, 2011, p. 60).

In addition to students benefiting from storytelling, Byron (2011) illustrated how postsecondary social justice educators found great value in the use of storytelling as a teaching and learning tool. Not only did storytelling encourage educators to do their own personal reflection about their role and location in the social structure, but also this personal reflection and subsequent disclosure of their personal stories prompted their students to do the same. The necessity and value of educator self-disclosure in storytelling was reiterated by Brookfield (2016) who emphasized the importance of instructors telling stories about their own role in enacting or confronting racism as it encourages similar disclosure by participants and learners. This disclosure requires emotional intelligence on the part of white instructors to manage the discomfort of self-interrogation of whiteness (Matias & Grosland, 2016). It is evident that

storytelling is a valuable tool for teaching and learning about issues of racial justice. Not only can it increase awareness around the challenges that People of Color face, but it can also raise consciousness about the pervasive influence of whiteness, which I discuss further in the following section.

Storytelling and Whiteness

According to Brookfield (2016), our educational institutions, including institutions of higher education, harbor an ideology of white supremacy. That is, "whiteness" is the preferred norm which leads to a perception of white people being the natural and trusted authority figures with white knowledge, the most legitimate knowledge of all humankind. These manifestations of whiteness are so engrained in the fabric of society that they are often invisible to white people (Brookfield, 2016). Storytelling can be an effective teaching approach to bring this invisibility to consciousness. As Brookfield (2016) stated, "Narratives can bring an intimidating topic to life" (p. 19). Boske (2016) illustrated how storytelling through art engaged one white participant, who did not consider herself a social justice leader and believed social justice issues were fabricated, through deep reflection about the issues she was seeing in her school and moved her to present concerns to school leaders. Additionally, according to Matias (2013), counter-storytelling experiences can lead white students to a realization of their white privilege and challenge the epistemology of ignorance, a pillar of whiteness that can be explained as an intentional aversion to understanding the human suffering caused by white supremacy (Cabrera et al., 2016). Although white students had a challenging experience in a history class at an urban public high school in which the curriculum centered on the counter-stories of marginalized groups, these counter stories disrupted students' whiteness as the stories challenged their blissful ignorance

mindset and prompted them to reflect on how race has influences and shaped their lives and afforded them advantages (Matias, 2013).

Additional support for the use of storytelling to disrupt whiteness can be identified in the work of Matias and Grosland (2016) who found that digital storytelling was an effective tool to investigate whiteness. After analyzing four years of digital stories produced in a required diversity course for future urban schoolteachers, the impact of digital storytelling as a pedagogy was seen through the critical self-reflection of white participants who interrogated their own role in the system of whiteness (Matias & Grosland, 2016). In this case, digital storytelling influenced white participants to make issues of race and racism more personal, to challenge the notion of colorblindness, to better understand and manage their emotions, and to involve themselves in the problem of racism (Matias & Grosland, 2016). In addition to the transformational potential of storytelling, the literature also provides several specific examples of how it can be implemented in the classroom. I will discuss these examples in the following section.

Integrating Storytelling into the Racial Justice Education Classroom

Bell (2009) provided four story types that can frame and inform a storytelling pedagogy within the racial justice education classroom. These four types include stock stories, concealed stories, resistance stories, and transforming/emerging stories. Stock stories are stories that are rooted in hegemony and support the status quo. They reinforce what is true and normal in society (Bell, 2009). These stories are created by dominant groups to remind them of their identity in relation to oppressed groups and reinforce their superior position as natural (Delgado, 1989). One example of a stock story is the story of the American Dream, the pervasive story in the United States that through hard work and following the rules, everyone has equal opportunity to succeed, accumulate wealth, and achieve the American Dream. Stock stories are passed down

and reinforced through art, media, tradition, holidays, and the education system (Bell, 2009). It is important that we talk about stock stories as just one of many stories. In doing so, they lose their identity as a singular truth and become just another story among many others. This allows us to unpack and challenge the stock story (Bell, 2009). Concealed stories are those stories that are hidden beneath stock stories and are told by members of marginalized groups. They talk back to and challenge stock stories and ultimately expose the lie of the stock story as truth. Because they challenge the stock story and thus, the status quo, they are frequently silenced and must fight tenaciously to be heard (Bell, 2009). Resistance stories acknowledge our nature as historical beings. They illustrate those who came before us who challenged inequality. We should leverage these stories as tools in the present from which to learn and draw support and recognition. Many of these stories are not taught in history books in the U.S., but tend to be passed down through oral storytelling (Bell, 2009). Finally, transforming/emerging stories are new stories created by oppressed groups to provide an alternate version of reality (Bell, 2009). Concealed stories, resistance stories, and emerging/transforming stories are all examples of counter-stories as described in CRT. These stories disrupt majority group reality (Delgado, 1989). I will further discuss the importance and necessity of counter-stories in racial justice education in the following section.

Counter-stories are powerful and needed in the racial justice education classroom. They engage our conscience and have the potential to illuminate our personal beliefs as self-serving and to build our understanding of the need to reallocate power (Delgado, 1989). They enable participants to confront ethnocentrism, to unlearn the idea that our personal worldview is the only valid one, and ultimately to build a world together that is more socially just than any world we could build alone (Delgado, 1989). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) asked, "Whose stories are

privileged in educational contexts and whose stories are distorted and silenced" (p. 36)? People of majority groups tend to discount the histories, experiences, and lives of People of Color through the telling of majority stories. Critical race methodology advocates for the telling of counter-stories, and the need for us to work for them to be told and heard (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Members of marginalized groups provide stories that differ from those predominantly told and heard. Their stories not only deserve to be heard, but they also reveal information about the world that we need to know. These stories expand our worldview and raise our consciousness around oppression of minority communities. Most importantly, perhaps, these often untold stories open our eyes to systemic injustices that might otherwise remain invisible (Delgado, 1990). Once we see these injustices, we can then work to correct them.

Although storytelling can be a powerful tool for creating dialogue, challenging viewpoints, and raising consciousness, there are important considerations to consider when implementing it into the classroom. First, it is imperative to recognize the high level of vulnerability that personal storytelling requires. Phillips et al. (2019) found that digital storytelling required an increased level of vulnerability, which came with a level of fear for storytellers. The challenge of leaning into vulnerability, however, is accompanied by the potential for personal growth. Increased vulnerability can lead to transformational teaching and learning (Phillips et al., 2019). Secondly, the importance of listening must be emphasized. Participants must listen to others' stories in an effort to truly understand before considering any form of action. Storytelling is only as powerful as the participants' willingness and ability to hear perspectives that differ from their own experiences (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Oppressor group members may have difficulty listening to others' stories that challenge their lived experience because they are not always conscious of the privileged positions they hold that result

from systemic oppression (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). Because of this challenge, they may hijack stories shared by oppressed communities and may revert to their own stories of guilt and shame associated with being in an oppressor group (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). As a result, members of oppressed groups may experience feelings of anger that hinder their willingness to hear stories from oppressors about their feeling of guilt and shame. Thirdly, perceived sense of safety of participants is also important to consider (Senehi et al., 2009). Safety may be disrupted if certain stories include "the other" as enemy. It is also possible for certain stories to be associated with abuse or trauma. There is an utmost importance in creating an environment of safety where all participants respond to others' stories in a thoughtful and respectful manner (Senehi et al., 2009). Lastly, it is important to recognize the experience that Johnson (2017) refers to as racial rehaunting that can occur through racial storytelling. Racial rehaunting occurs when a person's past racial encounters situate themselves in the present and take that person back to the time and space of past racialized experiences. This experience of racial rehaunting could occur for Students of Color as they engage in storytelling around their past experiences with racial injustice (Johnson, 2017). Considering the potential mental and emotional toll storytelling could have on Students of Color is imperative in implementing a storytelling pedagogy.

It is evident that the pedagogical approach of storytelling is valuable for teaching about issues of social justice, and more specifically, racial justice (Banks-Wallace, 1998; Bell, 2009; Delgado, 1989; Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010; Delgado et al., 2012). Existing literature illustrates the influence of storytelling being rooted in the history of marginalized populations and its ability to transcend various cultural contexts. What is lacking from existing literature is narrative accounts of racially diverse students' experiences with racial justice workshops or

classes utilizing storytelling as a pedagogical approach. Such narrative accounts are important to understand the nuances of storytelling more deeply in racial justice education contexts with undergraduate college students of diverse racial backgrounds. Additionally, although some literature exists on how storytelling can disrupt whiteness, there is a lack of narrative accounts of how whiteness disrupts storytelling as a pedagogy. These narratives can increase our understanding of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education by illustrating the ways in which the pervasive nature of whiteness manifests in storytelling exercises and affects the storytelling community. A deeper understanding of the nuances of storytelling as a pedagogical approach and the ways in which whiteness manifests in such an approach will aid educators in implementing a storytelling pedagogy in a more informed and transformational way that prioritizes the mental, emotional, and dignitary safety of all students in the learning environment. In the following section I will discuss the theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies that I used as a lens through which to shape and guide this study.

Theoretical Framework

What is the meaning of whiteness in white people's lives and how does it affect People of Color? These are the foundational questions that Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) aims to answer (Frankenberg, 1993; Hartmann et al., 2009; Cabrera et al., 2017). As I strive to understand the experiences of racially diverse participants in an intercultural leadership class that utilized storytelling as a pedagogy, a CWS framework, and specifically CWS tenets adapted to higher education, will aid me in understanding how whiteness showed up and affected how participants of differing racial backgrounds experienced storytelling. According to Hartmann et al. (2009), many white Americans still see race and racism as a problem in society today, but seem to understand the problem as one that belongs to others, namely, People of Color, and does

not involve them directly. Thus, this relatively recent emerging body of scholarship on the concept of whiteness has been largely influential in the fields of ethnic and racial studies (Hartmann et al., 2009). CWS explores white people's understanding and attitudes about their own racial identity and culture, and the extent to which they recognize and understand the accompanying privileges.

Key Scholars

Although CWS is recognized as an emerging body of scholarship, it is essential to note that research, writings, and discourse on concepts of CWS such as white racial identity are far from novel. Concepts that make up present day CWS began with Scholars of Color who for decades have been writing about white Americans and their position in the racial hierarchy that affords them privileges (Hartmann et al., 2009). According to Cabrera et al. (2017), W.E.B. Du Bois, African American sociologist and social reformer, is often credited with conducting the first analysis of whiteness in 1920 in his essay, "The Souls of White Folk," in which he called into question white superiority and privilege, colorblindness, and whiteness as neutral and normal (Rabaka, 2007). In the 1960s through 1980s, James Baldwin contributed writings that included foundational elements of what we now call CWS (Cabrera et al., 2017). He described the spectrum of whiteness in his book, *On Being 'White' and Other Lies*, and explained the ways in which immigrants to America who were not originally considered "white" had to pay a certain price, or prove their loyalty, to join the club of whiteness. Both Du Bois and Baldwin recognized the significance of whiteness in the U.S. as a cornerstone of the country (Roediger, 1998; Cabrera et al., 2017). More recently, in 1993, Ruth Frankenberg proposed ideas of CWS in her book, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, in which she wrote about how white people construct whiteness. Frankenberg challenged the idea that only People

of Color have race with the assertion that white is also a race that must be claimed by white people. Her goal was to expose the often invisible construct of whiteness and its privileges (Collins, 1995).

Basic Assumptions and Key Concepts

There are several basic assumptions and key concepts of CWS. First, and perhaps most important, CWS assumes the understanding that race is pervasive and shapes our daily lived experiences (Matias et al., 2017). Another assumption of CWS is that whiteness is not synonymous with white people (Cabrera et al., 2017). In other words, whiteness refers to a normalized system that privileges white people and marginalizes People of Color while white people are a socially constructed group of people who benefit from the system (Cabrera et al., 2017; Earick, 2018). Frankenberg (1997) outlined three assumptions of whiteness that serve as a foundation for CWS. First, whiteness is a system of structural advantage that affords white people race privilege. Secondly, whiteness is a central location or a viewpoint. It is a place from which white people base their views on themselves, others, and society. Lastly, Frankenberg stressed that whiteness is a culmination of cultural practices that have been normalized and usually remain unnamed and invisible in the U.S. (Frankenberg, 1997; Hartmann et al., 2009).

Key concepts of CWS reflected in the literature include white identity, understanding of privilege, and color-blind ideology (Cabrera et al., 2017; Du Bois, 1920; Earick, 2018; Frankenberg, 1993; Hartmann et al., 2009; Leonardo, 2009; Matias et al., 2017; McIntosh, 1989). White identity refers to the idea that white Americans have limited racial awareness and consciousness about themselves and their racial identity (Hartmann et al., 2009). This concept explains how a white racial identity in America is naturalized and normalized, and how as a result, white Americans do not have to think about it, which limits their ability to see and

understand the larger system in which they benefit as a result of that identity. Understanding of privilege refers to the degree to which white Americans are aware of and understand the structural benefits of whiteness (Hartmann et al., 2009; Frankenberg, 1997; McIntosh, 1989). As cited in Hartmann et al. (2009), this concept allows us to ask the following questions: Are white people aware of their advantages? Also, how, or in what ways do white people explain or account for racial inequalities or their own advantages? Finally, color-blind ideology refers to the invisibility of white identity and white privilege (Hartmann et al., 2009; Cabrera et al., 2017). Color-blind ideology informs the discourse that America is a fair and race-neutral country where accomplishments are in no way influenced by race but are directly related to hard work and determination (Cabrera et al., 2017; Hartmann et al., 2009).

Key Tenets of CWS in Higher Education

This study will employ the following key tenets of CWS adapted to higher education by Cabrera et al. (2017) and Foste and Irwin (2020): Whiteness as Colorblindness, Whiteness as Epistemologies of Ignorance, Whiteness as Ontological Expansiveness, Whiteness as Property, Whiteness as Assumed Racial Comfort, White Complicity, and White Normativity. Whiteness as Colorblindness asserts that no matter the information provided about the realities of racism on college campuses today, the evidence will always be interpreted by white people in ways that find the root cause as anything but racism (Cabrera et al., 2017). Whiteness as Epistemologies of Ignorance can easily be explained by the saying, "Ignorance is bliss." This construct includes intentional and unintentional ignorance to the reality of white privilege and the violence of white supremacy. By remaining oblivious to the violence People of Color face at the hands of white people and systems of white supremacy, white people do not have to bear any responsibility for this harm (Foste & Irwin, 2020). If racism does not exist then there is nothing to address,

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challenge, or fix. Epistemologies of ignorance also erase the contributions of People of Color while minimizing the violence whiteness has had on Communities of Color. This process of intentionally forgetting and rewriting truth is maintained by a system of white supremacy and allows white students to have overly positive views of their racial selves (Foste & Irwin, 2020; Cabrera et al., 2017). Whiteness as Ontological Expansiveness is defined by Sullivan (2006) as, "White people tend to act and think as if all spaces—whether geographical, psychical, linguistic, economic, or otherwise—are or should be available to them to move in and out as they wish" (p. 10). Whiteness as Property is historically based. Historically, a core component of whiteness was determining who was not white and excluding them from the privileges of whiteness. Harris (1993) argued that having access to unearned privileges, as McIntosh (1989) described, means white people can use and enjoy their whiteness. Whiteness as Assumed Racial Comfort explains how creating "safe space" on college campuses is frequently misinterpreted to mean a lack of social discomfort. Avoiding discomfort allows white people to remain unchallenged and normalizes microaggressions that Students of Color frequently face due to white entitlement to racial comfort (Cabrera et al., 2017; DiAngelo, 2018). I discuss the final two tenets, white complicity and white normativity, in the following section.

White complicity, a concept articulated by Applebaum (2010), explains white students' relationship to their own whiteness and the ways in which white people perpetuate racist systems, intentionally or unintentionally, through their complicity with these systems that benefit them while harming racially oppressed groups. In other words, white complicity helps us understand how white people do not have to engage in overt acts of racism or discrimination in order to contribute to racism and be considered racist (Foste & Irwin, 2020). Secondly, white complicity recognizes that no matter how deeply and complex white people analyze and

understand our racial identity, doing so will not remove us from a system that benefits us because of our whiteness (Foste & Irwin, 2020). The final construct explained by Foste and Irwin (2020), and originally outlined by Frankenberg (1993), is white normativity. White normativity explains the ways in which whiteness is normalized and made to be invisible. The major issue with white normativity is that People of Color are measured against this norm. The result then, as postulated by Foste and Irwin (2020), is that "Identities and ways of knowing that deviate from whiteness are constructed as illegitimate" (p. 448). It is important to note that although these core components of CWS may seem separate, in fact, they are intersectional. As explained by Cabrera, Franklin, and Watson (2017) they reinforce one another in a way that allows the problematic position of whiteness in the racial hierarchy to remain invisible.

Why CWS?

As discussed by Leonardo (2009), white people and whiteness dominate the field of education and play a foundational role in the very operation of education. Additionally, Matias et al. (2014) proposed utilizing a CWS framework to deconstruct dimensions of whiteness. A CWS framework allowed me to critically examine how whiteness operated in an intercultural leadership course that utilized storytelling as a pedagogical approach. I was drawn to the CWS framework because it allowed me an entry point into my study. While I could not understand the daily experiences of People of Color, as a white person, CWS offered an opportunity to better understand how whiteness serves to perpetuate the negative experiences People of Color continue to have in U.S. educational systems and how these negative experiences manifest in classroom communities that use storytelling as a teaching tool. Additionally, I was drawn to this framework because I have been continuously engaged in interrogating my own whiteness and how it shows up and grants me privileges in my day-to-day experiences. This framework

provided me the opportunity to continue the lifelong learning process of understanding my own racial identity within a system of white supremacy.

As noted by Gillborn (2006), there are several precautions to take in using a CWS framework. First, there is the risk of "othering" Scholars of Color who already see and live the realities that CWS strives to surface. Using this framework can also potentially perpetuate white supremacy by recentering and normalizing white people. These considerations were important to keep in mind as I moved throughout the study with a continual consideration of how I could mitigate the risks noted above while drawing upon the benefits of using a CWS framework. One way in which I intentionally strived to reflect upon, and challenge how whiteness was being centered in my study was by elevating the voices of Participants of Color, and placing an increased focus on how the system of whiteness impacted students' experiences with storytelling and a decreased focus on the actual experiences of white students as "normal."

Summary of Chapter Two

Throughout this chapter I discussed existing literature on storytelling as a pedagogical approach that makes its transformative potential for teaching about issues of racial justice quite evident (Banks-Wallace, 1998; Bell, 2009; Delgado, 1989; Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010; Delgado et al., 2012). I outlined the history of storytelling as a meaning-making process and how it has a long and deep history in the human experience, particularly among oppressed groups who relied on personal narratives to pass on their culture, customs, and traditions. For this reason, storytelling as a pedagogy is able to transcend cultural contexts and is relevant to diverse social groups. I also outlined several specific reasons why storytelling as a teaching tool is so powerful. It inspires empathy and connects us to issues from which we may feel disconnected. Storytelling also promotes engagement in a way that simply presenting information cannot. It

breathes life into tough social issues and allows students to consider current issues of racial justice through a lens of humanity. I also outlined the ways in which storytelling can combat whiteness by bringing the invisibility of whiteness to consciousness through the sharing of stories involving racial oppression and highlighting white privilege. Additionally, I provided several specific examples of how storytelling has been implemented into racial justice education contexts and some of the important considerations to make when utilizing a storytelling pedagogy. Furthermore, I outlined the theoretical framework of CWS that guided my study including key scholars, basic assumptions, and key concepts. Exploring the narratives of diverse college students' experiences with storytelling through a CWS lens increased my understanding of the nuances of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education and the ways in which the pervasive nature of whiteness disrupts storytelling communities. In the following chapter I will discuss how I pursued engaging and exploring these narratives by outlining the research design of this study.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

In seeking to understand the experiences of five racially diverse undergraduate college students with storytelling as a tool for racial justice education within an intercultural leadership course, I used a critical qualitative research approach. This approach allowed me to deeply understand participants' perspectives of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education while taking into account the impact of their social identities as well as power dynamics on their experiences within the context of the study (Cannella et al., 2016). In this chapter, I will introduce my research design including an overarching description of qualitative research methods. More specifically, I will discuss case study as the method of inquiry for this dissertation and provide justification for using these methods to address my research purpose and question. Subsequently, in this chapter, I will discuss other aspects of the research plan including study participants, data collection and analysis, and timeline of the study. Lastly, I will address measures I took to promote trustworthiness within the study while also discussing possibilities and limitations of the study.

Qualitative Research Design

In this study, I sought to understand racially diverse, undergraduate students' experiences with storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education within an intercultural leadership course. With a focus on storytelling and seeking to deeply understand the experiences of participants from their perspective, a qualitative approach was most appropriate to explore and answer my research question (Stake, 2010). In this study, I did not seek to establish an objective and generalizable truth, as would be the case in quantitative research, but instead my goal was to openly explore and understand the nuances of the phenomenon of storytelling as a teaching and learning tool (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research aims to generate an in-depth description of

people's experiences through participants' own words and on their own terms (Patton, 1982), which aligned with the goals of this study.

In order to address the research questions, a case study was utilized, and more specifically, an instrumental case study. An instrumental case study is used when there is a need for general understanding about an issue, and a certain case can possibly provide additional insight to the issue (Stake, 1995). As discussed by Baxter and Jack (2008), case studies are an effective way to study contextually grounded, complex phenomena using a variety of data sources which allows the research questions to be explored from various vantage points. Through this study, I sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of storytelling. However, I recognized that the context in which storytelling took place was integral to my understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Therefore, case study was advantageous for this study as it allowed me to explore not only the pedagogy of storytelling and how participants experienced it, but also the context of the course itself which undoubtedly impacted participants' experiences with storytelling (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Defining the Case

The case was defined as several sections of an undergraduate leadership course called Culture and Context in Leadership of which I was the instructor. The sections of this course were offered at a large midwestern university during the Fall 2019, Spring 2020, and Fall 2020 semesters. The course design was the same for all three sections, and a storytelling pedagogy was consistently utilized across sections. It is important to note that while the course design and curriculum were the same for all three class sections, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the last half of the Spring 2020 course and the entire Fall 2020 course took place virtually, while the Fall 2019 course section took place in person. The purpose of this course was to help students

develop an understanding of the ways in which culture impacts leadership and how we can

practice leadership to create more inclusive communities. It included discussions on a variety of

tough social issues including conversations around racial justice. Within the course, students

learned about various systems of oppression as well as tools for practicing intercultural

leadership such as empathy, mindfulness, active listening, and intercultural humility. They were

also asked to confront and to unpack their own power and privilege, implicit biases, and

socialization. Storytelling exercises were incorporated into each class section as a teaching tool.

For instance, some activity prompts included: Tell a story about a time when you noticed white

privilege playing out in our life, tell a story about the first time you had to confront race as a

college student, and tell a story about a time when it was challenging to be a member of a social

identity group with which you identify. In addition to the learning objectives of this course, it is

also important to note that these course sections were comprised primarily of white students and

were situated within a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). Thus, this case was well suited to

my research purpose and question as well as to the CWS theoretical framework. The case helped

me understand how students experienced storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education

and more specifically, how students from different racial backgrounds experienced the use of

storytelling in a predominately white classroom setting. The unit of analysis within the case was

defined as the experiences of students who participated in the proposed sections of the Culture

and Context in Leadership course.

Participants

I used purposive sampling to personally and purposely identify potential participants

from the LEAD 350 Culture and Context in Leadership course rosters of which I was the

instructor (Yazan, 2015). As the instructor for these course sections, I had familiarity with

potential participants and personally selected them. Because I hoped to gain an understanding of storytelling as a pedagogy from the experiences of racially diverse college students, I looked for this racial diversity in recruitment of participants. As a reminder, for the purposes of this study, diverse racial backgrounds referred to the differing racial identities of participants. I recruited one participant who identified as Biracial, one participant who identified as Hispanic, one participant who identified as Black, and two participants who identified as white. Participants were recruited through personal contact. Two participants, one who identified as Biracial and one who identified as white, were participants in a pilot study I conducted during Spring 2020 for a Case Study Research course as part of my doctoral coursework. In this pilot study, I asked the same research question, utilized the same theoretical framework, and the participants were students in the LEAD 350 course I instructed during Fall 2019, a section that was included in the parameters by which this case was bound. Data from that pilot study was included in the results of this dissertation. The other three participants were recruited from the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 sections of the Culture and Context in Leadership course.

In order to recruit participants, I sent emails to potential participants with information about the study and in which I invited them to participate. Interested, potential participants were asked to meet with me for additional explanation of the study including details about the research purpose and rationale and the requirements of participants (i.e., time and types of questions to be asked). After this meeting, I sent an informed consent form and the date and time of the first interview to potential participants who were interested. I utilized follow-up recruitment procedures including reminder emails about upcoming interview dates and times that I sent 24 hours prior to the scheduled interview time. I recognized that inconvenience or time conflict could have led to challenges in eliciting responses to the invitation email and in interested

participants dropping out of the study. As college students, participants were incredibly busy and could have realized they did not have the time to dedicate to a study that was not a required part of their educational program. In order to mitigate these obstacles, I ensured time expectations were clear in communications about the study, and that they were adhered to throughout the study. All participants who indicated initial interest in participating in the study remained as active participants throughout the entire study.

Data Collection

In a case study design, at least two different methods of data collection should be utilized in order to explore the research question(s) through various data points and to aid in triangulation of findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this case study I employed two different methods of data collection including in-depth interviews and document analysis of written assignments participants submitted during the class. I discuss these two methods in further detail below.

In-Depth Interviews

I used in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. As discussed by Bhattacharya (2017), my purpose in using in-depth interviews was to, "peel away a superficial understanding of one's experiences to a deeper understanding of one's experiences" (p. 127). In order to have the time and space to dive deeper into participants' experiences, I conducted two interviews with each participant. Each interview lasted no longer than an hour and a half and took place either virtually via Zoom or in a quiet and private space on campus or at a local coffee shop where the participant indicated they felt most comfortable. During the first interview with each participant, I followed a semi-structured interview guide that consisted of prepared questions and potential probes (Bhattacharya, 2017). I first communicated to participants that my goal of the interview was to have a conversation about their experiences, opinions, and feelings

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with storytelling within the Culture and Context course, and to try to see things the way they saw them. I expressed that there were no rights or wrong answers to the questions and that I was genuinely interested in understanding their experiences. I developed the interview questions for the first interview to reflect the idea of building safety and trust by beginning with lower risk questions and then gradually digging deeper. I started the interview with questions to get to know the participant's story more broadly, then focused in on their experience in our Culture and Context class as a whole before moving into how they experienced storytelling with the class. Finally, I began to ask questions about how they perceived the role their racial identity played in their experiences with storytelling within the context of the class. These questions guided our conversation, and when appropriate, our conversation veered in various directions depending on participants' responses. During the second interview, I also followed a semi-structured guide, but I generated questions in response to initial findings from the first interview after transcription and analysis had taken place. Again, these guides served as a foundation for the interviews, and I asked additional questions depending on the responses shared by participants. I audio recorded and transcribed the interviews.

Document Analysis

In addition to interviews, I utilized document analysis to analyze four reflection papers and two written assignments that were completed by each participant during their enrollment in the Culture and Context of Leadership course. Throughout the course, students submitted four reflection papers in which they were asked to reflect on what they had learned during the course. These reflection papers were called "Group Intercultural Exchange" reflection papers. In addition, students were required to submit two papers following two class assignments: "Storytelling Project" reflection and "This I Believe." I analyzed these papers for instances in

which students made reference to storytelling, in what context, and their experiences with it. I describe each of these assignments in further detail below.

Group Intercultural Exchange Reflections. Students were placed into research and discussion groups within the first week of class. Within these groups, they were expected to meet outside of class, four times for at least an hour each time, to debrief and to process through topics discussed in the course and to discuss how these connected to their understanding and practice of leadership. After each meeting, they submitted a one-page reflection paper describing their discussions and making connections to course content.

Storytelling Project Reflection. In this project, students were asked to explore another person's story. This project was not meant to provide an overview of all major life events of the person, but rather, a snapshot into an individual's lived experience. Projects integrated course content concerning various identities such as race, sexuality, gender, etc., and how they shape how we experience the world. The person students chose to have a conversation with had to differ from themselves in at least three major identity groups such as race, class, gender, sexuality, age, socioeconomic status, sex, nationality, ability, religion, politics, or weight/appearance. Students then submitted a paper, video, artwork, etc. that showcased what they learned about the person they interviewed, made connections to class content, and shared what they learned about their own practice of intercultural leadership.

This I Believe. For this project, students wrote or recorded and performed a "This I Believe" essay. The project was developed from a national radio show of the same name (This I Believe, 2021). Students focused their statements on inclusive leadership shaped by the following question: What statements, stories, and histories do you want to highlight to create a personal philosophy of inclusive leadership through this work?

Data Analysis

  I combined several analytical processes in this research. I primarily utilized thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2012), but also employed both an inductive and deductive approach within the same study. Braun and Clarke (2012) advocated for the use of thematic analysis due to its flexibility and accessibility. In other words, there is more than one way to conduct thematic analysis, and for novice researchers, it can be an entry point to data analysis that combats some uncertainty about the process.

Inductive Analysis

  For the interview transcriptions, I followed an inductive, thematic approach to data analysis. That is, I analyzed all of the raw data without any kind of prior testable hypothesis about what I might find (Bhattacharya, 2017). As defined by Braun and Clarke (2012), thematic analysis is a method for systemically organizing and analyzing data in order to gain insights into patterns across data sets. These patterns generated across, not within, data sets are referred to as themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I followed this approach in an effort to allow the data to speak for itself without viewing it through a certain lens or framework. Utilizing this approach was important in order to draw upon the power of storytelling and allow individuals' experiences to do the teaching. I first analyzed all of the raw data. This included familiarizing myself with the data by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts several times. As I read, I highlighted text that struck me as important to the research question and made notes about hunches and connections I was making. These highlighted pieces of text became my codes. Next, I began to organize codes into categories by grouping codes with similarities and identifying connections between and among them. Finally, I identified overall themes and patterns by looking in and across the identified categories. Throughout this process, I kept a reflexivity journal to document

how I was making sense of the data and to document the data analysis process itself. Each interview was transcribed and analyzed using the aforementioned process before the next interview took place.

Between the two interviews of each participant, I engaged in document analysis of participants' reflection papers and assignments. Doing so allowed me to ask follow-up questions in second interviews about observations I was making as I connected data from the first interview to data from the reflection papers and assignments. I analyzed participants' papers for instances in which they referred to storytelling, in what context, and their experiences with it. I used the following question to guide my document review: How do participants refer to their experience of storytelling and in what context? I followed a similar process to analyze the documents as I did to analyze interview transcriptions by reading, re-reading, highlighting particularly impactful text, and looking for patterns not only within the papers, but also in connection to data from the first interview. Furthermore, I analyzed these papers for statements that could potentially verify my findings from the interview data. In this way, the document analysis and the interview data analysis were used in tandem to achieve triangulation.

Deductive Analysis

After completing an inductive analysis and allowing the data to speak for itself, I then went back to the data to conduct a deductive, thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), a deductive data analysis is a top-down approach through which the researcher brings certain ideas, concepts, and theoretical perspectives to interpret the data. This approach was followed in order to make sense of the data through a Critical Whiteness lens. I drew upon the key tenets of CWS adapted to higher education by Cabrera et al. (2017) and Foste and Irwin (2020) to determine if and how these tenets showed up in the data, and to get an overall picture

of the ways in which whiteness influenced the participants' experiences with storytelling. Those key tenets are the following: Whiteness as Colorblindness, Whiteness as Epistemologies of Ignorance, Whiteness as Ontological Expansiveness, Whiteness as Property, Whiteness as Assumed Racial Comfort, White Complicity, and White Normativity (Cabrera et al., 2017; Foste & Irwin, 2020).

Blackout Poetic Transcription

In an effort to draw upon the power of storytelling and to decenter whiteness in analyzing my data and presenting my results, I also utilized a transcription method developed and utilized by Anthony Keith and Crystal Endsley called Blackout Poetic Transcription (BPT). This transcription method allowed me to share individual experiences of participants with storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education within an intercultural leadership course in a creative and artistic way. Keith and Endsley are scholars and spoken word artists who explore ways to incorporate hip hop pedagogy and spoken word poetry into teaching and research, specifically critical qualitative research (Keith & Endsley, 2020). Developed by Keith, BPT incorporates the study of hip hop and blackout poetry. Keith and Endsley (2020) argued that BPT serves as an "anti-racist and decolonizing research method that disrupts mainstream, traditional pedagogies and methodologies, and as a reflexive scholarly praxis for educators and researchers" (p. 57). In the following paragraph, I will detail the step-by-step process of BPT and how I incorporated it into my methodology.

The first step of the BPT process is to interview participants and to transcribe the interviews, which were the first steps of my data collection and analysis. After identifying specific codes from my data, which were direct quotes from participants, I applied the next step of the BPT method which is to literally blackout, or mark through with a black marker or

highlighter, all text that served as identifying information or language that I deemed not directly relevant to answering my research question. Blackout Poetry is then created by turning the remaining text into a poem by reorganizing and adding rhythm and flow, two essential elements of hip hop, to create a story of participants' experiences in poetry form (Keith & Endsley, 2020). I created a poem for each participant comprised of direct quotes from interview data to illustrate their individual stories of their experiences of storytelling as a pedagogy. These poems are presented at the end of Chapter Four.

Timeline of Study

The overall timeframe of the study ran from April 2021 through September 2021. I used the first month of the study to recruit participants, to obtain informed consent forms, and to schedule initial interviews. I sent an initial invitation email to each potential participant at the beginning of April and a follow-up email to potential participants who had not responded to the initial email in mid-April. The first interviews with participants were scheduled during the first two weeks of May 2021. During this initial meeting, I communicated further information about the study to participants, and they signed the informed consent forms. Directly following this conversation, once consent was freely given and documented, I began the first interview. I conducted initial interview transcription and analysis during the last two weeks of May and document analysis during the first two weeks of June. I scheduled follow-up interviews during the last two weeks of June. These interviews began with member checks of initial findings from the first interview. I transcribed and analyzed second interviews during the month of July, and then engaged in overall data analysis and generation of findings during July and August. I sent out an email to participants at the beginning of August with final member checks of findings.

Finally, I wrote the results, discussion, and conclusion sections of the dissertation throughout the months of August and September.

Trustworthiness

According to Tracy (2010), trustworthiness is an important component of qualitative research needed to establish credibility. Credibility refers to the believability of the research findings; promoting trustworthiness contributes to that believability. I employed several practices outlined by Tracy (2010) to establish trustworthiness and credibility including thick description, crystallization, and multivocality. Thick description refers to how the complexity of the data is illustrated (Tracy, 2010). Thorough and illustrative detail is provided in describing results so that readers are able to come to their own conclusion about the data. In presenting my results I am intentional to show rather than tell by providing descriptions that dive beneath the surface such as describing not only what is being said by participants, but also what is not being said. Doing so will give readers the opportunity to come to their own conclusions about the data presented that may or may not align with my own.

Crystallization is similar to triangulation in that it encourages researchers to gather multiple sources of data, to use several theoretical frameworks, to diversify the types of data collected, and to employ various data analysis methods (Tracy, 2010). The difference, however, is that the purpose of doing so in crystallization is not to come to a more valid, single truth, but to "open up a more complex, in-depth, but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue" (Tracy, 2010, p. 844). I employed crystallization in several ways. First, I gathered multiple sources and types of data including interview data and document analysis data. Incorporating data from these two different sources opened up more complex exploration of my research questions. Additionally, by including participants from different racial backgrounds, I was able

to explore the pedagogy of storytelling from diverse perspectives and to analyze it from a critical perspective. Lastly, by using various data analysis methods, including inductive and deductive analysis, and well as BPT, I had the opportunity to see the data from new perspectives. These practices helped me achieve crystallization in my study.

Multivocality was also imperative to establishing credibility in my study, as it involved analyzing experiences from participants' points of view. As noted by Tracy (2010), multivocality becomes especially important when differences in identities are present. It requires that researchers be attuned to cultural differences between participants and themselves. Due to the differences in racial identity between me and some participants, it was essential that I paid close attention to viewpoints that differed from my own and the ways in which race shaped participants' experiences with storytelling. I also achieved multivocality by engaging in close collaboration with participants through relationship-building and member reflections. Participants were involved in the research process not only as interview respondents, but also as team members in developing mutual understanding. Member reflections were an important part of this process. Member reflections involved seeking input from participants during data analysis and reporting. I engaged participants in written and verbal dialogue about my findings and interpretations of them. Space was provided for participants to ask questions, to give feedback, and ultimately to affirm or critique interpretations.

Limits and Possibilities of the Study

This study had the possibility of expanding the ways in which we understand how storytelling can be used as a tool for praxis. More specifically, it presented an opportunity to gain new insight into if and how whiteness manifests itself in a pedagogy rooted in CRT, such as storytelling, and how that manifestation or lack thereof affected racially diverse participants'

experiences in racial justice education curriculum. We often strive to understand how racial marginalization affects Students of Color on college campuses but less often turn our attention to the underlying circumstances that cause marginalization to occur. Through the lens of Critical Whiteness, this study had the possibility of increasing our understanding of the role whiteness plays in limiting the effectiveness and safety of racial justice education curriculum. Moreover, findings from this study added additional nuanced understanding to the knowledge base about the power of storytelling as a pedagogy for social justice, and in this case, racial justice education.

There were also several limitations to this study. First, as a white person, my interpretations of the experiences of Students of Color were made from an outsider's perspective. My positionality likely resulted in a lower sense of trust between Participants of Color and me that ultimately affected what they were willing to share with me and hindered my ability to fully understand and express some of the participants' experiences. Another limitation was the small pool from which to recruit participants, which resulted in some racial backgrounds not being represented in my study. For instance, there is no representation of Asian American or Native American student experiences in my study. While I did reach out to recruit two students who identified as Asian American, neither responded to my recruitment emails. This lack of racial diversity in my findings is a limitation.

Additionally, it is imperative to recognize another limitation could be the tendency to depend on the individual Participants of Color in my study to represent the experiences of all students of their same racial background. For instance, with only one participant who identified as Hispanic, it is important that readers not assume that his experiences are representative of all other students who also identify as Hispanic in a similar class context. The same can be said for

the experiences of the participant who identified as Black and the participant who identified as Biracial. My findings illustrate individual students' experiences, but their experiences were not necessarily representative of all students with similar identities, and readers should not assume this to be the case.

Additionally, as a white person who is no exception to the ways in which whiteness operates as a seemingly invisible force that affords me privileges, it is also possible that my interpretation of the ways in which whiteness showed up in participants' experiences is incomplete. In other words, I may have been unable to fully recognize all the ways in which whiteness impacted participants' experiences since inherently, it is meant for me to remain oblivious to it. Furthermore, my role as instructor of the course could have conflicted with my role as researcher. Participants may have been less likely to be fully open with me about their experiences, especially if they were negative, in an effort to save face.

A final limitation of my study was that while I sought to understand students' experiences with storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education, specifically, the course by which the case was bound was not purely focused on racial justice. Rather, the course that bound this study, Culture and Context in Leadership, focused on the impact of many different social identities. While race was a focus of one of the units in the course, other identity groups such as class, gender, sex, sexual orientation, ability, religion, etc. were also focused on within the context of the course. It is possible that participants of a course or workshop that was solely focused on race and racial justice education may have had different or additional experiences to share about their perceptions of storytelling as a pedagogical approach to racial justice education, which would have expanded the potential responses and interpretations to my research question.

Summary of Chapter Three

      In this chapter, I introduced my research design, discussed case study as the method of inquiry for this dissertation and provided justification for these methods to be used to address my research purpose and question. In seeking to understand the experiences of five racially diverse undergraduate college students with storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education within an intercultural leadership course, I utilized a qualitative research methodology, and more specifically an instrumental case study within which I engaged in interview and document analysis. In this chapter, I also discussed other aspects of the research design including study participants, data collection and analysis, and timeline of the study. Finally, I addressed measures I took to promote trustworthiness, and I discussed the possibilities and limitations of the study. In the following chapter, I will present the findings that resulted from my data analysis.

Chapter 4 - Findings

In this chapter I present findings from the data analysis I conducted to answer my research question: How do participants from diverse racial backgrounds experience storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice within an intercultural leadership course? In order to discuss these findings while maintaining participant confidentiality, I utilize the following pseudonyms: Cambria, Jeff, Rose, Alex, and Jordan. The chapter will begin with introductions of each participant followed by presentation of findings including themes, sub-themes, and direct quotes from participants to support my findings. It will also include individual poems created using Blackout Poetic Transcription (BPT) to illustrate each participant's experience with storytelling. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a summary of the research findings.

Participant Introductions

Cambria identified as a Biracial woman coming from a small, tight-knit family with a white mother and an African American father. At the time of the study, she was a junior in college majoring in marketing and minoring in leadership studies with the goal of making positive change in a larger organization after graduation. She was a student athlete, and passionate about yoga and self-enlightenment.

Jeff identified as a white man who grew up in a very small, predominantly Catholic town in which there was little to no racial diversity. Graduating from high school in a class of thirty, he was used to an environment of knowing everyone and everyone knowing him. There was not a focus on learning about or understanding differences in regard to social identities in his small town, so coming to the university was a big leap out of his comfort zone. In college he began meeting people who were much different than him with unique backgrounds and life

experiences, which he found to be exciting and enlightening. He was a junior in college at the time of the study and was majoring in life sciences with a minor in leadership studies.

Rose identified as a white woman majoring in athletic training and minoring in leadership studies, who was a senior at the time of the study. She expressed that she grew up with only people who talked like her and looked like her, and she was raised in a church where God tells you to be kind and treat people the way you want to be treated. When she got to high school, her circle expanded to include more friends from different racial backgrounds. As she began hearing their stories of personal experiences with racial discrimination, her eyes began to be opened to a reality of the world she did not know.

Alex identified as a Hispanic man who was a senior at the time of the study. He comes from a four-person family with two sisters and a mother. As a member of a single-parent household, he grew up always hovering over the poverty line and learning to rely upon himself to pay for school. He experienced a significant amount of hardship in high school that led him to stop caring about school and grades as he struggled with his mental health. However, there were a few teachers in his high school who really invested in him and his success and pushed him to keep going. He was selected to participate in a program called Multicultural Academic Program Success (MAPS), which brought him to the university to pursue his passions of business and programming through a management information systems major.

Jordan identified as a Black man from a large metropolitan area. At the time of the study, he was a sophomore who was double majoring in marketing and sales with a minor in leadership studies. At one point in his life, he attended a prestigious high school; in fact, it was one of the top high schools in the state. During his high school career, he transferred to a school that was academically one of the worst in the state with teachers frequently coming in and out and without

a strong focus on college. Because of this, it was challenging for him to get adjusted to college life. Additionally, the racial makeup of his high school was predominantly Black and Hispanic, so coming to a Predominantly White Institution was also a culture shock.

These introductions are important to more deeply understand the nuances involved with each of the participants' experiences with storytelling. While the study focused on how racial identity impacted participants' experiences, it is important to note and to consider how intersecting identities and background experiences of the participants also played a role in the findings presented in the following sections. Due to my focus on the impact of racial identity on participants' experiences and to combat a colorblind mentality that serves to perpetuate whiteness, throughout the next two chapters I will include the participants' racial identity in parenthesis following their name.

Findings

What permeated the data was an overall finding that the power of storytelling as a pedagogy is not black and white. A significant theme in storytelling literature is an emphasis on the power of storytelling as a pedagogy (Banks-Wallace, 1998; Bell, 2009; Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010; Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pyke, 2010; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Some literature does point to the potential challenges with storytelling such as participants' perceived sense of safety, the willingness of majority group members to listen and engage, and the potential for majority group members to hijack the conversation (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Senehi et al., 2009). However, the majority of literature conveys an understanding that there lies an overwhelming power in using stories as a teaching and learning tool for racial justice education. While findings from this study support this notion of storytelling as a powerful and transformational pedagogy, they also bring to light

significant challenges with the use of storytelling, and constant tensions that exist for participants when engaging in storytelling exercises, especially when considering the racial identity of students and the racial makeup of the classroom context. These findings are discussed in greater detail below.

I identified three significant themes in the data that respond to my research question. These themes include: Storytelling is a Powerful and Empowering Teaching Tool, Hesitancy in Being the Storyteller, and The Classroom Door is not a Whiteness Gatekeeper. Each of these themes are discussed below and supported with categories and codes from interview and document analysis data (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Summary of Findings

Research Question: How do participants from diverse racial backgrounds experience storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice within an intercultural leadership class?	
Themes	**Sub-Themes**
Storytelling is a Powerful and Empowering Teaching Tool	Promotes Empathy to Drive Change
	Fosters Engagement and Connection to Issues
	Raises Consciousness of Differing Truths
	Gets to the Heart of Why
Hesitancy in Being the Storyteller	Requires Vulnerability
	Fear of Judgment
	Requires a Cost/Benefit Analysis
The Classroom Door is not a Whiteness Gatekeeper	Class Context Matters
	Race/Intersecting Identities Matter
	Being the "Face of the Race"

Storytelling is a Powerful and Empowering Teaching Tool

Participants found the use of storytelling in the classroom to be both "powerful" and "empowering" for several reasons, including that it: 1) promotes empathy to drive change, 2) fosters engagement and connection to issues, 3) raises consciousness of differing truths, and 4)

gets to the heart of why. Each of these sub-themes will be discussed in detail in the following sections. For a summary of these sub-themes, see Table 4.2.

Promotes Empathy to Drive Change. Participants not only expressed the ways in which stories shared in the class developed empathy in them and in their classmates, but also, they discussed the drive for change that empathy inspired within them. For example, Jeff (white man) said, "If someone had been treated poorly or unfairly because of their race it makes you think about what if that was me being treated like that." Jordan (Black man) said, "Storytelling helps especially for empathetic people because even though sometimes you'll never have that experience you can try to put yourself in that person's shoes and imagine how you would feel if you were put in that situation." Furthermore, Cambria (Biracial woman) expressed how stories inspired empathy in a way that statistics and numbers could not and the importance of empathy in being moved to create change. She said the following:

> Stats don't do it. Like you can hear 50% of this class has experienced racial slurs. Like okay that's a number. That's kind of a shock, but no, I want to hear the emotional side of those people. Like what did they feel in that moment when they were called that? What did they feel when they experienced that, because I don't think you can change the world unless you can feel something. So, if you can't feel something, how are you supposed to make the next move forward?

She continued, "…because you can get these stats from anywhere, and they could do surface level impact, but storytelling is where you're going to get to the depth of people around you and the change that is going to happen is in the feeling and not just the knowing."

Similarly, Alex (Hispanic man) expressed how stories can lead to empathy which then leads to action. He said, "If the story touches you, you know, makes you believe what they've

gone through, and you believe that's something that shouldn't happen, positive actions could come about." Lastly, Rose (white woman) shared how storytelling actually helped her build her empathy skills. She said, "I think I also learned how to be more empathetic by hearing the stories because I think with the storytelling piece you can learn a lot more about how people actually feel." This sentiment was reflected in her Storytelling Project reflection she submitted during the class when she wrote, "He [her friend she interviewed for the assignment] shared heartbreaking stories that left me in tears." This finding can be summed up well by a statement Cambria (Biracial woman) made regarding how hearing stories made her feel like she was on a journey with the storyteller saying the following:

> No matter who was telling a story, I could really tell in their voice how much it hurt them or what they'd been through. I felt like I was with them on that journey, like my heart went out to them, like I'm here, like I feel you. There were times when I was crying over someone else's story, because you could feel the hurt they had behind it.

Storytelling helped students tap into the feelings experienced by their classmates who were affected by social injustices and inspired a drive to contribute to social change. In addition to building empathy, participants described how storytelling contributed to their engagement in the class and how connected they felt to current social issues. That sub-theme is discussed in the following section.

Fosters Engagement and Connection to Issues. As previously discussed, one of the reasons storytelling is so powerful is due to its ability to foster deep engagement and to connect participants to social issues that may seem separate from them. Jeff (white man) said the following:

> You can hear about an issue all you want, but when someone tells you their personal
>
> experience with it, how it affected them…. I think it allows you to connect not only to
>
> that person but that issue on a deeper level with more understanding.

In particular, participants discussed the impact stories had on them when they were shared by individuals in the class with whom they had formed relationships. Jeff (white man) explained, "Hearing somebody I'm going to class with everyday tell you about this story they experienced…. I definitely think it's positive in that way because it allows you to connect on a deeper level." He continued by saying, "It could be a very tragic story, but if you're just reading it from a paper or something and you don't know the person and they're a million miles away, it's just so much harder to connect to." And finally, to conclude his thoughts, he said, "You don't always care about it until it affects somebody you love. It's kind of like that." Rose (white woman) shared a similar experience as she described a relationship she had built with one of her group members in the class and how that impacted her desire to learn about the injustices faced by her classmate. She said:

> Getting to hear her story, if some random person would have tried to talk about it, I
>
> probably wouldn't have cared to listen. But, since it was her and it was something that
>
> had a huge impact on her, I wanted to know more about how it affected her.

In addition to building connection to issues, participants described how storytelling increased their overall engagement in the class. In regard to fostering engagement, Jeff (white man) remarked that storytelling made the class feel much more "real," and how that helped him to retain what he had learned. In one of his Group Intercultural Exchange reflection papers submitted during the class, he wrote, "After I finish most classes, I forget everything that I learned but not this class." Rose (white woman) shared how storytelling helped her to engage in

conversations she might otherwise have been hesitant to have. She said, "It [storytelling] kind of opened my eyes up to a lot of stuff and I kind of had a wall before and it broke down that wall." Jordan (Black man) also expressed how storytelling increased his engagement in class: "It's better to get to like hear a person's like real life experience versus like a theoretical situation that happens in like a textbook." Similarly, Alex (Hispanic man) shared how storytelling increased his engagement. He said, "The stories of people's experiences, they just kind of catch my ears, and I just thought storytelling was an amazing concept for a class where we were able to talk about all these taboo topics." Similarly, in one of his Group Intercultural Exchange reflection papers submitted during the course, Alex discussed how one of his group members grew from hearing people's stories. He said, "My group member grew by having her eyes opened by other people's stories and having deeper connections with everyone." Storytelling seemed to act as a bridge that connected majority group members to issues of racial justice that did not necessarily affect them, created a learning environment in which participants were more open to engaging in tough conversations, and ultimately fostered a deeper engagement with the material. In this same vein, storytelling helped students increase awareness of realities that were different than their own. I discuss this finding in the next section.

Raises Consciousness of Differing Truths. Storytelling served as a conscious-raising tool, an aspect of critical pedagogy that is central to Freire's (2018) work. Participants expressed the ways in which listening to and telling stories raised their consciousness about the existence and validity of differing truths. Jeff (white man) said the following:

> Talking with other people in the groups, hearing their stories was interesting, it was kind of like, you realize how different their stories were from yours, like how they grew up and how they were treated and stuff they had to worry about.

Cambria (Biracial woman) discussed the impact stories had on her in regard to hearing differing truths related to racial diversity. She said:

> I learned a lot about like perspectives when it came to storytelling and diversity…. Hearing their stories allowed me to kind of see that everyone is different. They helped me open up a little bit and see the world from a different perspective, and I think that's a huge point of storytelling. I think I assumed every white person had gone through the same stuff, and with storytelling I was like, "Woah." That was not the case at all.

Further, Cambria discussed the importance of stories in hearing different truths as she expressed the following sentiment in one of her reflection papers during the class: "Every person has their own story that needs to be heard, because anything else is just someone's perspective of a person, not that person's truth." Jordan (Black man) shared a similar sentiment in his Storytelling Project reflection during the course. He wrote, "I would never know what it feels like to be a Hispanic woman from Texas with ADHD, but my friend knows exactly how it feels, and this is her story." Furthermore, in his This I Believe statement, Jordan (Black man) shared the following about becoming aware of different truths:

> As I got older, I started to realize more and more that not everyone is the same and not everyone should be treated as such…. What made me change my perspective is seeing all the different people with all sorts of different situations. I know that everyone has their own story, and I have my own, so instead of trying to treat everybody the same we all need to help the others who may not be as fortunate and try to help them be on the same level of fortune as us if it is possible.

Alex (Hispanic man) shared the following about understanding different truths:

So, with storytelling, all these people who are different…. Their experiences are

absolutely almost 100% of time completely different from what you have experienced,

and so that's why I believe storytelling is very important, especially when trying to learn

about things of social justice going on in society right now. Because you get different

perspectives and different experiences.

Interestingly, storytelling not only aided participants in learning about others' truths, but it also

helped them engage more deeply with their own. For example, Jeff (white man) said the

following, "I think storytelling helps you understand someone else's experiences, but it helped

me understand more about myself because you're thinking critically about these experiences

you've been through." Furthermore, in his Storytelling Project reflection he submitted during the

class, he described how storytelling helped him understand the reality of multiple truths. He said,

"I shouldn't have to apologize for growing up in a two-parent household, but I am aware of this

and understand others may have faced different challenges coming from a one parent home."

Participants seemed to express that storytelling provided a tool through which to engage

in critical thinking not only about others' experiences, but also their own. It helped them

understand that varying truths exist and are valid, while digging deeper into the *why* underlying

different beliefs. This sub-theme is discussed further in the following section.

Gets to the Heart of Why. Several participants explained how storytelling served as a

powerful tool to deepen understanding around why people view the world the way they do,

which deepened understanding and empathy. For instance, Alex (Hispanic man) shared, "We

usually just hear people's opinion, but with storytelling, we get to hear why they believe in that

opinion." He also expressed the same idea with regard to the opportunity to share his own beliefs

saying, "That's the most important part of storytelling. It allows you to explain why you believe

in something or don't believe in something." Rose (white woman) described how her experience in class was different than other experiences she's had because of the storytelling approach to teaching and learning. She said, "You're usually just asked what you believe, but you're never asked why. The why is where the stories come out." Lastly, she made the connection between storytelling, understanding someone's why, and building empathy:

> Until you hear their stories, you're never going to understand why they are the way they are. And then once you understand that, I feel like you can empathize with each other, which I think is a huge part of storytelling.

> These findings represent the powerful nature of storytelling and help to justify why it is highly regarded as a transformative tool for teaching about difficult and controversial topics. Participants overwhelmingly expressed that storytelling played a foundational role in their desire to engage and learn in the course. As Cambria (Biracial woman) said, "I love this concept [storytelling]. I love these types of classes where you can discuss, and you can feel open minded." Rose (white woman) went so far as to say the following:

> As a student, that class was one of the best classes I've ever take. I don't think I or anybody would have enjoyed it without the storytelling piece. I honestly think the class would be awful without storytelling. It's the most important piece to the class, I think.

Alex (Hispanic man) expressed his views on storytelling as a teaching tool for racial justice when he said, "In terms of sharing stories when it comes to racial justice, I think that is the most impactful way to try to show others what racial justice and injustice is." However, not all experiences with storytelling that participants explained were positive. There seemed to be a constant tension participants experienced when engaging in storytelling that reflected an

existence of hesitancy, especially when being in the position of the storyteller, which is the

second theme and is discussed next.

Table 4.2 Summary of Theme 1: Storytelling is a Powerful and Empowering Teaching Tool

Sub-Themes	Codes	Participant	Analysis Tool
Promotes Empathy to Drive Change	If someone had been treated poorly or unfairly because of their race it makes you think about what if that was me being treated like that.	Jeff (white man)	Interview
	Storytelling helps especially for empathetic people because even though sometimes you'll never have that experience you can try to put yourself in that person's shoes and imagine how you would feel if you were put in that situation.	Jordan (Black man)	Interview
	Stats don't do it, like you can hear 50% of this class has experienced racial slurs, like okay that's a number that's kind of a shock, but no, I want to hear the emotional side of those people, like what did they feel in that moment when they were called that like, what did they feel when they experienced that because I don't think you can change the world unless you can feel something. So, if you can't feel something how are you supposed to make the next move forward?	Cambria (Biracial woman)	Interview
	I think I also learned how to be more empathetic by hearing the stories because I think with the storytelling piece you can learn a lot more about how people actually feel.	Rose (white woman)	Interview
	He [her friend she interviewed for the assignment] shared heartbreaking stories that left me in tears.	Rose (white woman)	Document Analysis
	If the story touches you, you know, makes you believe what they've gone through, and you believe that's something that shouldn't happen, positive actions could come about.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview
Fosters Engagement and Connection to Issues	You can hear about an issue all you want, but when someone tells you their personal experience with it, how it affected them, I think it allows you to connect not only to that person but that issue on a deeper level with more understanding. You don't always care until it affects somebody you love, it's kind of like that.	Jeff (white man)	Interview
	The stories of people's experiences, they just kind of catch my ears, and I just thought storytelling was an amazing concept for a class where we were able to talk about all these taboo topics	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview
	Getting to hear her story, if some random person would have tried to talk about it, I probably wouldn't have cared to listen, but since it was her and it was something that had a	Rose (white woman)	Interview

	huge impact on her I wanted to know more about how it affected her.		
	It's better to get to like hear a person's like real life experience versus like a theoretical situation that happens in like a textbook.	Jordan (Black man)	Interview
	My group member grew by having her eyes opened by other people's stories and having deeper connections with everyone.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Document Analysis
	After I finish most classes, I forget everything that I learned but not this class.	Jeff (white man)	Document Analysis
Raises Consciousness of Differing Truths	Talking with other people in the groups, hearing their stories was interesting, it was kind of like, how I said earlier, you realize how different their stories were from yours, like how they grew up and how they were treated and stuff they had to worry about.	Jeff (white man)	Interview
	I learned a lot about like perspectives when it came to storytelling and diversity… hearing their stories allowed me to kind of see that everyone is different… they helped me open up a little bit and see the world from a different perspective and I think that's a huge point of storytelling.	Cambria (Biracial woman)	Interview
	So with storytelling all these people who are different… their experiences absolutely almost 100% of time completely different from what you have experienced and so that's why I believe storytelling is very important, especially when trying to learn about things of social justice going on in society right now because you get different perspectives and different experiences.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview
	Every person has their own story that needs to be heard because anything else is just someone's perspective of a person, not that person's truth.	Cambria (Biracial woman)	Document Analysis
	I would never know what it feels like to be a Hispanic woman from Texas with ADHD, but my friend knows exactly how it feels, and this is her story.	Jordan (Black man)	Document Analysis
Gets to the Heart of *Why*	We usually just hear people's opinion, but with storytelling we get to hear why they believe in that opinion.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview
	That's the most important part of storytelling, it allows you to explain why you believe in something or don't believe in something.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview
	You're just asked what you believe but you're never asked why because the why is where the stories come out.	Rose (white woman)	Interview
	Until you hear their stories you're never going to understand why they are the way they are and then once you understand that I feel like you can empathize with each other which I think is a huge part of storytelling.	Rose (white woman)	Interview

Hesitancy in Being the Storyteller

All participants described instances in which they were overcome with hesitancy while being in the position of the storyteller. While Cambria (Biracial woman) described storytelling as "powerful," she described her feelings of being the storyteller as "hesitant." Similarly, Jordan (Black man) described storytelling as a "predicament" for him. For varying reasons, there seemed to be several factors at play that resulted in participants holding back or not fully engaging in storytelling activities. These findings were identified in three different sub-themes including: 1) requires vulnerability, 2) fear of judgment, and 3) engaging in a cost/benefit analysis. These sub-themes will be discussed in more detail in the following sections. For a summary of these sub-themes, see Table 4.3.

Requires Vulnerability. Participants described how sharing personal stories required a great degree of vulnerability. A discomfort with being vulnerable, especially with class members who they perhaps did not know well, contributed to a feeling of hesitancy. Storytelling essentially asked students to open up and to expose very personal aspects of who they were and their experiences. For instance, Cambria (Biracial woman) explained, "Now where the stories come in, that's my life, that's my story, that's what I've been through. So yes, I did share some stories, but I know I was hesitant because of the fact that like, this is me." Both Cambria (Biracial woman) and Jeff (white man) associated this level of vulnerability with fear saying, "It was definitely intimidating at first because you had to be vulnerable to share this story, and vulnerability can be scary." Furthermore, "It's a scary spot to be in when you're exposing yourself." Another remark Cambria (Biracial woman) made related to vulnerability and storytelling was, "You want to be able to just be comfortable saying something but when you feel like you have all this pressure to say something, it's a vulnerable spot to be in honestly."

Alex (Hispanic man) also described how the vulnerability required to engage in storytelling impacted his experience. He said, "I think that's the only negative I can think of with storytelling is…. How vulnerable do you feel like becoming?" It became evident that storytelling requires significant vulnerability, which can hold students back from participating. This sub-theme related closely to the next sub-theme, that of fear of judgment.

Fear of Judgment. A fear of vulnerability seemed to have an underlying associate, a fear of judgment. Sharing personal stories opened students up for potential judgment from their peers, whether that was real or perceived judgment. For example, when explaining why he was hesitant to share personal stories, Jeff (white man) said, "The biggest thing is just judgment from others. You're not scared, like, oh they're not going to like the story, but you're just thinking, like, they're gonna judge you for it." He went on to discuss how there were stories of moments in his life he was not proud of and considering how his peers might respond held him back from sharing those stories. He explained, "These were stories you had to tell about yourself that were personal, some that maybe you were proud of and some you weren't as proud of, and so it's intimidating." Additionally, Rose (white woman) said the following:

> When we all shared our stories of what's been hard in each of our lives that was probably the hardest thing because you just had to trust that they weren't going to go and share that with everyone else and they weren't going to judge you or treat you differently.

Overall, a fear of taking a chance and of being vulnerable, but not being understood and instead, being judged by peers, played a significant role in participants feeling hesitant to fully open up and to share personal stories. As Alex (Hispanic man) said, "I wouldn't want people to actually think I'm a bad person or a good person based on something I've said." However, while participants felt this fear, they simultaneously felt a yearning to share personal stories especially

when they felt their stories could be beneficial for others to hear. This constant tension seemed to lead participants to engage in a cost/benefit analysis of sharing personal stories before deciding to do so.

   Engaging in a Cost/Benefit Analysis. Engaging in a cost/benefit analysis of sharing a personal story was illustrative of the tensions that existed for participants with embracing storytelling as a pedagogy. For instance, Jeff (white man) said the following, "You're intimidated or something, and you're not as willing to share even though you have this story that would be very beneficial for others to hear." Alex (Hispanic man) described his dilemma of wanting to use his stories to educate others but knowing the emotions he would have to deal with in doing so. He said the following:

> I like sharing my story. I like being the informative person that gets to share my story for educational purposes. But after telling the story, my mind jogs back to everything, so after going through this prideful moment, it becomes sadness and sorrow. I've had a lot of struggles in my life. I want to share with other people, but you know, bringing it up just brings back emotions that I felt when I was going through it.

Cambria (Biracial woman) described her desire to help others learn by sharing her personal stories while knowing the potential for judgment or misunderstanding. She explained:

> The goal of this class is to open your eyes to see diversity, and if I could have helped one person open their eyes to say, "Woah, I've been looking at this all wrong".… I would rather have that than not share, because three people didn't like me.

Jordan (Black man) described the cost/benefit analysis as a "predicament" for him. He said:

> It's a predicament, because it's like every day there is something that I can speak on in class, but it's always a thing of like, "Well, do I want to speak? Do I not want speak?"

Like, should I say something, will they even take what I say seriously, or why should I have to explain myself to these people?

At the same time, he expressed, "If sharing those stories to the class helped classmates shape their perspective and then think a little differently, then I think that in a way would help me." As students engaged in a personal cost/benefit analysis, it became evident that the individual's racial identity and the racial makeup of the class played a role in the analysis. For instance, Cambria (Biracial woman) said:

I could tell a story about my race or what I've been through or what my family has been through, and there would still be a lack of empathy, or a lack of understanding, or a lack of reasoning, or someone not understanding how I could feel a certain way about a situation, or how I could think that that's something racial-wise I should be upset about.

As I began digging deeper into the data through a Critical Whiteness lens, I started to notice the significant role racial identity played in participants' experiences with storytelling within a predominantly white classroom context. This theme is discussed in detail in the following section.

Table 4.3 Summary of Theme 2: Hesitancy in Being the Storyteller

Sub-Themes	Codes	Participant	Analysis Tool
Requires Trust and Vulnerability	Now where the stories come in, that's my life, that's my story, that's… what I've been through. So yes, I did share some stories, but I know I was hesitant because of the fact that like, this is me.	Cambria (Biracial woman)	Interview
	It was definitely intimidating at first because you had to be vulnerable to share this story and vulnerability can be scary.	Jeff (white man)	Interview
	I think that's the only negative I can think of with storytelling is how vulnerable do you feel like becoming?	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview

Fear of Judgment	The biggest thing is just judgment from others. You're not scared, like, oh they're not going to like the story, but you're just thinking, like, they're gonna judge you for it.	Jeff (white man)	Interview
	When we all shared our stories of what's been hard in each of our lives that was probably the hardest thing because you just had to trust that they weren't going to go and share that with everyone else and they weren't going to judge you or treat you differently.	Rose (white woman)	Interview
	I wouldn't want people to actually think I'm a bad person or a good person based on something I've said.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview
Requires a Cost/Benefit Analysis	It's a predicament because it's like every day there is something that I can speak on in class, but it's always a thing of like well do I want to speak, do I not want speak? Like should I say something, will they even take what I say seriously, or why should I have to explain myself to these people? If sharing those stories to the class helped classmates shape their perspective and then think a little differently then I think that in a way would help me.	Jordan (Black man)	Interview
	The goal of this class is to open your eyes to see diversity, and if I could have helped one person open their eyes to say 'woah, I've been looking at this all wrong,' I would rather have that than not share because three people didn't like me.	Cambria (Biracial woman)	Interview
	You're intimidated or something and you're not as willing to share even though you have this story that would be very beneficial for others to hear.	Jeff (white man)	Interview
	I like sharing my story. I like being the informative person that gets to share my story in educational purposes. But after telling the story, my mind jogs back to everything, so after going through this prideful moment it becomes sadness and sorrow. I've had a lot of struggles in my life. I want to share with other people, but you know, bringing it up just brings back emotions that I felt when I was going through it.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview

The Classroom Door is not a Whiteness Gatekeeper

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) posits that race is pervasive and shapes our daily lived experiences (Matias, Henry, & Darland, 2017). From a CWS perspective, white people tend to perceive white knowledge and experience as superior to all other forms of knowledge and experience. Considering the assumption of CWS that race is pervasive and permeates all areas of our lives, it is no surprise that it also affected our classroom community and the use of storytelling in that community. Regardless of how inclusive and equitable an instructor or facilitator strives to make a learning community, whiteness has impacted and shaped participants' views of the world. The classroom door does not keep this influence of whiteness out; the participants and instructor bring it in.

Whiteness showed up in several ways in the storytelling community within the class. First, given that a white racial identity is considered the norm, white students tended to not share as many personal stories when discussing the impact of racial identity in class. As Cambria (Biracial woman) indicated, "White people in our class were not saying a lot of stuff. I would have loved to hear the stuff that they had experienced, like not being accepted by the minority group." Cambria went on to say, "When you're in the majority of everything there wasn't a lot of talking or exposing." This aligned with Rose's (white woman) experience as a white student in a predominantly white class. She said:

> I mean I don't really have any experience. It [race] hasn't really impacted me in any
> negative way, and it's hard to see the positives if most of the people you're surrounded
> by are having the same experiences. I didn't feel like I could contribute quite as much.
> Like, I could listen and have a conversation and try to learn, but I didn't feel like I could

share as many stories because they would be stories from my friends in high school. But those weren't my stories.

Rose's (white woman) experience reflects the tenet of whiteness that white people tend to see themselves as not having a racial identity. So, when students were asked to share stories about how their racial identity had impacted them, white students did not think that question pertained to them, and they were at a loss for what to share.

Cambria (Biracial woman) also shared the ways in which her prior experiences with whiteness before coming into the class affected her experience with storytelling in the classroom. Coming from a family of an African American father, and a Caucasian mother, she shared experiences of grappling with her racial identity and never feeling like she completely fit in with a specific race. She shared, "I start to contradict my racial identity at the end of the day, because for so long I've been told I'm not Black enough." She shared a similar sentiment in one of her reflection papers during the class. She wrote, "Not being Black enough is a phrase that is always associated with my name and personality…. I was thinking of a specific instance when my friend looked at me and said, 'I always forget that you are Black.'" She also mentioned other times she experienced subtle racist remarks like, "You're not Black enough to do that hair," or "Your hair looks very white." This challenge navigating her racial identity compared to society's perception of her racial identity emerged in her experiences with storytelling. For instance, she explained:

> I didn't say a lot of my stories for the fact that I feel like people wouldn't see me as Black
>
> enough, and I don't know, I never actually thought about it like that, but it's true I never
>
> really shared any experiences of my own. I knew if I shared what I just told you about my
>
> hair, people would be like, "That's not racist." I wanted to kind of make a big impact, so

hence, I never really shared my stories, because it was hard for me to feel like someone

would actually think my stories are racism.

In this case, whiteness controlled the storytelling community. Cambria (Biracial woman) felt like her stories with discrimination would not live up to her white counterparts' expectations of her lived experiences based on their perceptions of her racial identity. Since she had not faced many instances of overt racial discrimination, she feared her stories might not be "Black enough" for her white peers, and thus would not make an impact.

In further looking at the ways in which whiteness influenced the storytelling community, I identified three sub-themes. Those sub-themes are: 1) class context matters, 2) race matters, and 3) being the "face of the race." I discuss each of these themes in the following sections. For a summary of these sub-themes, see Table 4.4.

Class Context Matters. The racial make-up of the class played a role in how participants of different racial backgrounds experienced storytelling. The class sections that participants were part of were comprised of anywhere from 37 to 39 undergraduate students. In the various class sections, there were anywhere from two to seven Students of Color. The class context significantly impacted the participants' experiences with storytelling in different ways, but in particular, it influenced the ways in which Participants of Color perceived storytelling as a pedagogy. For instance, Alex (Hispanic man) said:

Since my classmates were predominantly white, not many of their stories correlated to

that one of the outlier. The outlier will most definitely become the most impactful story.

If you're the outlier in a group, you kind of become the center of attention, not just

because you're talking but because you are an outlier.

Cambria (Biracial woman) emphasized the pressure she felt and the hesitancy in sharing stories because of the racial make-up of the class. She shared the following:

> I didn't have anyone else also Black in the class.... It was kind of hard for me because I was like okay, I'm heading on this road alone. No one here can really relate to what I'm saying. Someone who is white has never experienced the racial slurs, has never experienced those things.... So it's hard to go into it alone. I mean, I would definitely say that was probably a huge part of not telling my story to a bunch of people I knew had never experienced the same thing.

Jordan shared a similar experience saying:

> It's kind of weird when you're a minority in a class full of white people. I'm in class with these people like I kind of know them, but you never really know how a person like can truly feel. I meet a white person and I'm like, "This dude is cool." Like, "Wow. I hope he's not low key racist." In the back of your head, you kind of always have to keep that mentality, because you never know.

It's also important to note that this sense of racial isolation in a predominantly white classroom led to negative emotions. Cambria (Biracial woman) explained this when she remarked, "I had never been in that position where I was the only minority, and everyone was looking at me for answers. It brought out like ears hot, like a very emotional side." It became evident that not only the racial makeup of the class overall, but also participants' individual racial identities in relation to the racial makeup of the class significantly impacted how participants experienced storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice within our intercultural leadership course.

Race/Intersecting Identities Matter. Building on the idea that class context matters, it also became evident that race and intersecting identities mattered in how participants

experienced storytelling. While there were similarities between participants' experiences, there were also notable differences that showcased how race played a role in the storytelling experience. For instance, all participants shared how their racial identity caused them to hold back from sharing personal stories, but for very different reasons. Jeff (white man) explained that being white, and a member of the majority, made him hesitate before sharing stories. He said:

> It may have slightly caused me to hold some stuff back for the sake of talking about struggles. It was something I kind of wanted to hold back like what I've considered a struggle because of my race and identity.

He felt that by sharing his personal struggles with his racial identity, it could potentially come off as offensive to his racially marginalized peers who had faced racial discrimination. Rose (white woman) explained her experience in a similar way by saying, "I was definitely more apt to want to share stories with other people who were white, because it wasn't going to offend them personally." At the same time, however, she explained how her intersecting identities allowed her to show and experience more empathy with those who were sharing stories about race. She explained the following:

> As far as the disability group since I've had those experiences, I honestly think it made me more empathetic to the stories about race. Because even though they are two different challenges, I know how I've been treated differently than the norm, and so I can imagine that they've been treated much differently than the norm, too. So, knowing what I've been through in my own life makes me more empathetic to knowing they've been through that kind of stuff too where they are judged not necessarily on who they are, but for me…. It's been my disability, and for them, it's based on what their skin color is.

While race and intersecting identities impacted white participants' experiences in the storytelling community, they also impacted the experiences of Participants of Color, but in a very different way. For instance, Alex (Hispanic man) shared his experience being the only Hispanic student in the class. He said:

> I think I was the only Hispanic person in that class. So you know, getting it from my Hispanic perspective point of view, everything was more helpful to them than it was to me. But, I still gained a lot of knowledge and experience based on the reactions and how they felt.

Jordan (Black man) also shared how being a member of a racially underrepresented group in the class impacted his experience with storytelling. He said:

> They won't ever understand the feeling of, "Oh well, he only checked my bill, because I am Black" or "They only follow me around the store, because I'm Black." They will never understand that feeling, and they will never be put in that position because they're not Black or they're not a minority. We live in like two different worlds.

Cambria's (Biracial woman) racial identity resulted in significant tension between wanting to share her experiences to help others learn, but also not knowing the response she might receive from her majority group peers. She explained this tension in the following way:

> I kind of contradict myself because I know these people need to hear it. I know they need to hear that little things to a half Black person will affect them. Little things like that will build up and cause a person to be a certain way, but at the same time, it's like, "Why am I going to talk to a bunch of people who I know don't respect me and are not even going to listen to what I'm saying right now?"

She also shared how a desire to not fulfill racial stereotypes caused her to hold back when feeling overwhelmed with emotions saying, "Showing my pure feelings towards certain subjects was really hard for me, because I really didn't want to be that angry minority girl in the class that got mad at any racial slur." Finally, Cambria (Biracial woman) remarked on the challenges of balancing the burden placed on racially marginalized students to educate others. She said, "It's a hard balance to find, because minorities don't want the burden of having all this stuff on their back, but then white people want to know what we've been through." This pressure that she described here directly relates to the next sub-theme: the pressure on racial minority group members to be the "face of the race" in a predominantly white classroom.

Being the "Face of the Race." Cambria (Biracial woman) and Jordan (Black man) spoke repeatedly about the pressure and dissonance they felt in almost feeling forced into a position of being the "face of the race" within the class. Cambria (Biracial woman) said, "I can't be a voice for my entire race." Jordan (Black man) explained the following:

I feel like they [white classmates], in a sense, depend on me to be like the spokesperson for Black people. I don't always want to speak in class. I don't want to be like the person who is always asked questions about race just because I'm Black.

He also shared, "I have to realize like it's not my job to educate you [white classmates] on race. I don't get paid to do this. Google is free." Cambria (Biracial woman) felt pressure both from her majority group peers as well as an overall feeling of wanting to represent her race well and accurately if she was going to be in this position. She shared the tensions she felt with storytelling as a result of this pressure:

In general, I feel like there's a lot of expectations for me as a minority to kind of be looked at like okay let me get more knowledge, so let me look to her… People kind of

assume that like just because you're Black you know all of the troubles of being a Black person. I clearly DO NOT have the knowledge and stories and experiences that a lot of my friends do that would give people an idea of how bad it really is out there. I just felt like I would do my race an injustice if I'm the one, like, if I'm the face of the race.

Alex (Hispanic man) had a somewhat different experience with feeling the pressure to be the "face of the race" as he enjoyed the opportunity to be in a position to educate others. He said:

I was just hoping to be more educational, and I was hoping to inform them and hopefully give them a view of people of my background. If I educate people and teach them how people around me struggle through my failures and successes, then I'm being somewhat helpful, even though I can't personally speak for everyone... I don't mind sharing my story, and so, if I can at least, you know, get my story out there, I can also share experiences from other people that I've seen or heard that have a similar culture and background as me. We have to get our stories out there, and because we are outnumbered, someone has to speak up.

Looking at the participants' experiences with storytelling through a CWS lens provided important insight to the role race and whiteness played in the storytelling community. While participants of diverse racial identities had similar experiences with the tensions of engaging in storytelling, these tensions existed for very different reasons and were shaped by their racial identities in comparison to the racial make-up of the classroom community at large.

Table 4.4 Summary of Theme 3: The Classroom Door is not a Whiteness Gatekeeper

Sub-Themes	Codes	Participant	Analysis Tool
Class Context Matters	Since my classmates were predominantly white, not many of their stories correlated to that one of the outlier. The outlier will most definitely become the most impactful story. If you're the outlier in a group you kind of become the center of attention, not just because you're talking but because you are an outlier.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview
	I didn't have anyone else also Black in the class… it was kind of hard for me because I was like okay, I'm heading on this road alone, no one here can really relate to what I'm saying… Someone who is white has never experienced the racial slurs, has never experienced those things, so it's hard to go into it alone, so I mean I would definitely say that was probably a huge part of not telling my story to a bunch of people I knew had never experienced the same thing.	Cambria (Biracial woman)	Interview
	It's kind of weird when you're a minority in a class full of white people…I'm in class with these people like I kind of know them, but you never really know how a person like can truly feel. I meet a white person and I'm this dude is cool, like wow, like I hope he's not low key racist. In the back of your head, you kind of always have to keep that mentality, because you never know.	Jordan (Black man)	Interview
Race/Intersecting Identities Matter	It may have slightly caused me to hold some stuff back for the for the sake of talking about struggles, it was something I kind of wanted to hold back like what I've considered a struggle because of my race and identity.	Jeff (white man)	Interview
	I was definitely more apt to want to share stories with other people who were white because it wasn't going to offend them personally.	Rose (white woman)	Interview
	As far as the disability group since I've had those experiences, I honestly think it made me more empathetic to the stories about race because even though they are two different challenges I know how I've been treated differently than the norm, and so I can imagine that they've been treated much differently than the norm too. So knowing what I've been through in my own life makes me more empathetic to knowing they've been through that kind of stuff too where they are judged not necessarily on	Rose (white woman)	Interview

	who they are, but for it's been my disability and for them it's based on what their skin color is.		
	I think I was the only Hispanic person in that class so you know, getting it from my Hispanic perspective point of view, everything was more helpful to them than it was to me, but I still gained a lot of knowledge and experience based on the reactions and how they felt.	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview
	They won't ever understand the feeling of oh well, he only checked my bill because I was Black or they only follow me around the store because I'm Black. They will ever understand that feeling and they will never be put in that position because they're not Black or they're not a minority…we live in like two different worlds	Jordan (Black man)	Interview
	Showing my pure feelings towards certain subjects was really hard for me because I really didn't want to be that angry minority girl in the class that got mad at any racial slur.	Cambria (Biracial woman)	Interview
Being the "Face of the Race"	I feel like they [white classmates], in a sense, depend on me to be like the spokesperson for Black people. I don't always want to speak in class. I don't want to be like the person who is always asked questions about race just because I'm Black	Jordan (Black man)	Interview
	I have to realize like it's not my job to educate you [white classmates] on race. I don't get paid to do this. Google is free.	Jordan (Black man)	Interview
	In general I feel like there's a lot of expectations for me as a minority to kind of be looked at like okay let me get more knowledge, so let me look to her… People kind of assume that like just because you're Black you know all of the troubles of being a Black person. I clearly DO NOT have the knowledge and stories and experiences that a lot of my friends do that would give people an idea of how bad it really is out there. I just felt like I would do my race an injustice if I'm the one, like, if I'm the face of the race.	Cambria (Biracial woman)	Interview
	I was just hoping to be more educational, and I was hoping to inform them and hopefully give them a view of people of my background. If I educate people and teach them how people around me struggle through my failures and successes, then I'm being somewhat helpful, even though I can't personally speak for everyone... I don't mind sharing my story, and so, if I can at least you know get my story out there, I can also share experiences from other people	Alex (Hispanic man)	Interview

that I've seen or heard that have a similar culture and
background as me. We have to get our stories out
there, and because we are outnumbered, someone has
to speak up.

Blackout Poetic Transcription Narratives

In addition to identifying the aforementioned themes, I utilized Blackout Poetic

Transcription (Keith & Endsley, 2020) to illustrate each participants' individual, unique

experience with storytelling within the class context. Following the blackout poetic transcription

method described in Chapter Three, each poem was developed using direct quotes from

interview data. During interviews I asked each participant to describe their experience with

storytelling within the context of our classroom community in one word. I have bolded these

words in the poems that are presented below.

Cambria (Biracial woman)
two years ago,
realized I didn't want to be in the Black or white category,
but Biracial
trying to figure out my racial identity, every day is a conflict
who are you?
told I'm not Black enough
struggled with my racial identity, put it on pause
didn't have a place I could talk about it
got to this class, a place I could dig deeper
interested in that side of me because the stories I was allowed to tell

I love this concept, these classes
storytelling, the power to understand a person to their core
where you get to the depth of people
only way to feel empathy is to know stories of people
hearing their stories allowed me to see, everyone is different
assumed every white person had gone through the same
with storytelling,
woah, that was not the case
everyone has a story
no matter who was telling a story, I could tell in their voice how much it hurt
can't change the world unless you can feel

storytelling challenges you to be vulnerable
to the class, to yourself
letting yourself figure things out; it's scary when you figure things out

class gave me a place to explain
I'm not just a stereotype
opened up people's eyes, she is more than just a race
a biracial woman, I didn't disclose a lot,
a scary place to be in, exposing yourself
hesitant because… this is me
were my stories worthy of being contributed?
in the minority, but also the majority; in both, experienced both
haven't had huge moments of police brutality or not being allowed in places
wanted to make a big impact
wanted people to be aware minorities are going through stuff
they have no idea
hard to feel like my stories are racism
people wouldn't see me as Black enough
didn't feel comfortable saying everything I've been through
feeling alone
the fear of not being understood

one of few minorities in class, the only Black person in the room
being a minority in a class of a majority, intimidating
always a lens on me
one Black girl in class, I have no backup
heading on this road alone, no one here can relate
hard to show pure feelings – didn't want to be that angry minority girl
me versus a whole room of the majority
don't know if they respect your race at all

being the storyteller, you get a lot of questions
people assume just because you're Black you know the troubles of being a Black person
everyone looking at me for answers
a voice for my entire race, a face for a race
would do my race an injustice,
if I'm the face of the race

it's a hard balance
minorities don't want the burden
white people want to know what we've been through
do they deserve to hear my story?

goal of this class, open your eyes to see diversity
if I helped one person open their eyes:
"Woah, I've been looking at this all wrong"

would rather have that than not share
only way to feel empathy is to know stories of people
definitely brought our class closer
change is in the feeling, not the knowing
powerful
best way to teach about racial justice,
stories

Jeff (white man)
growing up, everybody was exactly me
predominantly Catholic town,
everybody was white, everyone was straight
my small town was lacking cultural diversity
as well as
a desire to educate on the mistreatment of
different races, genders, sexualities, religions, culture
didn't meet people who were different
coming to college, a great experience
learning from other people

this class, personal stories
three people in my group,
sitting by each other every day
easy to discuss with that close relationship

storytelling – understand someone else's experiences
put yourself in their shoes
someone in class tells their personal experience
connect to that person, that issue
on a deeper level with more understanding
a very tragic story from a newspaper
don't know the person, harder to connect
don't care until it affects somebody you love

storytelling – thinking critically about experiences you've been through
things I hadn't considered about myself
someone treated poorly or unfairly because of their race,
what if that was me being treated like that?
how privileged I am because I'm white
not being ashamed, don't need to apologize
didn't choose how I was born, the world I was brought into
before storytelling, I would say it to myself
wasn't something I said out loud to someone else

privileged being a male, my religion, my race
intimidated to share

hold back because my identity
hasn't really been a struggle
fear of offending someone
intimidating because you had to be vulnerable to share
vulnerability can be scary, thinking they're going to judge you

storytelling – scary and intimidating at first,
but very **empowering**
needs give and take
giving your story
listening to others
get twice as much from listening to story than telling
without it, wouldn't have been as engaged
after most classes, forget everything learned
not this class
hearing stories allows you to connect
storytelling made the class real

Alex (Hispanic man)
I am Hispanic, my ethnicity is from Mexico
grandparents came from nothing
single head household
hovering over the poverty line, rely upon myself
end of sophomore year of high school, stopped caring about school, grades
homeless for a year, depression made me not care
failing every class, gained motivation to share my story

stories catch my ears, an amazing concept for class
to open these conversations about taboo topics
some of us had to struggle more than others,
the stories told, eye-opening
best way to learn what it would be like in their shoes
story touches you, positive actions come
storytelling is **understanding**, a mind-blowing experience

sharing stories when it comes to racial justice,
the most impactful way to learn about different experiences
without having to experience it yourself
learn from their experience, what they had to face
storytelling gives the *why,* why you believe in something
figure out the root cause

part of my struggles is because of my race
classmates were predominantly white
their stories and experiences quite similar
the only Hispanic person in class

I was the outlier
the outlier becomes the center of attention
how vulnerable do you feel like becoming?
my perspective, more helpful to them than to me
get my story out there
hoping to inform them, give a view of people of my background
educate people, teach people, then I'm being helpful
we are outnumbered, someone has to speak up

telling story, I feel prideful
educating people, giving a different perspective
after telling the story, mind jogs back
sadness and sorrow, a lot of struggles
bringing it up brings back emotions
want to move forward
don't want to look at the past

story, a great first step into learning people's perspectives on social injustice
people, the bridge from storytelling to action

Rose (white woman)
Growing up, only exposed to people who talked like me,
looked like me, same background
raised in church, God tells you to be kind
treating people the way you want to be treated
white, black, gay, straight
treat them like a person
friends from high school, all different races
lots of stories, jaw dropped
being labeled, kicked out of stores
it's real, not just on the news
see and hear it from people close to you
their stories made me see, it's a thing
now I care, before I didn't

until stories, never going to understand why they are the way they are
the why is where the stories come out
once you understand, you can empathize – a huge part of storytelling
learned to be more empathetic, how people actually *feel*
storytelling - **insightful**, why ideas and beliefs shift
only way I've learned and changed my thoughts

shared stories of what's been hard in our lives
afraid to have those conversations at first
to share with complete strangers, really uncomfortable
having the teacher share something personal

if she's doing it, I can too
with storytelling you're being vulnerable
trust they weren't going to share with everyone else,
weren't going to judge or treat you differently
more storytelling, more trust
learned I can share, people aren't going to judge

didn't have many non-white people in class
most people you're surrounded by are having the same experiences
a female, not as much pressure to not show feelings
being white, I haven't had to worry about much because of my race
hasn't impacted me in any negative way
didn't feel I could contribute
I could listen, have a conversation, try to learn
apt to share stories with other people who were white
wasn't going to offend them

a member of the disability group, been treated differently than the norm
those experiences made me more empathetic to stories about race
two different challenges, judged not on who we are but for my disability,
and for them, skin color

with stories, actually *see* white privilege versus just hear about it
opened my eyes, had a wall before
it broke down that wall
one of the best classes I've taken
storytelling, a comfort by the end of the semester
most important piece to the class
only way to teach about racial justice

Jordan (Black man)
Came into college from a school not focused on college
one of the worst schools in the state
teachers come in and out
hindered growth
predominantly Black and Hispanic
counted on my fingers and toes
all the white people that attended
when I first got here, culture shock

eye-opening class
things discussed can be uncomfortable
a lot of leadership classes
happy, happy, happy
in moments of seriousness, it's awkward
people aren't comfortable with negative feelings

storytelling helps with understanding
real life experience versus a theoretical situation in a textbook
try to put yourself in that person's shoes
hearing it from people you're close with puts things in perspective

people in leadership classes
from majority white schools, communities
we live in two different worlds
harder to understand a perspective they'll never experience
only checked my bill, followed me around the store
because I'm Black
talking about privilege makes white people uncomfortable, feeling attacked
"I don't see race"
"why can't we all just get along?"
undermining the struggles minorities go through
ignorance is bliss
never have to understand the struggle

it's weird when you're a minority in a class full of white people
depend on me
the spokesperson for Black people
always asked questions about race because I'm Black
not your teacher, don't get paid to do this
Google is free

it's a **predicament**
do I want to speak, do I not?
if telling stories helped classmates think differently, that would help me
will they take what I say seriously?
why should I have to explain myself?
would rather not have an argument in class, not professional
every time, in that predicament, that thought process

white people share a white person's perspective
helped me understand
shouldn't always pressure the minority
hear what the majority has to say
better understanding on both ends

Summary of Findings

Participants found storytelling to be an incredibly powerful learning tool for racial justice

education. In response my research question about how participants from diverse racial

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backgrounds experience storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice within an intercultural leadership course, participants expressed that within the classroom community, storytelling promoted empathy, fostered engagement and connection to peers and social issues, raised participants' consciousness of differing truths, and got to the heart of why they and their classmates held the beliefs they did. These are key foundational elements to transformational pedagogies in teaching about racial justice. The power of storytelling cannot be overlooked. However, participants also revealed the gray area of the power of storytelling, or the tensions that exist in utilizing storytelling as a pedagogy. They expressed that storytelling required a great deal of vulnerability that was accompanied by sincere fears of judgment from peers. Storytelling activities also created a scenario in which participants found themselves engaging in an inner dialogue of cost/benefit analyses of sharing personal stories before deciding to do so.

Through my analysis, it became evident that racial identity, both of individuals and of the class in its entirety, created a tension with the use of storytelling. For instance, while Cambria (Biracial woman) experienced many tensions and hardships related to storytelling in a predominantly white classroom, she still said, "I think the best way to teach people about racial justice is to hear stories." Alex (Hispanic man) and Jordan (Black man), the other two Participants of Color, shared similar reflections. While they both experienced storytelling as emotionally burdensome, they also agreed that it is the best and only way to teach about racial justice. Cambria (Biracial woman) and Jordan (Black man) expressed feeling added pressure to educate others, to represent their race, and in Cambria's (Biracial woman) experience, to live up to her white peers' expectations of her based on their perceptions of her racial identity. As we look to employ storytelling as a pedagogy in racial justice education learning communities, we should be cognizant of the class context and acknowledge the ways in which whiteness

permeates the classroom and impacts the storytelling experience. Although storytelling as a pedagogy holds great transformational potential, the power of storytelling is not black and white. There exist many tensions and nuances of storytelling that should be carefully considered before and during its use.

Summary of Chapter Four

In this chapter I presented findings in response to my research question that guided this study: How do participants from diverse racial backgrounds experience storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice within an intercultural leadership course? I presented three themes and ten sub-themes in response to this question that highlight the pedagogical power storytelling holds, but also brings to light some of the potential negative consequences associated with employing storytelling as a pedagogy. I described the ways in which students' racial identities in relationship to the racial makeup of the educational context influenced their experience. Additionally, I presented each participant's unique and individual experience with storytelling in the form of a poem created using Blackout Poetic Transcription as developed by Keith and Endsley (2020). I will further discuss these findings along with corresponding implications for research and practice in the following chapter.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

While the power of storytelling is well documented in the literature (Boske, 2016; Carter-Black, 2007; Byron, 2011; Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010; Flanagan, 2014; Freire, 1970; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Sautner, 2017; Senehi et al., 2009), lacking from current literature is narrative accounts of racially diverse students' experiences with storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education. Additionally, while there is some literature discussing the ways in which storytelling can disrupt whiteness in a classroom context (Boske, 2016; Brookfield, 2016; Matias, 2013; Matias & Grosland, 2016), there is less information about how whiteness can disrupt a storytelling community. This knowledge was important to gain in order to better understand the nuances of storytelling as a pedagogical approach for racial justice education and the considerations that should be made in implementing a storytelling pedagogy especially within predominantly white educational contexts. Through this study I sought to fill these gaps by seeking to gain a deep understanding how five, racially diverse undergraduate college students at a large midwestern university experienced storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education within an intercultural leadership course. It was my goal to share the stories of participants' experiences with storytelling as a pedagogy. In order to meet this goal, I utilized a qualitative research methodology. Specifically, I followed an instrumental case study design as a way to study contextually grounded, complex phenomena using a variety of data sources. In my study, I utilized interviews and document analysis. This variety of data sources allowed me to explore my research questions from various vantage points. I recognized that the context in which storytelling took place was integral to my understanding of the phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Therefore, case study was advantageous for this study, as it allowed me to explore not only the

pedagogy of storytelling and how participants experienced it, but also the context of the course itself which undoubtedly impacted participants' experiences with storytelling (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

My study was guided by the following research question: How do participants from diverse racial backgrounds experience storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice within an intercultural leadership course? Through analyzing both interviews and documents as data, I identified three themes and ten sub-themes in response to my research question. The three themes I identified include: Storytelling is a Powerful and Empowering Teaching Tool, Hesitancy in Being the Storyteller, and The Classroom Door is not a Whiteness Gatekeeper. In this chapter I will seek to make meaning of my findings from Chapter Four, providing my interpretations of the three aforementioned themes in addition to the ten sub-themes. I will connect my findings to current literature and discuss how they contribute to and expand our understanding of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education. Additionally, I will make sense of my findings through the theoretical framework I used for this study, Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), as I discuss the ways in which whiteness impacted, influenced, and disrupted the storytelling community within the class context. Finally, I will discuss implications and recommendations for research and practice.

Discussion of Research Question and Findings

In this section I will make connections between my research question and findings. As I do so, I will continue to include each participant's self-identified racial identity in parentheses following their name so readers can acknowledge and make sense of the potential impact of racial identity on participants' experiences and to challenge the notion of colorblindness (Cabrera et al., 2017). It is also imperative to reiterate that these experiences are individual to each

participant and do not represent all people who have a shared racial identity. Again, the research question that guided my study was: How do participants from diverse racial backgrounds experience storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice within an intercultural leadership course?

My interpretation of conversations with participants suggests that there is not a simple answer to this question. In fact, participants had incredibly complex and nuanced experiences that were shaped by their life experiences prior to entering the class and influenced by their racial identity in relationship to the racial makeup of the other members of the classroom community. All participants perceived storytelling as one of the most effective tools for teaching and learning about racial justice based on their experiences. They expressed that within the classroom community, storytelling promoted empathy to drive change, fostered engagement and connection to peers and social issues, raised participants' consciousness of differing truths, and got to the heart of people's "why's." These are key foundational elements to transformational pedagogies in teaching about racial justice. The power of storytelling cannot be overlooked.

At the same time, participants also revealed the gray area of storytelling, or the tensions that exist in using storytelling as a pedagogy. They shared that storytelling required a great deal of vulnerability that was accompanied by sincere fears of judgment from peers. Storytelling activities also created a scenario in which participants found themselves engaging in inner dialogue of cost/benefit analyses of sharing personal stories before deciding to do so. In other words, most of the participants shared that they weighed the potential educational benefits of sharing their personal stories against the possible negative consequences of doing so.

Furthermore, while striving to understand the data through a CWS lens, it became evident that participants' racial identity impacted their experience with storytelling in a predominantly

white classroom context. Students of Color expressed that the racial makeup of the classroom community in relation to their racial identity mattered in their experience with storytelling. In other words, as one of few Students of Color in a given class section, they felt an additional burden to be the "face of the race" and to use their personal experiences to educate their white peers while not knowing how their stories would be received. In the following sections, I will expand on each of the main themes and sub-themes in relation to existing literature.

Storytelling is a Powerful and Empowering Teaching Tool

Reflective of existing research, participants found the use of storytelling in the classroom to be both a powerful and empowering teaching tool for racial justice (Boske, 2016; Brookfield, 2016; Carter-Black, 2007; Byron, 2011; Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010; Flanagan, 2014; Freire, 1970; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Sautner, 2017; Senehi et al., 2009). There were several reasons they provided as to why they found it to be both powerful and empowering. These included that storytelling promoted empathy to drive change, fostered engagement and connections to issues, raised consciousness of different truths, and got to the heart of people's "why's."

Promotes Empathy to Drive Change

Participants shared about the role storytelling played in their ability to connect with social issues on an emotional level, which increased their empathy and motivated them towards change. Cambria (Biracial woman) compared storytelling as a teaching method to the use of presentations and statistics and explained how hearing others' stories and what they had personally gone through, and the feelings associated with those experiences, was powerful. She described that, for her, motivation for social and personal change comes from feeling something, and stories tap into those feelings. She went so far as to say that we cannot change the world unless we can feel something. Feeling others' emotions serves as a catalyst to action.

Alex (Hispanic man) also described a similar experience of the power someone's story can have to motivate a listener to contribute to change if a listener believes that what happened to the storyteller should not have happened. This finding is consistent with existing literature (Boske, 2016; Byron, 2011) that describes stories as a tool for individuals to challenge themselves and others about social conditions and as a "motivating force for change" (Byron, 2011, p. 60). In addition to tapping into participants' empathy, Rose (white woman) also discussed how engaging in storytelling activities and listening to stories from her peers who had experiences, challenges, and perspectives different from hers, helped her to cultivate and to build her empathy skills. Carter-Black (2007) discussed a similar outcome of storytelling activities in that they allowed participants an opportunity to relate to others with whom they may have assumed they had nothing in common. Through this relational process, participants build their empathy skills which are essential for the creation of a socially just society. The building of empathy seemed to be the foundation that led participants to having an increased level of engagement and connection to issues that may or may not directly affect them.

Fosters Engagement and Connections to Issues

Participants discussed how storytelling increased their engagement in difficult conversations as well as strengthened their connection to their classmates and to issues that did not necessarily affect them personally, which coincides with the power of storytelling described in Flanagan (2014). Jeff (white man) shared that he could hear about an issue many times over, but if he only hears about it on an impersonal level, such as through a channel of media, and he does not know the people who are affected, he does not feel any pull to engage with the issue. However, he explained that when someone he knew in the class personally told him about a challenge they had faced as a result of discrimination or oppression, it allowed him to connect

not only with that person, but with the issue itself on a much deeper and more personal level. He said, "You don't always care until it affects someone you love. It's kind of like that." Rose (white woman) shared a similar experience with storytelling in the class. As she built a strong friendship with one of her classmates, she expressed when that friend shared stories about how she was affected by discrimination, Rose (white woman) became very interested in learning more about what her classmate was experiencing and engaging with the issue. Rose (white woman) expressed that if a person with whom she did not have a close relationship would have shared the exact same story, she probably would not have cared to truly listen. However, their established relationship increased Rose's (white woman) motivation to know more about the issue and how it had impacted her friend. This finding is reflected in the research of Chin and Rudelius-Palmer (2010) who asserted that sharing personal stories involving experiences with discrimination and oppression, and listening to the stories of others, can bring us closer to issues that may seem separate from us.

While Rose (white woman) and Jeff (white man), two white participants, talked more about how storytelling aided them in connecting to issues that did not affect them directly, Alex (Hispanic man) and Jordan (Black man) shared how storytelling increased their engagement in the class and in difficult conversations. Alex (Hispanic man) shared that having the opportunity to hear his classmates' stories caught and kept his attention and served as an effective tool to engage in conversations around topics that might usually be considered taboo. Jordan (Black man) also shared that being able to hear another person's own experience, or story, related to a certain topic was more impactful and empowering than engaging with a theoretical situation from a textbook. While I have highlighted these two participants' specific experiences related to storytelling and engagement, all participants made remarks about the use of storytelling as a

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teaching and learning tool increasing their engagement in the class, the class being one of the most impactful they had taken at university, and how they felt as though the class would not have been as transformative if storytelling had not been the primary pedagogical approach. These findings reflect those described by Bell (2009) and Sautner (2017) in that stories inspire engagement in ways that dry presentations filled with statistical data cannot (Bell, 2009), and storytelling engages participants on a deeper level and keeps them mentally present (Sautner, 2017). As telling and listening to personal stories in the class built empathy among participants, connected them to one another and to issues that did not directly affect them, it resulted in heightened consciousness of differing truths, experiences, and social injustices that participants may not have considered prior to the class. This is discussed further in the following section.

Raises Consciousness of Differing Truths

Harper and Quaye (2009) described one tenet of Critical Race Theory (CRT), counter-storytelling, which involves the telling of personal narratives by People of Color, as an essential component of raising consciousness about racial injustice. These stories have historically been silenced or dismissed in educational contexts, but it is essential for them to be told, heard, and validated in order to challenge white supremacy and ethnocentrism (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Most importantly, counter stories serve to open our eyes to systemic injustices that might otherwise remain invisible (Delgado, 1990). Counter-stories are similar to concealed stories presented in Bell's (2009) storytelling for social justice model that are told by individuals on the margins and that challenge the status quo.

Participants in my study echoed the power of counter-narratives in raising their consciousness of injustices. For instance, Alex (Hispanic man) shared that storytelling was so important to his experiences in the class, especially when learning about current issues of social

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injustice, because it [storytelling] provided insight into people's experiences that were different from his own which increased his awareness and consciousness of those current issues. Furthermore, Freire (1970) outlined one of the goals of praxis being critical consciousness raising that takes place through dialogue with members of oppressed groups. Jeff (white man) described this process happening for him within the class. As he heard stories from people of different racial backgrounds, he realized the experiences they had to go through and how differently they were treated than he ever had been. This helped him build consciousness around how white privilege showed up in his life and how his experiences would have been different if he had been treated the way Students of Color described in their stories. This is consistent with the knowledge put forth by Carter-Black (2007) and Matias (2013) who asserted that through the sharing of personal experiences with social inequity, white students can develop increased awareness about how race has afforded them advantages, and all students can increase their understanding and appreciation for the experiences of diverse groups. Interestingly, from the perspective of Cambria (Biracial woman), storytelling also helped raise her consciousness around the experiences of her white classmates. She mentioned that, before this class, she held the assumption that all white people had similar experiences. Through storytelling in the class, she recognized that race was just one aspect of her classmates' identities and that her white classmates' experiences differed drastically as a result of their intersecting identities.

Gets to the Heart of Why

A final sub-theme I identified as a reason in which participants experienced storytelling as a powerful and empowering teaching tool is that stories get to the heart of a person's "why." Several participants described the challenge in having difficult conversations around issues of social justice that can often be divisive and result in defensiveness. However, when their peers

shared their personal stories related to topics of social injustice, participants were better able to understand where they were coming from and how their beliefs developed. For instance, Alex (Hispanic man) mentioned that typically in these conversations we only hear people's opinions, but when they share personal stories, we are able to hear why they believe what they do which to him was the most important aspect of storytelling. Similarly, Rose (white woman) made the connection between getting to the heart of someone's "why" and building empathy for a person with a different perspective or experience. She explained that, for her, she was not able to understand why some of her classmates were the way they were or why they believed what they did, but once she heard their stories, she was able to empathize with them which was the most powerful aspect of storytelling for her. Overall, it seemed that participants' experiences with storytelling were reflective of the power of stories described by Chin and Rudelius-Palmer (2010) who said, "The basic power of stories lies in their potential to connect people to one another in fundamental ways through uncovering basic themes that strengthen the common bonds of humanity and change existing systems of oppression" (p. 267). Through promoting empathy to drive change, fostering engagement and connection to issues, raising consciousness of different truths, and getting to the heart of "why," storytelling in this intercultural leadership course provided a way for participants to connect through their shared humanity and to generate a deeper understanding for the ways in which social injustice impacts others' experiences.

The power of storytelling that was reflected in participants' experiences is reflective of much of the storytelling literature on its potential as a transformational pedagogy. However, another angle of this study was to consider the potential challenges or shortcomings of storytelling as a pedagogical approach as well as the racial dynamics at play in participants' experiences with storytelling including both participants' racial identities and the racial makeup

of the class at large. The following section will address some of these challenges as I discuss the second theme I identified, Hesitancy in Being the Storyteller, along with the corresponding three sub-themes including: 1) requires trust and vulnerability, 2) fear of judgment, and 3) requires a cost/benefit analysis.

Hesitancy in Being the Storyteller

While participants overwhelmingly described storytelling as a powerful tool for teaching and learning about racial justice, they also described some negative aspects associated with storytelling that should be considered when implementing it as a pedagogy. These downsides to a pedagogical approach of storytelling are not as well documented in existing literature, and thus, these findings are integral to giving us a more complete and nuanced perspective of utilizing a storytelling pedagogy for racial justice education. All of the following sub-themes reflect the reality that participants felt a great deal of hesitancy when in the role of storyteller in the class. While hearing others' stories was beneficial and empowering to their learning, being the one to share personal stories from their own experiences brought up a whole host of feelings that caused a significant amount of discomfort. The reasons for this discomfort that participants described are outlined in the sub-themes below.

Requires Trust and Vulnerability

Participants remarked on the high degree of vulnerability required to share personal stories especially with people they did not know well and with whom they did not have an established sense of trust. Rose (white woman) described the paradoxical nature of the relationship between trust and storytelling, commenting that a sense of trust is essential in order for storytelling to happen in a context that feels safe, but in her experience, it was the act of storytelling that helped to build the trust among her classmates. Jeff (white man) also commented

on how scary vulnerability can be and how that impacted his desire to open up and share his

personal stories. Alex (Hispanic man) said the question he continually asked himself was, "How

vulnerable do you feel like becoming?" It seemed that in the participants' experiences, stories

were powerful in getting to know a person and in understanding their perspectives and

experiences, but the person who was doing the sharing took on the burden of opening themselves

up to potential scrutiny and judgement, which is discussed further in the following section.

Fear of Judgment

Accompanying the requirement of trust and vulnerability was a fear of judgment. All of

the participants described the fear of judgment from their fellow classmates in some capacity. It

was not necessarily a fear of their stories being judged, but rather, it was a fear of being judged

for who they are as a person. As Alex (Hispanic man) shared, he did not want people to think he

was a good or a bad person based on a story he shared. Participants acknowledged that being in

the position of the storyteller was a vulnerable place to be, which led to an increased sense of

fear. However, they were able to lean into that vulnerability and were met with acceptance and

validation from their peers, personal growth and deeper learning resulted. The challenge of

leaning into vulnerability accompanied by the potential for personal growth was reflected in the

work of Phillips et al. (2019) who found that digital storytelling required an increased level of

vulnerability, which came with a level of fear for storytellers. However, it was this increased

vulnerability that led to transformational teaching and learning. In order for storytelling to be a

powerful teaching tool, stories must be shared. It is important to recognize that a fear of

judgment from others may hinder participants' willingness to share their personal experiences,

which could ultimately impact the overall potential power of storytelling as a pedagogy.

Requires a Cost/Benefit Analysis

Given the fear of judgment that comes from being vulnerable with peers, participants described the mental analysis they went through before deciding to share a story with others. They explained their process of weighing the potential costs against the potential benefits of sharing their stories. Several of the participants recalled moments in the class when they felt the tension between feeling like they had a story to share that was relevant to the topic being discussed and that would aid in their classmates' learning, but at the same time not wanting to open themselves up to vulnerability and judgment. At the end of the day, most of the participants agreed that if sharing their stories helped their classmates to shift their perspectives or open their eyes to realities they had never before considered or experienced, then doing so was worth the risk of the potential for some of their classmates to judge them or react negatively to their stories.

Another cost Alex (Hispanic man) described was the emotional burden of sharing stories especially those that may have been associated with trauma. He explained that while telling his stories was empowering, doing so also caused his mind to jog back to the experience. So, after experiencing a prideful moment of courage and bravery in sharing his story, he was reminded of the sadness and sorrow that accompanied the experience, and there was a burden associated with re-experiencing those emotions. Johnson (2017) refers to this re-experiencing of emotions in his conceptualization of racial storytelling and racial hauntings when he said, "Teaching in a contested space, for instance, demonstrates that having critical dialogue about race, racism, and whiteness triggers my repressed memories, transmitting me back to various times in the past" (p. 478). While Alex was a student and not an educator, it seemed that he had a similar experience of his past racial stories "rehaunting" him as he shared those stories with his white classmates. At the same time, Alex (Hispanic man) also agreed that if sharing his stories helped to educate his

classmates, then the benefit of doing so outweighed the cost. The potential for stories to be associated with abuse or trauma and the safety concerns involved with sharing those stories was also highlighted by Senehi et al. (2009) as an important consideration in implementing a storytelling pedagogy.

Up to this point, I have discussed both the power of storytelling as a pedagogy as well as the potential shortcomings from the perspectives of my participants. I have not yet discussed the role of racial identity in participants' experiences with storytelling in this intercultural leadership course. After deeply exploring and interrogating the role of participants' racial identities as well as the racial dynamics of the classroom community, in addition to the university community in which the class was situated, it became evident that race played a salient role in how participants experienced storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education. The following section will discuss the third theme I identified, The Classroom Door is Not a Whiteness Gatekeeper, along with the corresponding three sub-themes including: 1) class context matters, 2) race/intersecting identities matter, and 3) being the "face of the race."

The Classroom Door is not a Whiteness Gatekeeper

For this section I find it important to revisit important context surrounding the course by which this case was bound as well as the university context in which the course was situated. The course, Culture and Context in Leadership, was offered at a large, midwestern, predominantly white institution, which was reflected in the racial makeup of the students enrolled in the course sections. The course sections that participants were part of were comprised of anywhere from thirty-seven to thirty-nine undergraduate students. In the various class sections, there were anywhere from two to seven Students of Color. In Cambria's (Biracial woman) class section, she was one of five Students of Color in a class of thirty-nine students and the only student who

would be perceived by her classmates as Black. In Jordan's (Black man) class section, he was one of seven Students of Color in a class of thirty-eight students. In Alex's (Hispanic man) class section, he was one of two Students of Color in a class of thirty-seven students. These numbers are important to consider in interrogating the role race played in how participants of different racial backgrounds experienced storytelling within the context of their classroom community.

In order to discern the role race and racial identity played in participants' experiences, I utilized the theoretical framework of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) as a lens through which to analyze the data. CWS posits that race is pervasive and shapes our daily lived experiences (Matias, Henry, & Darland, 2017). Considering the assumption of CWS that race permeates all areas of our lives, it is no surprise that it also affected our classroom community and the use of storytelling in that community. According to Brookfield (2016), our educational institutions, including institutions of higher education, harbor an ideology of white supremacy. Regardless of how inclusive and equitable I, as an instructor or facilitator, sought to make our learning community, whiteness had impacted and shaped participants' view of the world, as well as my own. The classroom door did not keep this influence of whiteness out. The participants, the system of higher education, and I brought it in. In the following sections I will explore the ways in which whiteness influenced the storytelling community and how racial identity impacted the storytelling experiences of my participants. In answering my research question utilizing a CWS lens, I identified the following three sub-themes that make sense of the factors that affected participants' experience with storytelling as a teaching tool for racial justice within our intercultural leadership course: 1) class context matters, 2) race and intersecting identities matter, and 3) many feel pressured to be the "face of the race."

Class Context Matters

It quickly became apparent, especially for Participants of Color, that the racial makeup of the class context mattered in their experience with storytelling. All three Participants of Color described experiencing feelings of isolation in a predominantly white classroom setting. Alex (Hispanic man) talked extensively about feeling like a racial outlier in the class. While he felt like being an outlier came with the pride of having the most impactful story to share, he also talked about the pressure of being the center of attention in conversations about race. Cambria (Biracial woman) described the role the class context played in her hesitancy to share personal stories about race. She frequently felt like she had no support system in the class, and no one would be able to relate to stories she shared about race and racism. Jordan (Black man) talked about the uncomfortable feelings of being a Student of Color in a class full of white students and the uncertainty he felt in not knowing how his classmates truly felt about him and the stories he had to share about race. Due to his life experiences prior to entering the classroom, he experienced always needing to be on guard about if his classmates who he thought he knew could be harboring racist perspectives and ideologies. While Amoah (1997) found that in the telling of one's personal story, people from oppressed groups have the opportunity to take ownership of their own theorized existence (Amoah, 1997), given the experiences that all three Participants of Color shared, it is clear that the racial makeup of the individuals in a classroom context affects how students experience storytelling and the degree to which Students of Color feel comfortable and safe to share personal stories about their racialized experiences.

Furthermore, Jordan (Black man) described how differently he would have experienced storytelling had it taken place in one of his high school classrooms in which the majority of students were Students of Color. He said the conversations would have been completely different

in a classroom context in which most of the students looked like him and could relate to his experiences. He also expressed that he would have felt more comfortable, and it would have been much easier to talk about hard issues of racial injustice. For instance, he shared that if the topic of police brutality would have surfaced in our intercultural leadership course, he probably would not have shared his personal stories about interactions with law enforcement because of the sensitivity of the subject, of the fear of his classmates undermining his experiences, and of the intense emotions that would have been invoked in him if invalidated by others. However, if the same subject would have come up in one of his high school classes, he would not have hesitated to share his story, which he was confident would be followed by many other stories from his classmates who had similar experiences. He described the main difference between the two class contexts as being questioned versus being validated and understood. In our predominantly white class, he experienced a much greater fear of his peers questioning his experiences which caused him to hold back from sharing openly. As expressed by Amoah (1997) hearing stories that allow us to realize we are not alone is empowering, and the sharing of personal stories can help us grapple with painful experiences and lead us to a place of healing and liberation (Delgado, 1989; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Phillips et al., 2019), but in a classroom context that is predominantly white, it becomes increasingly difficult for Students of Color to reap this benefit of storytelling.

Harper and Quaye (2009) asserted that a primary aim of the use of CRT informed pedagogical approaches is the development of critical consciousness among participants that encourages Students of Color to be actively engaged in the learning community without having to suppress their racial/ethnic identities. This study brings to light that even the utilization of pedagogical approaches grounded in CRT, such as storytelling, may not be enough to create

conditions in which Students of Color do not feel the pressure to suppress their racial/ethnic identities and experiences. While the use of storytelling is based in CRT, the whiteness of the class context hindered the transformational potential of storytelling as it created a space in which Participants of Color did not always feel safe to fully and authentically engage in storytelling within a classroom context in which few, if any, other students looked like them.

Race and Intersecting Identities Matter

While the classroom context and the racial makeup of other individuals within the class impacted participants' experience with storytelling, their own racial identity in relation to the classroom context also played a significant role. For the two white participants in my study, Jeff (white man) and Rose (white woman), their racial identities caused them to hold back from sharing stories related to their struggles in fear of offending Students of Color in the class who they assumed had much more challenging experiences. Rose (white woman) expressed that she was much more comfortable and willing to share stories with other white students in the class because there was not a fear of unintentionally offending them. While white students might hyper-focus on not wanting to offend others, work by DiAngelo (2018) informs us that their resistance to engaging in storytelling around race and racial identity with Students of Color may be more about the negative emotions they will experience if they do offend someone and are challenged. DiAngelo (2018) coined the term "white fragility," that explains how as white people we grow up in a system in which we seldomly have to experience racial discomfort, so when we do, we can become easily triggered and defensive in conversations that ask us to critically consider our racial identity. Resulting emotions often include fear, anger, guilt, and shame, which can lead to behaviors like arguing, silence, and withdrawal from the conversation (DiAngelo, 2018).

At the same time, Rose (white woman) explained how her intersecting identities allowed her to lean into the tough conversations around race and racial injustice and to build empathy for her peers who were directly impacted. As a student with a disability, she was able to draw upon her own experiences of being treated differently than the norm to imagine how Students of Color were feeling when they shared stories about being judged and discriminated against for their skin color. While she recognized that they were two different challenges, having had the experience of being "othered" for an aspect of her identity built her empathy for her classmates who had experienced the same and an increased drive to be part of change efforts. Her experience highlighted the role intersectionality, or the role our intersecting identities play in our experience of oppression, had in how students may experience storytelling as a pedagogy and respond to others' stories that are shared (Crenshaw, 1991).

The three Participants of Color, Cambria (Biracial woman), Alex (Hispanic man), and Jordan (Black man), talked about their life experiences as a result of their racial identities coming into play in the class. For instance, as a Biracial woman who felt she appeared Black to her classmates, Cambria (Biracial woman) felt hesitant to share personal stories of racism, because she did not feel that her stories of more covert rather than overt racism would match the expectations her white classmates had of her experiences based on her appearance. She feared sharing her stories would ultimately downplay the reality of the severity of racial injustice in our world today and would do more harm than good in educating her white peers. Additionally, she felt like she had to hold back any stories that might be laced with strong emotions because she did not want to fulfill the stereotype of being "that angry minority girl in the class." This is an example of how whiteness, or the superiority of white knowledge, norms, and expectations, showed up and negatively influenced the storytelling community within our intercultural

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leadership course. While it is tempting to lean on the power of storytelling as a transformational pedagogical tool, we cannot overlook the role that students' racial identities play in how they experience the use of storytelling in a predominantly white classroom context.

Being the "Face of the Race"

One way in which participants' racial identities manifested in their experience of storytelling was through Participants of Color feeling the pressure to be the "face of the race." In other words, as one of few Students of Color in their given class sections, they felt like the stories they shared would be interpreted by their classmates as representative of all other people of their racial/ethnic groups. Furthermore, they felt a burden as the "face of the race" to educate their classmates on issues of racial injustice as they were always looked at to share stories in conversations about race and racial identity.

Both Cambria (Biracial woman) and Jordan (Black man) had a negative experience with being placed in the position of being the "face of the race." Jordan (Black man) felt an unspoken expectation from his white classmates to be the spokesperson for all Black people even when he did not necessarily want to share his experiences or speak up on issues of racial injustice. He expressed that he had to continuously remind himself that it was not his job to educate his peers and he was not getting paid to do so. Cambria (Biracial woman) had a similar experience of feeling like her white classmates looked to her to gain more knowledge about racial injustice. She felt like her white classmates assumed that because she appeared Black she knew all the challenges that Black people face, which she emphasized was not the case and that she was doing her racial/ethnic group an injustice by being the "face of the race."

It was evident that Participants of Color felt an additional mental and emotional burden to share their stories related to race and racial identity to educate their white peers about issues of

racial injustice. Even when I, as their instructor, or their peers did not directly put pressure on them by asking them to share their personal experiences, that perceived burden and expectation still existed for them. On the other hand, Alex (Hispanic man) had a more positive experience with being the "face of the race." He was eager to share his stories of being a Hispanic man and how that impacted his life and experiences. He felt like if he could use his hardships to educate his peers about the struggles that people of his racial/ethnic group experience, then he would be somewhat helpful in making progress on issues of racial justice. He felt compelled to "get his stories out there," especially in a context in which he felt racially outnumbered, he emphasized that someone had to speak up.

While pedagogies informed by CRT, such as storytelling, encourage the experiential knowledge held by students of racial/ethnic minority groups in the learning environment (Harper & Quaye, 2009), it is also important for educators to consider the difference between *encouraging* the experiential knowledge held by students of racial/ethnic minority groups and *relying* upon the experiential knowledge of those students in order to provide education for their white classmates. In the following section I will utilize the theoretical framework of CWS to expand upon the discussion of whiteness influencing the storytelling community and participants' experiences with storytelling in our intercultural leadership course.

Making Meaning of the Findings through a Critical Whiteness Lens

According to Braun and Clarke (2012), deductive data analysis is a top-down approach through which the researcher brings certain ideas, concepts, and theoretical perspectives to interpret the data. I followed this approach to make sense of my data through a Critical Whiteness lens. I drew upon the key tenets of CWS adapted to higher education by Cabrera et al. (2017) and Foste and Irwin (2020) including: Whiteness as Colorblindness, Whiteness as

Epistemologies of Ignorance, Whiteness as Ontological Expansiveness, Whiteness as Property,

Whiteness as Assumed Racial Comfort, White Complicity, and White Normativity, to determine

if and how these tenets showed up in the data, and to get an overall picture of the ways in which

whiteness influenced participants' experiences with storytelling. The following sections will

discuss the tenets I identified as showing up in participants' experiences with storytelling in our

intercultural leadership course, in what capacity, and the resulting impact.

Whiteness as Assumed Racial Comfort

Whiteness as Assumed Racial Comfort explains how creating "safe space" on college

campuses is frequently misinterpreted to mean a lack of social discomfort. Avoiding discomfort

allows white people to remain unchallenged and normalizes microaggressions that Students of

Color frequently face due to white entitlement to racial comfort (Cabrera et al., 2017; DiAngelo,

2018). This tenet showed up in our classroom when stories about race and racial privilege were

shared. Rose (white woman) recalled several conversations that occurred in the class early on in

which her white peers asserted that they should not have to feel bad just because they are white.

One comment she remembered from the class was, "I don't have a choice of what race I want to

be, and I'm doing my part, so I shouldn't be part of the bad group of people that are racist and

white supremacists." This concept also showed up in response to stories shared about white

privilege. Rose (white woman) commented that when white people in the class were told that

they are privileged to be white, for many, their automatic response tended to be, "Well, I have

challenges too, and I didn't choose to be white. I didn't choose to get to go to a good school. I

want that for you too [speaking about those who hold underrepresented racial identities], so I'm

not a bad guy." Furthermore, Jordan (Black man) reflected on his experience of his white

classmates utilizing "feeling attacked" and taking on a victim mentality as a cop out to avoid

feeling uncomfortable in conversations about race and white privilege as they commonly relied

upon the language of, "Why can't we all just get along?"

What manifested in our classroom with regard to whiteness as assumed racial comfort

was reflective of the idea put forth by Chin and Rudelius-Palmer (2010) that oppressor group

members may have difficulty listening to others' stories that challenge their lived experience,

because they are not always conscious of the privileged positions they hold that result from

systemic oppression. Because of this challenge, they may hijack stories shared by oppressed

communities and may revert to their own stories of guilt and shame associated with being in an

oppressor group (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). In Jordan's (Black man) experience, the result

of stories about race and racial identity being hijacked by white students in our class was feeling

like his stories and experiences were misunderstood by his white peers.

Whiteness as Colorblindness

Whiteness as Colorblindness asserts that no matter the information provided about the

realities of racism on college campuses today, the evidence will always be interpreted by white

people in ways that find the root cause as anything but racism (Cabrera et al., 2017). While

Matias and Grosland (2016) found that storytelling influenced white participants to challenge the

notion of colorblindness, it is also possible for colorblindness to be perpetuated by white

students. This occurred in our classroom community during a class session on white privilege.

Reading Peggy McIntosh's (1989) work about the specific ways white privilege showed up in

her life, Jordan (Black man) expressed to a small group of his white classmates that the statement

about her ability to use checks, credit cards, or cash without her skin color working against her

perceived financial reliability resonated with him. He shared the following story about the

experience he had in this class session when he shared a personal story related to this aspect of white privilege:

> In class I shared that I was at a gas station. I was trying to buy something with cash, and I didn't even give the cashier a large bill, but they still checked the bill to see it was counterfeit. I don't remember details of the experience, but let's say I handed the cashier a twenty-dollar bill, and they checked to see if it was fake. If I'm at a gas station buying some chips or something and hand the cashier a small bill and they check to see if it's fake like that's going to offend me, and I've had that situation happen to me before. The negative side of me sharing this experience in class was that there were people in class trying to justify why the cashier might have been checking to see if the bill was fake or not. To me that was really weird because I would understand if maybe I was young or something, but honestly if a 16-year-old kid walks into a gas station with a $20 bill and the cashier checks to see if it's real, it's either because they're young or because they're assuming that it's fake based off some narrative that they perceived about that person in their mind because they have no idea who this person is. It could their race or the way they're dressed or something like that, so that's really not a good thing. And it was just kind of wild to me that they were trying to justify the cashier's actions. I don't think there should be any reason why you would check to see if a $20 bill was real or fake.

I, too, remembered the situation that Jordan (Black man) described above. His white classmates tried to come up with any and every potential reason why the cashier checked Jordan's (Black man) bill that discounted the role race played. I remember one student saying, "Well, that has happened to me before too, and I'm white, so I don't think it was about race." As white students took on a colorblind approach to understanding the story that was shared, they

discounted Jordan's (Black's man) experience and allowed the role of race and the reality of

racial injustice to remain unchallenged. Jordan (Black man) expressed that he did not necessarily

feel invalidated by their response, but he realized that they would never be able to understand

where he was coming from because they lived in two different worlds. While this situation

reflected the tenet of whiteness as colorblindness, it was also laced with intentional or

unintentional ignorance of the reality of white privilege, which is discussed further in the next

section describing the tenet of Whiteness as Epistemologies of Ignorance.

Whiteness as Epistemologies of Ignorance

Whiteness as Epistemologies of Ignorance can easily be explained by the saying,

"Ignorance is bliss." This construct includes intentional and unintentional ignorance to the reality

of white privilege and the violence of white supremacy. By remaining oblivious to the violence

People of Color face at the hands of white people and systems of white supremacy, white people

do not have to bear any responsibility for this harm (Foste & Irwin, 2020). If racism does not

exist then there is nothing to address, challenge, or fix. Epistemologies of ignorance also erase

the contributions of People of Color while minimizing the violence whiteness has had on

Communities of Color. This process of intentionally forgetting and rewriting truth is maintained

by a system of white supremacy and allows white students to have overly positive views of their

racial selves (Cabrera et al., 2017; Foste & Irwin, 2020). Matias (2013) found that the sharing of

counter-stories challenged white students' blissful ignorance mindset and prompted them to

reflect on how white privilege and race have influenced their lives. While that may have been the

case for many white students in our intercultural leadership course, one participant in my study

experienced intentional and unintentional ignorance from his white peers throughout the class.

Jordan (Black man) expressed how this tenet showed up for him in the classroom context in

response to the stories he shared about his experiences being Black. He said, "It's not really something that I can teach somebody that's not Black you know, but this is why ignorance is bliss because you [white people] would never have to understand that struggle."

White Normativity

The final construct explained by Foste and Irwin (2020), and originally outlined by Frankenberg (1993), is white normativity. White normativity explains the ways in which whiteness is normalized and made to be invisible. That is, "whiteness" is the preferred norm which leads to a perception of white people being the natural and trusted authority figures with white knowledge, the most legitimate knowledge of all humankind (Brookfield, 2016). The major issue with white normativity is that People of Color are measured against this norm. The result then, as postulated by Foste and Irwin (2020), is that "Identities and ways of knowing that deviate from whiteness are constructed as illegitimate" (p. 448). According to Brookfield (2016), storytelling can be an effective teaching approach to bring the invisibility of whiteness to consciousness. However, this seemed to come at a cost to Participants of Color in my study.

White normativity was pervasive in our classroom community. Due to the normalization of whiteness, white students did not see themselves as having a racial identity, and therefore, were unable to unpack and articulate stories around their racial identity and how their racial identity had shaped their experiences. This reality was expressed by several participants in my study. White participants explained that when they were asked to share stories about their racial identity, they did not feel like they could contribute to the conversation but could only listen and try to understand the stories shared by their classmates who were not white. Additionally, Participants of Color expressed that their white counterparts were not having to open themselves up and become vulnerable in sharing about how race had impacted their life. It is important to

think about how this reality adds to the pressure that Students of Color feel to carry

conversations about race and racial justice and how placing that burden on them, intentionally or

unintentionally, perpetuates the normativity of white students and the idea of Students of Color

as the other.

Scholars who do not take a critical approach to research may critique these interpretations

of findings and question the centrality of racial identity in participants' experiences. Given that

there were three Students of Color represented in my study, it is possible to conclude that other

Students of Color may have different experiences. Additionally, readers may conclude that the

risk of sharing vulnerable stories of trauma and hardship exists for all students regardless of

racial identity. While these conclusions and interpretations may hold a degree of truth, I would

urge readers who find themselves drawing these conclusions to consider the ways in which they

may be centering whiteness by engaging in race-neutral interpretations, a component of

whiteness reflective of Whiteness as Colorblindness as outlined by Cabrera et al. (2017). As

Michael Eric Dyson (2017) so eloquently expressed, before we can get to a point in our society

in which race does not make a difference in people's experiences, we first have to grapple with

the difference race makes.

Given my interpretations of my findings, it becomes necessary to complicate the usage of

storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education especially within predominantly white

classroom contexts. While participants of all racial backgrounds found storytelling to be the most

powerful way to teach and learn about racial justice, Participants of Color drew attention to the

emotional burden it placed on them to use their experiences of racial injustice to educate their

white peers. Whether intentional or not, this recenters whiteness within a practice that aims to

decenter it. While my findings confirm the power of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice

education, they also highlight that the practice of storytelling alone is not enough to decenter whiteness in a given context. With this tension in mind, the following section will explore implications for practice when implementing a storytelling pedagogy for racial justice education to promote the dignitary safety of all students, but especially Students of Color.

Implications for Practice

In the spirit of theory to practice, this section will outline several recommendations for practice based on the findings of this study. My first recommendation when implementing a storytelling pedagogy for social justice education, and more specifically racial justice education, is to acknowledge the tension that exists in its potential power and simultaneous potential harm. Participants in my study, as well as those cited in previous literature, report that storytelling is a powerful model through which to teach about racial justice, but the potential negative impact, especially on Students of Color in a predominantly white classroom, cannot be overlooked. As practitioners, especially white educators who may be less aware of the experiences of Students of Color in our classrooms, we need to become increasingly aware and mindful of the ways in which we might be depending on Students of Color in our classrooms to educate their white peers with their stories of hardship and trauma. In placing this responsibility on students who have experienced racial injustice, we are perpetuating the systemic injustice of white learning at the expense of Students of Color. At the same time, there may be students in our classrooms who have experienced racial injustice and who do have a genuine desire to share it with their classmates. These students should also have the space to do so. And, if we can create a classroom community in which students' stories are validated and affirmed by their peers, storytelling has the potential to be a healing experience for all participants. As practitioners we should be prepared to navigate any harmful reactions or responses that follow a story shared about the

impact of racial oppression. It will be our responsibility as facilitators to manage this tension that exists. I suggest a few recommendations for doing so in the following paragraphs.

One recommendation in bringing storytelling into the classroom is to consider the ways we might do so without putting the burden on students who hold marginalized identities in the class to share their stories. Stories of racial injustice, and stories of white people acknowledging and unpacking their racial identity and privilege, could be brought into the curriculum in the form of already existing videos and articles from people who have been paid for the mental and emotional labor of sharing their experiences. Doing so could help Students of Color feel more represented within the classroom context without depending on them to educate their white peers. However, participants articulated that one of the reasons storytelling was so powerful was because the stories came from their classmates with whom they had formed personal relationships. It is possible that stories heard through a more impersonal channel such as through videos and articles online would not have the same transformative impact. However, this suggestion does have the potential to reduce potential harm to Students of Color, which should be the top priority.

Given the high degree of trust and vulnerability that participants reported as being required for storytelling, practitioners of racial justice education who wish to utilize a storytelling pedagogy should also spend significant and intentional time building a classroom community that fosters a culture of trust, respect, confidentiality, and humility. As Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) expressed, storytelling is only as powerful as the participants' willingness and ability to hear perspectives that differ from their own experiences. Students should receive education on how to listen and respond to stories they have never considered before with curiosity and empathy. In other words, it would be negligent to jump into personal storytelling exercises

around race without doing some intentional work to build a storytelling community that minimizes intentional and unintentional harm toward students who share stories of racial injustice.

One strategy to build this storytelling community is by beginning with low-risk storytelling exercises that require a low level of vulnerability from students. One example might be to ask students to share a story about their name with a small group within the class. This could be a story related to the meaning of their name, a nickname they had growing up, or how their name came to be. This activity requires a low level of personal disclosure, allows students to begin to get comfortable with vulnerability, and provides an opportunity for listeners to practice active listening and to validate responses before doing so with higher-risk storytelling exercises. Another strategy to build a classroom community of trust and vulnerability that Rose (white woman) from interview data, and that is reflected in existing literature is the importance of facilitator self-disclosure to model vulnerability (Brookfield, 2016; Byron, 2011). Rose (white woman) expressed that having the teacher share something personal about their own life would not only help students understand how to be vulnerable, but modeling from the person in the room with more systemic power, would also give students permission to be vulnerable too. In other words, the teacher sharing a personal, deep story sets the tone for the rest of the class to do the same.

Another recommendation or consideration in managing the tension of storytelling as pedagogy for racial justice education is to increase racial diversity within the class in which storytelling is used. It was evident that Participants of Color felt very alone and isolated in the class as one of few students who looked like them. This increased their sense of fear in sharing stories about their experiences with racial injustice with which they knew their white classmates

would not be able to relate. Increasing racial diversity within these classroom contexts could provide a greater sense of safety for Students of Color as they feel less alone and more supported in their experiences. Creating a diverse student body is important and necessary to create an engaging and dynamic learning environment. According to the American Council on Education & American Association of University Professors (2000), a lack of diversity in the university community decreases educational experiences for students and limits the institution's ability to achieve its mission. The same can be said for units, departments, and programs within the university. A diverse student body is important in order to create a transformational learning environment that is reflective of our interconnected global society. Increasing racial diversity within our classrooms at Predominantly White Institutions is easier said than done. We should acknowledge that many educators have a desire to increase racial diversity within their classrooms, but doing so requires a complex, systems-level initiative that extends beyond the classroom to the department, college, university, and surrounding community. It is important to consider that institutionalizing diversity is not simply one action or outcome, but an ongoing process that requires the buy-in of all stakeholders noted above and a continued commitment to improvement and change. To provide one example, McDowell et al. (2002) sought to diversify their Marriage and Family Therapy Program so they created a model to guide efforts in not simply increasing the number of underrepresented students in their program, but infusing social justice into everything they do. In taking a more holistic approach they saw a significant increase in the number of Students of Color engaging in their program along with an increased depth of student and faculty understanding of social and racial sensitivity (McDowell, et al., 2002). While one instructor alone might not have direct control over the racial diversity of their classroom, as

educators we do have the power to continue the conversation with our colleagues about ways in which we can increase the racial diversity of our classrooms.

Finally, in order to manage the tension of a storytelling pedagogy, it is essential for the facilitator to be equipped with the skills and confidence to interrupt and diffuse potential situations that could be harmful to Students of Color. Facilitators should be in the continual process of developing their racial self-awareness, the power and privilege that comes with their identity, and how it shows up in their ability to recognize when a particular situation might cause further harm to Students of Color. Facilitators should prioritize the safety of Students of Color over the comfort of white students. This might look like calling out students who cause dignitary harm or invalidate the experiences shared by their peers or bring to the surface instances in which whiteness disrupts the storytelling community in order for it to be further unpacked. In addition to these implications for teaching practice, it is also evident that there is more scholarly work that needs to be explored on the topic of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial justice education. In the following section I will provide several areas for further research.

Implications for Research

Given the findings of my study, I offer several recommendations for future research related to storytelling, whiteness, and racial justice education. First, future research should explore how students from diverse racial backgrounds experience storytelling as a tool for racial justice education when the stories are brought in from outside resources rather than coming from their classmates with whom they have personal relationships. Does this more impersonal method of storytelling have the same impact? Does it create a culture in which Students of Color feel seen and validated by bringing in stories from people who look like them? Along the same lines, future research should more broadly explore how storytelling can be utilized in racial justice

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education contexts in ways that do not place the burden on Students of Color to share their stories of hardship and trauma for the benefit of their white peers' education. Related to whiteness specifically, future research could interrogate how whiteness is decentered in a predominantly white classroom and how white students respond to materials and pedagogies that intentionally decenter whiteness. Several other questions I am considering as I wrap up this research, and that I hope future researchers in this area will consider as well, include: If storytelling is the most effective way for white students to be open to conversations about racial justice, and to be inspired to change, is the potential long-term benefit worth the potential harm caused for Students of Color? Who gets to decide?

Summary of Chapter Five

The purpose of this study was to understand how five, racially diverse undergraduate college students experienced storytelling as a teaching tool for racial justice education within an intercultural leadership course. As highlighted several times throughout this dissertation, existing literature speaks to the transformational power of storytelling as a pedagogy for social justice education, and more specifically, for racial justice education. Storytelling builds empathy, connects participants to one another and to social issues that may not affect them directly, and promotes a deep level of engagement with the material in ways that statistics and dry presentations cannot. At the same time, this study highlighted some of the potential negatives associated with a storytelling pedagogy that are not as prevalent in the existing literature. Storytelling requires a high level of vulnerability from those in the position of storyteller which comes with a fear of judgment and a need for participants to engage in a mental cost/benefit analysis of sharing their personal experiences before decided to do so. Furthermore, participants' racial identity in addition to the racial makeup of the classroom community in which participants

were situated influenced participants' experiences with storytelling, especially for Participants of Color. While Participants of Color felt a sense of pride in owning and sharing their stories, they also felt an additional burden to share their personal experiences with their white classmates in order to educate them about issues of racial justice. Additionally, sharing their stories of racial injustice required them to re-experience the heavy emotions that were associated with the story. When all was said and done, all participants agreed that storytelling is the most effective way to engage learners in conversations about racial justice. However, Participants of Color acknowledged the tension, pressure, and feelings of isolation that existed for them in sharing personal stories with a community of predominantly white students who would unlikely be able to understand their experiences.

This study also highlighted the ways in which several tenets of whiteness adapted to higher education contexts by Cabrera et al. (2017) and Foste and Irwin (2020) including Whiteness as Colorblindness, Whiteness as Epistemologies of Ignorance, Whiteness as Assumed Racial Comfort, and White Normativity showed up and impacted the storytelling community. White students tended to respond to the uncomfortable emotions associated with stories of racial injustice with defensiveness and failed to recognize themselves as having a racial identity. This placed the pressure on Students of Color to carry the conversation and storytelling exercises related to racial injustice, which created a situation in which Students of Color, at times, felt an unfair responsibility to educate their white peers.

In implementing a storytelling pedagogy, it is necessary to be mindful of the class context and conscious of the ways in which storytelling has the potential to negatively impact Students of Color, especially in a predominantly white classroom. It is my hope that this research highlighted and reinforced the transformational power of storytelling as a pedagogy for racial

justice education, while shedding light on the role the educational context plays in how students from diverse racial backgrounds experience it. Additionally, I hope this research exposed ways in which storytelling, a pedagogy rooted in CRT, can continue to center whiteness even with the best, and most careful of intentions. While from personal experience I believe deeply in the power of stories to change mindsets and inspire white people to be part of the movement towards racial justice, this research helped me to complicate the positive notions of storytelling as a pedagogical approach to racial justice education, and unpack the continued work needed to understand best practices for racial justice education that decenter whiteness while protecting and preserving the humanity and dignity of Students of Color.

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Appendix A - Recruitment Email

Dear _____ (Name of Possible Participant),

I am writing to seek your interest and availability in participating in a research study with the goal of understanding the experiences of racially diverse undergraduate college students in an intercultural leadership course that utilizes storytelling as a pedagogical approach. As a past student in LEAD 350: Culture and Context in Leadership, I am very interested in having you as a participant in my study, and gaining a deeper understanding of your experiences with storytelling as a teaching and learning tool.

The timeline of the study is from March 2021 – December 2021. As a participant, you would be asked to participate in two interviews with me that would last around one hour each, in which we would have a conversation about your experiences with storytelling in LEAD 350: Culture and Context in Leadership. Additionally, I would be interested in using the four reflection papers you submitted throughout the class in the study with your consent. As a participant, you would be free to withdraw from the study at any point and/or choose to not respond to any question in an interview you find uncomfortable.

If participating in this study is of interest to you, and you are available to do so, I would like to meet with you in person within the next week to further discuss the study including research purpose and rationale and what you can expect as a participant (i.e. time and types of questions to be asked). After this meeting, if you remain interested in participating, I will provide you with an informed consent form to sign.

Thank you so much for your consideration. This research will be helpful to college faculty and administrators who want to know more about how students of racially diverse backgrounds experience storytelling as a pedagogy. I look forward to hearing back from you!

Best Regards,
Tess Hobson

Appendix B - Informed Consent

PROJECT TITLE: The Power of Storytelling is not Black and White: A Case Study Unpacking the Tensions of Storytelling as a Pedagogy for Racial Justice Education

PROJECT APPROVAL DATE:

PROJECT EXPIRATION DATE: 12/31/2021   LENGTH OF STUDY: 10 months

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Christy Craft, Professor

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Tess Hobson, Graduate Student

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS: Dr. Christy Craft, ccraft@ksu.edu, 785-532-5940

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION: For the subject should they have questions or wish to discuss on any aspect of the research with an official of the university or the IRB, please contact: Rick Scheidt, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224; Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH: The purpose of this research study is to understand how five, racially diverse undergraduate college students experienced an intercultural leadership course that utilized storytelling as the prominent pedagogical approach at Kansas State University. The questions that guide this study are as follows: 1) What are the experiences of student participants in an intercultural leadership course utilizing storytelling as a pedagogical approach? 2) How do participants from a diversity of racial backgrounds perceive storytelling as a tool for learning about racial justice?

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED: This study will use interviews and document analysis as data collection methods. Interviews will be the primary data collection method. Interviews will be conducted at least twice with each participant. Interviews will be held in a quiet and private space on campus or virtually via Zoom, where the participant feels most comfortable. These interviews should last around one hour each and will be audio recorded and transcribed. Additionally, document analysis will be used to analyze reflection papers submitted by participants during the duration of their participation in the course LEAD 350: Culture and Context in Leadership.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED: Minimal risk is anticipated in this study. In LEAD 350 Culture and Context of Leadership, challenging and sometimes sensitive topics are discussed. Participants will be asked to respond to questions about their experience in this course discussing these sensitive topics. Some discomfort may be experienced in reflecting and discussing experiences in the class. Participants will be free to choose not to respond to any

questions that cause them too much discomfort, and to withdraw from the study at any point. Participants are also free to choose to not participate in this study at all without penalty.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED: Understanding students' experiences with storytelling as a pedagogy for learning about tough social issues will help inform best practices in teaching about topics of social justice.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY: We will take all steps possible to ensure confidentiality. We will use password-protected folders and laptops to store all data related to the study. We will omit any identifying information from the results and discussion and conduct debriefing sessions with participants to ensure the information included in the results and discussion is accurate and permissible to include. We will remove any information participants do not wish to be shared.

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

Do you agree for the sessions to be video/audio-recorded? (Please circle one)   Yes   No

Do you agree to allow research activities? (Please circle one)   Yes   No

Do you agree to participate in an interview? (Please circle one)   Yes   No

_____   _____

Signed Name   Date

Printed Name_____

Appendix C - Interview Protocol

Interview #1 Guide (Semi-Structured)

Length: 45-60 minutes

Primary Goal: to see things the way you see them… like a conversation with focus on your experiences, opinions, and feelings. There are no right or wrong answers here. I'm interested is genuinely understanding your experiences.

To begin, please tell me a little bit about yourself and your story up to this point in your life.

Tell me more about your experience in LEAD 350, specifically thinking about the focus on storytelling.

Is there any certain experience you had in LEAD 350 that stood out to you as particularly impactful? If so, tell me more about that experience and why it was so impactful.

What positives and negatives of using storytelling in the classroom did you experience during LEAD 350?

Can you think of a time during the class when you were the storyteller? If so, tell me about that time. What was it like for you?

When you think about sharing stories as a way to teach about issues of racial justice, what thoughts and/or feelings come to mind?

Interview #2 Guide (Semi-Structured)

Length: 45-60 minutes

Primary Goal: to seek clarification and deeper understanding from first interview, and to gain insight into how tenets of whiteness influenced participants' experiences. The following questions were asked to each participant. There were additional questions asked that were specific to each participant based on data analysis from first interviews.

How, if at all, do you think your racial identity shaped or impacted your experience with storytelling?

Explain the tenets of whiteness one at a time (whiteness as assumed racial comfort, whiteness as colorblindness, whiteness as epistemologies of ignorance, whiteness as ontological expansiveness, whiteness as property, white complicity, and white normativity) – would you highlight any of these as descriptive of the storytelling community in our classroom? If so, how did it impact you?

What are your perceptions of storytelling as a tool for teaching and learning about racial justice?

If you were to describe your experience with storytelling in one word, what would it be?