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Ryan Nelson Parker
Slavery in the white psyche:
How contemporary white
Americans remember and
make meaning of U.S.
slavery

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how contemporary white Americans remember and make meaning of U.S. slavery and assessed if there is psychological conflict in relationship to slavery. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants who identify as “white” and were born and raised in the United States. Participants were asked to reflect on their memories of learning about, talking about, and knowing about the history of slavery; to share their internal representations of slavery and how they imagine their familial, personal, and imagined relationship with slavery; to report their beliefs about the impact of slavery on themselves personally and on contemporary society; and to share their ideas about how slavery should be taught to children.

The findings indicated that many contemporary white Americans have an intense and conflictual emotional and psychological relationship to U.S. slavery. Participants’ responses suggested that psychological defenses, such as denial and disavowal, are used to avoid intense feelings of shame and guilt associated with slavery. Another critical finding was the pervasive interpersonal silence around slavery among participants.

This study indicates that slavery is an important site of white racialization and that talking about slavery is essential for the mourning process that all Americans must undergo if we are to mediate slavery’s pernicious legacy in the United States.

SLAVERY IN THE WHITE PSYCHE: HOW CONTEMPORARY WHITE
AMERICANS REMEMBER AND MAKE MEANING OF SLAVERY

A project based upon independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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2010

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study explores how contemporary white Americans remember and make meaning of U.S. slavery. The question this study aims to answer is: *Do contemporary white Americans experience psychological conflict in relationship to slavery?* As Kenneth Hardy (1996) asserts: “Slavery remains a deeply significant and untold story for all of us” (DVD).

Slavery in the United States lasted for over three hundred years; it has been less than 150 years since it was legally abolished. The institutional, social, economic, and psychological residuals of slavery continue to profoundly impact and oppress black people and other groups of color. The violent and oppressive aftermath of slavery included the convict-lease system, the terror of lynchings, Jim Crow segregation, electoral disenfranchisement; and continues to include discriminatory housing policies, unequal educational and employment opportunities, increasing income disparity, and a criminal justice system and industrial prison complex that incarcerates black men at staggeringly disproportionate rates. Racism pervades all aspects of U.S. society. *All* contemporary white Americans have and continue to reap enormous material benefits and privileges via the racial hierarchy that was firmly established by slavery in this country.

Despite the explosion of historical research on slavery that began in the 1970s and continues today, and a rich and growing body of scholarship within the social sciences that addresses the ongoing social, cultural, legal, economic, and psychological

consequences of slavery for black Americans, slavery is still thought of in the popular imagination as being black people's history. How might contemporary white Americans recognize themselves in this history? Inspired by the current work of Kenneth Hardy and Joy DeGruy Leary who write on the psychological residuals of slavery for contemporary black people in the United States, and the burgeoning academic, psychoanalytic and psychodynamic studies of whiteness, this study aims to address the question that no known empirical research does: Do contemporary white Americans experience psychological conflict in relationship to slavery?

Speaking to white people, Lazarre (1996) states, "We cannot erase centuries of slavery, discrimination, and bigotry, but we can begin the process of respectful, truthful remembering. For what sort of psychological distortion must take place in us in order "not to know" the reality of this immense subjugation?" (p. 133). This study explores an important aspect of that psychological distortion. What keeps contemporary white Americans from "knowing" that immense subjugation is inextricable from what keeps them from facing, mourning, and engaging in a reparative relationship with it. Slavery is deeply implicated in the "intergenerational transmission of trauma, including the traumatic construction of the self in acts of domination and the continuation of privilege and/or power [that] is a deep infrastructure of any white person's life." (Harris, 2007a, p. 892). Thomas Jefferson identified this traumatic construction of self in 1781. In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson writes:

The whole commerce between master and slave is a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism on the one part, and degrading submissions on the other. Our children see this, and learn to imitate it; for man is an imitative animal. This quality is the germ of all education in him. From his cradle to his grave he is learning to do what he sees others do. [...] The

parent storms, the child looks on, catches the lineaments of wrath, puts on the same airs in the circle of smaller slaves, gives a loose to his worst of passions, and thus nursed, educated, and daily exercised in tyranny, cannot but be stamped by it with odious peculiarities. The man must be a prodigy who can retain his manners and morals undepraved by such circumstances. (1781-1782, p. 289)

Contemporary white Americans are the heirs of these white children. Over two hundred years ago the odious effects of slavery on white people was being considered, yet the level of denial today is such that it has been little explored.

Fifteen participants, who identify as “white” and were born and raised in the United States, were interviewed for this qualitative exploratory study. Significant findings are presented followed by a discussion of a few of the most salient findings.

Morrison (1992) writes: “The scholarship that looks into the mind, imagination, and behavior of slaves is valuable. But equally valuable is a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination and behavior of masters” (p. 11-12). As a white woman I am invested in contributing to this endeavor.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is an exploration of how contemporary white Americans remember and make meaning of the history of slavery in the United States. It engages the question: Do contemporary white Americans experience psychological conflict in relationship to slavery? This study is situated in a complex relationship with the past, collective and individual memory, whiteness, and psychological processes. Due to the scope of this paper, these areas of study cannot be comprehensively reviewed here. This study attempts to better understand how slavery impacts contemporary white Americans on the psychological level.

In order to situate this study's referent, the review of the literature will begin with a brief historical review of slavery and its aftermath. It will also review literature on autobiographical and collective memory. It will then give attention to the impact of slavery on black American collective identity and memory as well as the representations of slavery in white dominant collective memory. Major themes in whiteness studies will be reviewed. And finally, a close review of psychoanalytic and psychodynamic oriented literature on whiteness is discussed in order to provide a theoretical orientation for this study.

Brief History of Slavery in the United States

According to Paul Lovejoy (1989), a renowned historian on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, approximately 11,863,000 Africans were shipped to the Americas as slaves,

and an estimated 10-20%, or 1.2 to 2.4 million died on the journey (p. 373, 394). By the time of the American Revolution, African chattel slavery was firmly established, institutionalized, legal, and largely accepted throughout the Americas (Davis, 2006). Massachusetts, the first colony to legally sanction slavery, did so in 1641 (Johnson & Smith, 1998 as cited by Miller & Garran, 2008). Approximately 480,000 kidnapped and enslaved Africans arrived in North America prior to the 1806 law banning all participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Hine, Hine & Harrold, 2006). Historians estimate that in the mid eighteenth century, five kidnapped and enslaved Africans arrived for every one European immigrant (Davis, 2006). According to Deyle (2009):

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most slaves sold in British North America were imported from Africa or the West Indies, and by the mid-eighteenth century a small, locally based domestic trade had also developed. After the American Revolution this internal trade became a major operation, annually transporting thousands of enslaved men and women from the Upper South to the Lower South. (par. 4)

By 1860, the number of African slaves in the United States made up about half of the total African slave population in the Americas and is estimated between four and six million individuals (Blackburn, 1988). According to the 1860 Census, 393,973 white people owned 3,950,528 black people, and about 1.5 percent of the total white population in the United States owned slaves (The Civil War Home Page, n.d.).

The enslavement of kidnapped Africans and generations of their children lasted for over 300 years in the United States; it has been less than half that time since it was legally abolished in 1865. Eyerman (2001) writes, “It was not so much the direct experience of slavery that would prove traumatic, but its aftermath as the hope and promise of equality and acceptance were crushed finally and formally in the 1880-90s by

a reconfiguration around the views of blacks and whites” (p. 39). In *Black Reconstruction*, published in 1935, W.E.B. DuBois wrote the famous lines: “The slave went free; stood for a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery” (1998, p. 30). That “brief moment in the sun” during which Black communities alongside the federal support of the Freedman’s Bureau began to establish schools, social supports and some legal protections, was largely defeated by the white southern elite whose newly established state governments “promptly passed laws (the black codes) designed to re-impose upon the freedpeople obligations, burdens and restrictions redolent of slavery” writes Levine (2006, p. 49, citing Foner, 2005). Eric Foner has written on the extensive political and community mobilization of black people in the early Reconstruction Era (see especially Foner, 1988, 2004, 2005).

The primary characteristics of these black codes were to disenfranchise the black vote, prohibit black men from serving on juries and state militias, and an elaborate system of legal codes designed to control the movement and labor of freed blacks (Foner, 2004). Vagrancy and contract laws were put in place that led to a widespread peonage labor system (Carper, 1976). As Gordon Carper (1976) explains, “peonage is a form in involuntary servitude based on alleged debt or indebtedness. As of 1915 at least six former slave-holding states had statutes which made it possible to compel men [and women] to labor for others against their will” (p. 85). If people were convicted of vagrancy they were put to work in the convict-lease system (Carper, 1976), a highly profitable system for the elite whites who sold and bought the “convicted” labor (Felton, 1919). Rebecca Felton (1919), a white woman living during this period wrote in her memoir, *Country Life in Georgia: In the Days of My Youth*:

The corruption of the judiciary in Georgia has been more than once exposed in legislative investigations, but it is well understood that the "dominant faction" elected the judges at the time when a negro could be sent to the chain-gang for ten years for stealing three eggs or for stealing a bowl of milk, and a negro girl fifteen years old in Atlanta was sent to the penitentiary for five years for snatching fifty cents from the hand of a smaller negro. The dominant faction made a half million annually out of a convict lease, and the judge who could send able-bodied negroes to the pen was well worth electing! (p. 205)

The control of Black people's labor would not have been possible without the threat of violence (Daniels, 1979). During this period Ku Klux Klan groups spread throughout the South (Foner, 2006; Hale, 1998). The estimated number of lynchings of black people in the South between 1880 and 1930 is 3,200 (Davis, 2006, p. 336n5; Wood & Donaldson, 2008, p.11), and for all states, 3,437 total lynchings were recorded from 1882 and 1951 (Grimshaw, 1969, p. 57).

In *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court constitutionally sanctioned Jim Crow segregation, firmly enshrining the doctrine of "separate but equal" (Golub, 2005). From the end of Reconstruction until the Civil Rights movement and legislative gains of the 1950s and 60s, Jim Crow laws instituted the segregation of all public facilities. This constitutional sanction was effectively maintained for nearly six decades until *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954) made school segregation illegal; the 1964 Civil Rights Act further banned institutionalized segregation practices. However Jim Crow segregation was not merely legal; it was an intricate social and cultural system of racial oppression and white supremacy (Smith, 1949; Hale, 1998).

In "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration" Loïc Wacquant (2002) argues: "Not one but several 'peculiar institutions' have successfully operated to define, confine, and control African Americans in the United States" – chattel slavery, the Jim Crow system,

the urban ghetto, and now, mass imprisonment (p. 41). Wacquant suggests that the current mass incarceration cannot be understood outside of its genealogical link to slavery (2002). According to Wacquant (2002), in the last three decades mass imprisonment has become “the novel institutional complex formed by the remnants *of the dark ghetto and the carceral apparatus* with which it has become joined by a linked relationship of structural symbiosis and functional surrogacy” (p. 41).

As William Faulkner famously said, “The past is not dead. It is not even past.” This brief review of slavery and its aftermath was given in order to provide a historical context for this study. It is important to remind ourselves that though slavery legally ended with the Civil War, it has had and continues to have deep structural and symbolic manifestations.

Individual and Collective Memory

“People are trapped in history, and history is trapped in them,” writes James Baldwin (1985, p. 65). This study explores how a national historic event, involving almost three hundred years of slavery, is remembered and made meaning of by an individual white subject, but it also expects to tap into the white collective memory of and contemporary representation of that history. The white individual’s memory of and associations to the referent, slavery, while intertwined with the individual psyche and personal experiences, cannot exist outside of collective memory and consciousness.

In *Theories of Social Remembering* (2003), Barbara Misztal aptly points out that memory is both collective and individual. Memory is an individual mental act, but it has no existence outside of the shared matrix of language, symbols, events, and social and cultural contexts (Misztal, 2003, p. 11). Misztal (2003) defines autobiographical memory

as the “way we tell others and ourselves the story of our lives” (p. 10). Barclay and DeCooke (1988) have argued that while autobiographical memories are not necessarily accurate per se, in that they are not capable of time travel, they are “mostly congruent with one’s self knowledge, life themes, or sense of self” (p. 92, quoted in Misztal, 2003, p. 10). It is the element of the self that this study is after, not what *really* happened, but the *account* of what happened and is happening.

Drawing on the seminal work of Maurice Halbwachs’ (1925/1992), *On Collective Memory*, Eyerman (2001) writes:

Memory is always group memory, both because the individual is derivative of some collectivity, family, and community, and also because a group is solidified and becomes aware of itself through continuous reflection upon and recreation of a distinctive, shared memory. Individual identity is said to be negotiated within this collectively shared past. Thus, while there is always a unique, biographical memory to draw upon, it is described as always rooted in a collective history. (p. 6)

Collective memory is more than a reference to a shared past, it molds the present because it is the framework and discourse, the lens, through which the present is rendered knowable (Misztal, 2003; Schwartz 2000). Misztal (2003) writes: “collective memory not only reflects the past but also shapes present reality by providing people with understandings and symbolic frameworks that enable them to make sense of the world” (p. 13). At the same time, memory, individual and collective, shifts according the present needs (Misztal, 2003). As will become clear in the following sections, collective memory is also a process of strategic forgetting (Billig, 1995; Mannheim, 1952; Eyerman, 2001; Misztal, 2003). Drawing on the work of Henri Bergson (1991) a contemporary and early mentor to Maurice Halbwachs, Middleton and Brown (2005) write that memory can be understood “as the totality of our past experience, as the burden of the past ‘pressing

against the portals of consciousness'. In this sense, memory is 'always on'. We do not need to question how the past is preserved, but, rather, how it is held back, how it is 'forgotten'" (p. 229).

An important point for this study is that individual memory always exists in relation to the collective, for every memory's existence relies on the language, symbols, and other meaning-making apparatus within which the individual exists and remembers (Miztal, 2003). Each of my participants identifies as a white American, and it is my goal to make clear—the "white American" collective memory and identity is intimately bound to the history of slavery, "real" and imagined.

Collective Unconscious and the Individual Unconscious

It was Karl Jung who made famous the concept of the collective unconscious. Michael Vannoy Adams (1996) points out that in *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon disputes Jung's concept of the collective unconscious as an innate artifact embedded in the human species at large, and argues that the collective unconscious is wholly "cultural, i.e., it is acquired" (Fanon, 1952/2008, p. 165). In the following, Fanon illuminates the function of black and white in the collective unconscious:

Darkness, obscurity, shadows, gloom, night, the labyrinth of the underworld, the murky depths, blackening someone's reputation; and on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical heavenly light. A beautiful blond child—how much peace there is in that phrase, how much joy, and above all how much hope! No comparison with a beautiful black child: the adjectives literally don't go together. (2008, p. 166)

In this eloquent passage Fanon shows how these unconscious meanings are moving, active, vibrant and loaded with images, sounds and feelings. According to Fanon, "In the

collective unconscious black = ugliness, sin, darkness, and immortality” (1952/2008, p. 169).

According to Foulkes (1966/1990) “the individual is pre-conditioned to the core by his community [...] and his personality and character are imprinted vitally by the group in which he is raised” (1990, p. 152, quoted in Dalal, 2002, p.115). Furthermore, “the group, the community is the ultimate primary unit of consideration, and the so-called inner processes in the individual are internalizations of the forces operating in the group to which it belongs,” explains Foulkes (1990, p. 212, quoted in Dalal, p. 114). In other words, for Foulkes the psyche is infused with and constructed by the social frame from the very beginning, perhaps even before birth (Dalal, 2002).

Slavery and Black Collective Identity and Memory

In *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (2001), Ron Eyerman meticulously explores how slavery has been a critical symbol and cite of memory for African American collective identities. “It was slavery, whether or not one had experienced it, that defined one’s identity as an African American, it was why you, an African, were here, in America,” writes Eyerman (2001, p. 16). The importance of Eyerman’s work for this study is how it illuminates the centrality of slavery within the collective African American memory and identity, in contrast to the distinctly less central role that slavery plays in the memory and identity of the white collective.

According to Eyerman, the first generation of free black Americans, the emancipation generation, sought to distance themselves from identification with slavery, the general thrust was “look forward not backwards, see yourself as agent with a future to

construct, not a victim mired in the past” (2001, p. 44). Then, propelled by the disappointments of Reconstruction and the persistence of racial degradation and oppression by the dominant society, early twentieth century black intellectuals and artists (such as Zora Neale Hurston, Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. DuBois, Charles Chesnut, Frances Harper, Paul Dunbar, and James Weldon Johnson) sought to construct a self-determined positive black subjectivity around which a collective identity and thus collective force could be empowered. Slavery, specifically its cultural artifacts (music, dance, community, religion), became the shared history around which this positive collective identity could be formed (Eyerman, 2001, p. 58-59). It was at this time that the term “African American” came into fruition, which was both a reconnection with Africa and a strategic political and ideological identification with the Enlightenment and the French and American Revolutions’ notion of full citizenship rights (Eyerman, 2001). Eyerman writes:

Through various media and forms of representation, black artists and writers reconstituted slavery as the primal scene of black identity. In this emergent identity, slavery, not as institution or experience but as a point of origin in a common past, would ground the formation of a black ‘community.’ [...] In the trauma of rejection, slavery was remembered as its memory re-membered a group. Slavery defined, in other words, group membership and a membership group.” (2001, p. 16)

Eyerman (2001) cites two major ideological narratives, the progressive and the tragic redemptive, that emerged out of the Harlem Renaissance and were later inherited and reframed by the civil rights movement and black nationalist movements of the 50s and 60s; both position slavery as the “primal scene” upon which a positive collective African American identity can be built, unified, and empowered. According to Eyerman (2001) the work of Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes exemplifies the progressive

narrative in which the shared past of slavery was configured into a narrative of progression and evolution, and the slave past as “tradition and heritage” should be “mined and used, a form of cultural capital to which blacks could be argued to have privileged access” (Eyerman, 2001, p. 90). For Hurston, and others like her, the goal was integration into American society as equal beneficiaries of its modern progress and privileges (idea of modern progress). The opposing narrative, most notable in the ideas of Marcus Garvey and his United Negro Improvement Association, one of the largest social movements in the history of the United States, saw in the shared past of slavery a narrative of tragedy and redemption and a collective responsibility to do justice to the memory of the enslaved by restoring what was lost through retribution and a renewed connection to Africa.

According to Eyerman (2001) collective African American identity has remained rooted in a symbolic relationship with slavery throughout the twentieth century. The progressive narrative, that remained fairly stable and became largely institutionalized since the Harlem Renaissance, was inherited and reformulated by the civil rights movement (Eyerman, 2001, p. 174-222). This narrative continued to position slavery—within the Enlightenment rhetoric of emancipation – as a shared past from which the collective could draw strength and out of which the collective could rise up. Martin Luther King’s famous words, “We shall overcome,” are an easy example of the progressive lineage in the civil rights narrative. Conversely, the Black Nationalist movements drew upon and reformulated the tragic redemptive framework. The connection to Africa was reconfigured; the current African American experience was understood in connection to the ongoing European colonization of Africa, as a domestic

colonization of African American people by white America. Secondly, this movement shifted the focus from the economic effects of slavery to the psychological and cultural effects of slavery on African Americans. As Eyerman points out, Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* was incredibly influential in this shift. Within the narrative promulgated by Malcolm X, the Nation of Islam and the black power movement, slavery is symbolized as a "lived and living" reality that continues to oppress economically, but more importantly, psychologically and culturally; the "true" past must be discovered in order for psychological, cultural, and spiritual transformation to occur and for the consequences of slavery to be eradicated (Eyerman, 2001, p. 188-189).

Eyerman notes that since more blacks have moved into and retained positions of influence and power in the last several decades, the representation of black experience in the dominant culture, especially when presented within a progressive framework, has widened – and the two narratives, originating in the 20s and continuing into the 60s are no longer so distinct. What Eyerman importantly draws attention to, is the way in which slavery, as "cultural trauma" is a continual cite both of collective meaning and memory; "as opposed to individual memory," slavery "the primary scene of the collective, will be recalled every time the collective is questioned" (2001, p. 221). In terms of this study, the question is: How might slavery, as national trauma, impact the meaning and memory of the white collective identity, as both the heirs to privilege and power that slavery engendered for them, but also to the deep shame and guilt that lies in the unconscious of the enslavers? (Altman, 1999; Suchet, 2004).

Slavery and White Collective Memory and Representation

“Slavery here is a ghost, both the past and the living presence; and the problem of historical representation is how to represent that ghost,” writes Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995, p.147). How did the white collective memorialize slavery? What is the white collective memory of slavery? How has white collective identity been shaped by slavery? Unlike black people, white people were not in America because of slavery, however much they depended on it for the making possible of an American nation, and a white American collective identity. In *Making Whiteness: the Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, Grace Elizabeth Hale (1998) argues that our modern white collective identity was and is bound to the concepts of racial difference that began in the 1850s in the South to justify slavery. Hale suggests that until the 1850s, slavery—and the role of master and slave—was largely understood as a difference in political and legal position (1998). It was in response to the growing domestic and international anti-slavery movements, and with the ‘scientific’ theories about race, that the Southern narrative racialized slavery’s positions into black and white, into a “naturalized, embodied identity existing outside of it [slavery]” (Hale, 1998, p. 4). Hale concludes: “Slavery, in other words, founded and fixed the meaning of blackness more than any other transparent and transhistorical meaning of black skin founded the category of slavery” (1998, p. 4). Cheryl Harris, who wrote the famous, “Whiteness as Property” (1993), states: “The ideological and rhetorical move from ‘slave’ and ‘free’ to ‘black’ and ‘white’ as polar constructs marked an important step in the social construction of race” (p. 1718).

According to Krasner (1997), the “history of slavery had shifted from recent memory to cultural artifact” by the late eighteenth century and its “representation was a

matter of cultural and political struggle” (p. 23, quoted in Eyerman, 2001, p. 59). As Eyerman (2001) describes:

As the nation was re-membered through a new narration of the war, blacks were at once made invisible and punished. Reconstruction, and blacks in general, were made the objects of hate, the Other, against which the two sides in the war could reunite and reconcile. The memory of slavery was recast as benign and civilizing, a white man’s project around which North and South could reconcile. (2001, p. 5)

The Civil War produced intense regional and national antagonism; and in the drive to stabilize the nation and to create a national American identity a white collective identity based on racial difference was born. Hale (1998) writes:

It was racial identity that became the paramount spatial mediation of modernity within the newly reunited nation. [...] This happened because Confederates, a growing working class, embattled farmers, western settlers, a defensive northeastern elite, women’s rights advocates, an increasingly powerful scientific community, and others, simultaneously but for different reasons, found race useful in creating new collective identities to replace older, more individual, and local groundings of self. (p. 7)

A critical point that both Eyerman (2001) and Hale (1998) make is that the new white collective identity needed the racial other, especially the black other, to make itself coherent.

Whites, before and after emancipation, were preoccupied with representations of slavery (Hale, 1998). Citing the writings of the ex-Reconstruction official Albion Tourgée, Hale (1998) points out that as early as the late nineteenth century and especially as Reconstruction ended, whites, North and South, had fallen in love with the sentimental and nostalgic tropes of the Old South; the “ex-slave was already one of the most popular figures in American culture” and “the white South, its regional autobiography fixed in a plantation romance peopled with “happy darkies,” noble masters, and doting mistresses,

had won the [national] peace” (p. 51-52). Eyerman adds that these images “sought to reinforce the recollection of slavery as a benign, pastoral period” (2001, p. 60).

The widely successful film *Gone With the Wind* (1939) that won ten Academy Awards in the year it came out and was ranked the fourth best epic film of all time by the American Film Institute in 2008—is evidence that the romanticized white collective memory of slavery was still strong in the mid-20th century and in fact still has its power in the 21st. This trope was reproduced in popular culture through literature and became even more powerful with the development of photographic and cinematic technology of the early twentieth century (Hale, 1998; Eyerman, 2001). Hale (1998) writes:

The desire to mark racial difference as a mass identity, as white versus “colored,” converged with the means to create and circulate the spectacle. [...] A picture, a representation, could convey contradictions and evoke oppositions like white racial supremacy, white racial innocence, and white racial dependency more easily and persuasively than a carefully plotted story. (p. 8)

As Hale (1998) importantly points out, the collective white representation of blackness that became narrowly defined into these images—was how collective white guilt about and nostalgia over the loss of slavery was mediated—was disavowed and projected onto the black other as spectacle and entertainment, and more importantly as a way to define and police the boundaries of whiteness. What is critical for this study is Hale’s assertion that white collective memory of slavery was fixed on representations of the slave and ex-slave, so that slavery’s face and body was black, leaving the white face and body invisible. With whiteness as the unseen backdrop, i.e., the national landscape—blackness was made the foreign object, the unwanted, hated object.

The dominant collective narratives described above were mirrored in the academy. According to Levine (2006) and Etcheson (2009), William Dunning, a

Columbia University professor, and his graduate students dominated the academic historical view of antebellum slavery and the Civil War through the 1960s. “As they saw it, slavery was a benevolent and mutually beneficial arrangement that southern whites would in due course have brought to a gradual and peaceful conclusion” writes Levine (2006, p. 47). Myszal (2003) asserts that:

Schools and textbooks are important vehicles through which societies transmit the idealized version of the past and promote ideas of a national identity and unity. Textbooks have always been updated and rewritten to present the acceptable vision of the past, [...] in many national narratives past events that could harm social cohesion and the authority of the state are still underplayed. (p. 20)

The recent proposition (Spring 2010) put forth by the Texas Board of Education to re-write social studies textbooks to portray a more positive view of capitalism, to emphasize the role of Christianity in the founding of the nation, to question constitutional separation of church and state, and to omit prominent women and people of color, like W.E.B. DuBois (prolific scholar of the consequences of slavery and racism), Susan B. Anthony (women’s rights activist and abolitionist), Florence Nightingale (abolitionist) and Shirley Chisholm (first black woman elected to Congress), is a present-day example of the kind of mediation of the past that Myszal describes, and one that is strikingly meaningful for this study.

According to Lisa Woolfork (2009), the voluminous writings of black Americans, even while slavery was happening, were not considered authoritative historical texts. Woolfork draws attention to Ira Berlin’s statement: “the memory of slavery in the United States was too important to be left to the black men and women who experienced it” (1998, p. xiii, quoted in Woolfork, 2009, p. 3). However, a shift occurred in the 1970s along with an explosion of scholarly attention to the history of slavery in the following

decades; prominent historical and sociological studies of slavery and its aftermath weave a much more complex and archival-based representation of slavery, including the black-authored texts that were previously barred from “official” representations of slavery (Fredrickson, 2000; Hale, 1998; Levine, 2006; Woolfork, 2009; for examples see the work of David Brion Davis, Eric Foner, and Ira Berlin among others). According to Woolfork (2009), “many contemporary black authors and critics have attempted to remedy that erasure” (p. 3). There is a growing body of historical literature that addresses the role of white people, both dominant and resistant, in the history of slavery and segregation (see the work of Nell Irvin Painter, George Fredrickson, Elizabeth Genovese-Fox and Eugene Genovese among others). But as Nell Irvin Painter (2003) pejoratively points out, “themes of ‘slavery, resistance, and abolition’ apply more intuitively to people of African rather than European descent” and that studies of race “finger blackness compulsively” (p. 1-2). Furthermore, the story of slavery continues to be one that highlights “progress” and distances the present from the past. As Saidiya Hartman (2002) points out: “The dismissal or refutation of slavery’s enduring legacy, not surprisingly, employs the language of progress, and, by doing so, establishes the remoteness and irrelevance of the past.” (p. 771).

Kenneth Bindas (2010), based on his study of 600 oral history interviews collected by himself and his students from 1990 through 2004 of rural Georgians and Ohio urbanites about their experiences of the Depression Era, found that the contemporary collective memories of black Americans and white Americans are substantially different. He writes:

Each generation of Americans since the Civil War has had to deal with the structural and generational memory of slavery, Jim Crow and its corresponding historical paradigm of subordination, which helps to construct a collective memory. For African Americans, this process reminds them that for their historical cohort slavery was a lived, real situation that produced distinctive social and political systems, culture and folkways. For white Americans, slavery and its aftermath have a different collective memory, one that reflects [...] slavery as a moral, political or economic wrong righted by the Civil War and a century of activism that followed [...]. (2010, p. 117)

Bindas's study reveals that the white collective distances itself from slavery, externalizing it into a moral, political and economic object, an object that has successfully been done away with—as opposed to a shared history with consequences and responsibilities for all Americans.

The congressional resolution, entitled “Apologizing for the enslavement and racial segregation of African Americans” passed by the U.S. Senate on June 19, 2009 and passed by the House shortly after, was the first official national acknowledgement of slavery and its aftermath. This document is surprisingly frank and detailed in its description of the enslavement and ongoing, “until this day,” oppression of African Americans. However, the congressional resolution maintains what Hale (1998) referred to as the white American collective's fixation on slave and ex-slave representations of slavery and the invisibility of the whiteness within the history of slavery. African Americans are referred to as “they” and “their” and there is no reference to the persons who practiced, promulgated and committed the actions that are being apologized for.

To end this section, let us turn full circle to the connectedness between the individual and the collective. Discussing what the informants in his study do by telling their stories, Blandis (2010) argues:

In thinking about their experiences and then framing them within the context of

their social group, the act of telling their stories conveys both their personal and collective understanding and allows the interviewer to see beyond the individual story to the larger collective one. (p. 119)

My expectation is that this study of individual white people's associations with the history of slavery will offer a degree of access to the collective that Bindas's study found.

Whiteness Studies

Modern whiteness studies, sometimes called critical whiteness studies, budded in the late 1980s, came into full bloom in the 1990s, and is a virtual explosion today in all of the academic fields of humanities and social sciences. But studying whiteness is not new. Studying whiteness has been the means of daily survival for many for a very long time.

As hooks (1999) describes:

[...] black folks have, from slavery on, shared with one another in conversations “special” knowledge of whiteness gleaned from close scrutiny of white people. Deemed special because it was not a way of knowing that has been recorded fully in written material, its purpose was to help black folks cope and survive in a white supremacist society. For years black domestic servants, working in white homes, acted as informants who brought knowledge back to segregated communities—details, facts, observations, psychoanalytic readings of the white “Other.” (p. 165)

Some mark W.E.B. Du Bois as the original textual voice calling for a critical examination of whiteness (Hartman, 2004). For Du Bois, writing in *The Souls of Black Folk*, “the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line” (1903/1995, p. 41), and in the “The Souls of White Folk,” his message about the white side of the color line is more direct: “The discovery of personal whiteness among the world's peoples is a very modern thing, a nineteenth and twentieth century matter indeed” (1921/1996, p. 497). It might even be appropriate to drop a note of acknowledgment to Lillian Smith, a white woman and Southerner, who despite still being relatively unknown, began writing about the entanglement of whiteness in the segregated

South in the 1930s. In the 1950s and 60s, Franz Fanon, was the first to examine the psychological consequences of race in a world where white people dominate, oppress, and colonize people of color (Suchet, 2004; Eyerman, 2001). Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/2008) can be read as a study in whiteness via its trauma on black people, the way that whiteness attacks black people from the inside. For Fanon, being raced is inevitable and imbued through structural and collective means; "The white man is sealed in his whiteness. The black man in his blackness" (1952/2008, p. 9). Other important scholars such as James Baldwin, Reginald Horsman, David Wellman, and Adrienne Rich were writing critical analyses of whiteness over several decades before whiteness studies became a major cite of research (Frankenberg, 1999). The mid 1970s marked the entrance of critical race theory—originating in interdisciplinary legal studies and radical feminism; it soon spread among academic and activist communities (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), critical race theory, concerned with studying and actively "transforming the relationship among race, racism and power" (p. 2), conceptualizes the wide-ranging interest in how those relationships play out in "economics, history, context, group- and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious" (p. 3).

Modern whiteness studies was born out of decades of scholarship and activism of people of color and some white people during the pre- and post-Civil Rights decades who named and critically analyzed the ways that 'race' and 'racism' manifest on the individual, social/cultural and institutional level (Frankenberg, 1999). Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992) is often cited as a crucial seed for the growth of whiteness studies (Fishkin, 1995; Krumboltz, 1996;

Lazarre, 1996). Fishkin (1995) writes, “*Playing in the Dark* put the construction of “whiteness” on the table to be investigated, analyzed, punctured, and probed. Morrison’s book offered a set of questions and an agenda for research that resonated with a number of projects already under way [...] and that also helped spark myriad new publications” (p. 430). In *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison (1992) writes:

A good deal of time and intelligence has been invested in the exposure of racism and the horrific results on its objects. There are constant, if erratic, liberalizing efforts to legislate these matters. There are also powerful and persuasive attempts to analyze the origin and fabrication of racism itself, contesting the assumption that it is an inevitable, permanent and eternal part of all social landscapes. I do not wish to disparage these inquiries. It is precisely because of them that any progress at all has been accomplished in matters of racial discourse. But that well-established study should be joined with another, equally important one: the impact of racism on those who perpetuated it. It seems both poignant and striking how avoided and unanalyzed is the effect of racist inflection on the subject. (p. 11)

Other seminal works in whiteness studies, some of which will be explored in more detail below, include Peggy McIntosh’s “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (1988), Richard Dyer’s “White” (1988) and *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (1997), David Roediger’s *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991), Ruth Frankenberg’s *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993), and Theodore Allen’s *The Invention of the White Race; Volume One: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (1994).

Frankenberg (1993) defines whiteness in the following way:

First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a “standpoint,” a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, “whiteness” refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. (p. 1)

Making a distinction between “whiteness” and “whiteness studies” is ultimately arbitrary because the former is simply the signifier of the latter’s study and thus their meanings are mutually dependent.

In terms of this study it is also useful to look at Frankenberg’s (1999) overview of the four major areas of whiteness studies. She names historical studies as the “fullest and best developed area of work” that has done much to elucidate the “fundamentally racialized character of U.S. and European histories” (p. 2); she locates the second area within sociology and cultural studies in which whiteness is considered central in “the making of subjects and the formation of structures and institutions” (p. 2). Frankenberg locates the third area of whiteness studies as coming out of sociological and cultural studies which “asks how whiteness is performed by subjects, whether in daily life, in film, in literature, or in the academic corpus” (p. 3). Finally, Frankenberg names a fourth area of whiteness studies that involves an analysis of racism within social change movements, this area originated in the women’s movement as the result of women of color calling upon their white counterparts to examine their whiteness and the racism they were enacting and perpetuating within the movement (p. 2).

This study taps into several of the areas of whiteness studies and whiteness that Frankenberg defines. Understanding whiteness as a location of advantage and racial privilege from a historical perspective that considers the racialized character of U.S. history is critical for situating how the history of slavery has informed and constructed whiteness and the structures and institutions that maintain whiteness. Central to this research is the notion that we are all racialized subjects, meaning that our subjectivity cannot exist outside of race. Hazel Carby (1992) asserts, “everyone in this social order

has been constructed in our political imagination as a racialised subject” (p. 193).

Furthermore, this study’s interest in the psychological impact of the history of slavery on contemporary white Americans draws on the concept that whiteness plays an integral role in the “making of subjects,” and that the white Americans who participated in this study will inevitably perform whiteness as they remember and make meaning of slavery.

An analysis of racism, and an ethical and political stance against it, is central to the term, concept and study of whiteness (Rothenberg, 2005). According to DiAngelo (in press), citing the work of Hilliard (1992), “Whiteness scholars define racism as encompassing economic, political, social and cultural structures, actions and beliefs that systematize and perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources and power between white people and people of color” (p. 2). Citing the work of Feagin (2006) and Mills (1999), DiAngelo (in press) adds:

This unequal distribution benefits whites and disadvantages people of color overall and at the group level. Racism is not fluid within the U.S. in that it does not flow back and forth, one day benefiting whites and another day (or even era) benefiting people of color. The direction of power between whites and people of color is historic, traditional, normalized, and deeply embedded in the fabric of U.S. society. (p. 2)

Some scholars note that for people of color, whiteness is felt as a terrorizing, violent force (hooks, 1999; Fanon, 1952/2008; among others).

White Privilege

“*White privilege is the other side of racism,*” writes Rothenberg (2005, p. 1).

There is nothing in the whiteness studies literature that does not link whiteness with privilege—whiteness and privilege go hand-in-hand. Peggy McIntosh’s (1989) article “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” was groundbreaking for whiteness

studies (Suchet, 2004; Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). In term of its popular impact – if there is any one entre into whiteness studies among undergraduates in the social sciences, it is this article (DiAngelo, 2010, personal correspondence). An important part of this article’s power is the fact that it is only four pages long; it is direct, politicized, and easily accessible. McIntosh (1989) writes, “White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (para. 3). McIntosh gives fifty specific examples of that privilege such as “I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed” or “I do not have to educate my children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection” (Daily effects of white privilege section, no. 5 & 15).

George Lipsitz’s “The Possessive Investment of Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the ‘White’ Problem in American Studies” (2005) is another critically important piece of scholarship on white privilege. He writes, “Conscious and deliberate actions have institutionalized group identity in the United States, not just through dissemination of cultural stories, but also through systematic efforts from colonial times to the present to create economic advantages through a possessive investment of whiteness for European Americans” (p. 68) and that the social and financial policies that ensure this economic advantage have actually increased in the last half century (p. 70). On the symbolic level, whiteness signifies socioeconomic power (Cushman, 2000; cited by Suchet, 2007).

In addition to the daily and unseen benefits of whiteness described by McIntosh (1989) and the historical and ongoing material economic benefits of whiteness detailed by Lipsitz (2005), white people in the United States have the privilege of a deeply

internalized sense that they belong where they live, that their society and nation values them and that it is theirs (McIntosh, 1989; DiAngelo, 2004). In the words of DiAngelo (in press):

This racial belonging is instilled via the whiteness embedded in the culture at large. Everywhere we look, we see our own racial image reflected back to us – in our heroes and heroines, in standards of beauty, in our role-models and teachers, in our textbooks and historical memory, in the media, in religious iconography including the image of god himself, etc. In virtually any situation or image deemed valuable in dominant society, whites belong (p. 7).

This sense of belonging is bound to what is one of the most critical aspects of whiteness raised by whiteness scholars—its invisibility.

The Invisibility of Whiteness

In “Unraveling Whiteness,” Melanie Suchet writes:

What does it mean to be white? For most people, that is a strange question for which they have no answer. Whiteness is that which is not seen and not named. It is present everywhere but absent from discussion. It is the silent norm. The invisibility of whiteness is how it maintains its natural, neutral position. This silence is central to the power of whiteness. (2007, p. 868)

Richard Dyer’s (1988) “White” in which he analyzes how whiteness is represented in three films, *Jezebel* (1938), *Simba* (1955), and *Night of the Living Dead* (1969) was an early and highly influential work in whiteness studies (Suchet, 2004). In “White,” Dyer articulates several concepts that continue to be critical in whiteness studies; that whiteness operates as the human norm, it seems “not to be anything in particular” to be “everything and nothing;” that whiteness is virtually never represented as such, it is rendered via representations of people of color, in other words, what whiteness *is*, is made visible by what it *is not*; and that this invisibility is the hallmark of its power. These aspects are intimately intertwined, for the invisibility of whiteness depends on the

racialized other to mark its border, the border is seen, but what is protected/it protects is not—the invisibility of whiteness is maintained by the visibility of the non-white other (Aanerud, 1999; Dalal, 1998; Dalton, 2005; Dyer, 1988, 1997; Morrison, 1993). In the words of Farhad Dalal (1998), “the white ensign at the centre is invisible, and is only the black ensign at the margins that is able to be seen” (p. 576).

Dalton (2005) states, “Whiteness is meaningless in the absence of Blackness; the same holds in reverse” (p. 16). Drawing on Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark*, Rebecca Aanerud (1999) explains how whiteness functions in literature: “Whiteness as race operates as an unmarked racial category. Unless told otherwise, the reader, positioned as white, assumes the characters are white. [...] Such (un)marked whiteness is often reinforced by the overt racial marking of the non-white character” (p. 37). Aanerud is pointing out the way in which whiteness is marked by its invisibility and that its marking is done through the non-white other. The non-white other is utilized as an object to mark the white subject, and the subjectivity of whiteness (Morrison, 1993). Dalal states: “The power of ideology is such that the ‘whiteness’ as organizing principle is unconscious. The white ensign at the centre is invisible, and is only the black ensign at the margins that is able to be seen” (1998, p. 576).

Furthermore, on the level of the individual, this centering of whiteness means that white people, representing the whole of humanity, often do not experience themselves as raced at all; it is people of color who *have* race, who represent race (Dyer, 1997; Leary, 2004; Thandeka, 1999a). Thandeka (1999a) a theologian interested in how racial identity interacts with religious sentiment and informs social behavior, invited white people, who defined themselves as non-racist, to play what she calls the “Race Game”—to use the

descriptive term “white” in the company of white people whenever referencing a white person, such as my “white friend Julie” or “my lovely white child Jackie” (p. 11-12). She found that no one who agreed to do it, and many enthusiastically did agree, could actually carry through with the task. One woman wrote back saying that she didn’t have the “courage,” the man who was able to play the game for the longest, expressed that it was a “miserable experience;” “Every time I decided to play the game with someone new, I felt that I was about to be rejected, that the person would turn away, and that I would be shunned. I felt terrible” (1999a, p. 14). What Thandeka’s experiment shows is that for white people, among white people, acknowledging that white people have race provokes intense fear. Hooks (1992) suggests that in a mixed race context this fear turns to rage. Hooks found that “white students respond with disbelief, shock and rage” when they are confronted with the fact that black students see them as white and study their whiteness (1992, p, 167).

Frankenberg (1999) reminds us however that the invisibility of whiteness varies, “for hegemony is never complete, never uniform” (p. 5). In different contexts, locales, and times, whiteness may indeed disappear into virtual invisibility and then again it may become quite pronounced when the boundaries of whiteness are being questioned. While “collectively black people remain rather silent about representations of whiteness in the black imagination,” writes hooks (1992, p.170), whiteness is seen quite clearly by many and is associated “with the terrible, terrifying, and terrorizing” (p. 170). Rebecca Aanerud (1999) points out that one’s ability to see whiteness is both a result of race, in the sense of the racial position that the seer occupies, and a result of the level of consciousness of the seer.

Scholars of whiteness seem to agree that the project of studying whiteness—unveiling its invisibility and naming, marking, and analyzing how it maintains and monitors the possession of power and privilege for white people on the individual and collective level—is where the opportunity to dismantle its violence and oppression of people of color lays (Aanerud, 1999; Dyer, 1997; hooks, 1992; Lazarre, 1996; Rothenberg, 2005; Suchet, 2007; Wise, 2005). Put succinctly by Frankenberg (1993), “Naming ‘whiteness’ displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance. [...] To look at the social construction of whiteness, then, is to look head-on at a site of dominance” (p. 6). For Dyer “whiteness needs to be made strange” (1997, p. 10) and for Wise after it has been *seen*, it needs to be challenged (2005).

Whiteness is not a veil that can be simply thrown off, the historical, political, legal, economic, and social privileges cannot be given back, because they are constantly being bestowed upon people who are identified as being included in it (Harris, 1993; Lipstiz, 2005; McIntosh, 1989). Scholars describe that systems of whiteness are bigger than any one person or group of people—as DiAngelo describes, whiteness is a “constellation of processes and practices” it is “dynamic, relational, and operating at all times on myriad levels” (in press, p. 9)—but also argue that whiteness is lived in and through the lives of individual white people. They are actively shaped by whiteness; it shapes their desires, beliefs, perceptions, behaviors and relationships (DiAngelo, in press; Frankenberg, 1997; Morrison, 1992; Tatum, 1997).

As whiteness scholars point out, white people can experience themselves as not being raced at all (Dyer, 1997; Leary, 2004) and white people enjoy myriad benefits via

their race without ever having to know about it (Dyer, 1988; Feagin & Vera, 1995; McIntosh, 1989). The protection from such awareness is whiteness itself (DiAngelo, in press). But whiteness also has consequences (Harris, 2000; Wise, 2005). Not knowing that whiteness or white privilege exists means that how it functions collectively and individually, externally and internally, is for the majority of white people, largely unconscious. White people will enact the racial oppression and violence inherent in whiteness on people of color simply by having been born a white person within a white dominated society—this will happen, despite conscious intention or goodwill, also for the most part unconsciously (Altman, 2004a; DiAngelo, in press; Dyer, 1997; Leary, 2000; Straker, 2004; Suchet, 2004, 2007; Wise, 2010).

Whiteness and the White Psyche

In 1965, in his essay “The White Man’s Guilt,” James Baldwin wrote:

The history of white people has led them to a fearful, baffling place. [...] They do not know how this came about; they do not dare examine how this came about. On the one hand, they can scarcely dare to open a dialogue which must, if it is honest, become a personal confession—a cry for help and healing, which is, really, the basis of all dialogues—and, on the other hand, the black man can scarcely dare to open a dialogue which must, if it is honest, become a personal confession which, fatally, contains an accusation. And yet, if neither can do this, each of us will perish in those traps in which we have been struggling for so long. (1998, p. 724-725)

Tim Wise stated to the white members of his audience: “Whiteness is not something that you *are*. It is something that is *done* to you” (2010, italics mine). At the most basic level, Wise was pointing out that the racial violence embedded in whiteness is not inherent in white people. But this statement has many subtle meanings. Whiteness here becomes something more than privileges and unconscious performances that hurt people of color; whiteness becomes something that hurts white people. His use of the words

done to connotes a kind of trauma, or at least a negative impingement, on white people. What some scholars suggest is that this *being done to* has deeply unconscious, forgotten, and haunting psychological elements.

Because this study is an exploration of how the memory and representation of slavery resides in the white psyche, this review of the literature has been, at its heart, an attempt to find scholars who have written about the psychic implications of whiteness for white people, what belonging to whiteness, being one whose skin and social location mark one as possessing whiteness, does to the psyche. I have found the most in-depth analysis of how whiteness resides and functions on the psychic level in the work of scholars who utilize psychoanalytic concepts and/or are writing from within psychodynamic and psychoanalytic clinical practice and theory. It must be noted that whiteness scholars at large have examined many of the psychological implications of whiteness via how these processes play out and erupt during anti-racist dialogue and education. See Tatum (2005), Sleeter (1996) and DiAngelo (in press) for excellent work on white silence and DiAngelo (in press) on white fragility.

The psychodynamic and psychoanalytic literature that deals with race and racism is quite small, even smaller is the body of literature that deals with whiteness specifically. As Leary (1997) points out:

What is usually under discussion in most psychoanalytic writing about race is less about race per se than it is about racism and racial status. In consequence, most of the existing psychoanalytic literature is better appreciated for illustrating the psychodynamics of racism than for offering a commentary on race or cultural identity. (p. 182)

Thus, this review of the psychodynamic scholarship will be in part, a sifting through, to find the kernels of analysis that deal with whiteness. It will focus on the work of Neil

Altman (1995, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2006), Melanie Suchet (2004, 2006), Kimberlyn Leary (1997, 2000), Gillian Straker (2004) and Adrienne Harris (2000, 2007a, 2007b) who do deal with whiteness directly. It will also draw upon the work of a number of other scholars who study race, racialization and racism, particularly those who discuss racial melancholia.

Scholars have argued that whiteness is deeply imbedded in the psyche of white people (Altman, 2000, 2004b, 2006; Blechner, 2008; Harris, 2000, 2007a, 2007b; Leary, 2000; Straker, 2004; Suchet, 2004, 2007) and that it will always be, on some level, bound to the unconscious (Altman, 2006; Harris, 2007b). According to Altman (2006) no one will ever be able to make their unconscious disappear, which means that some of whiteness (here he is referring to racism in particular) will always be out of reach, lodged as it were, forever—deep inside our psyches. As Suchet (2007) writes, “There is no possibility of transcending race. No space in which we can be beyond race” (p. 883). In “The House of Difference” Harris (2007b) draws on André Green’s notion of “psychose blanche” to suggest that some qualities of whiteness, born from centuries of being the privileged and the oppressor, may reside so deep in the unconscious that they are beyond symbolization. Harris (2007b) writes:

Perhaps this is what “whiteness” is: the disruption or erasure of mourning, a gap in the psyche through which “whiteness” functions like an imploding star, refusing signification. It is not trauma solely that is whitened out, but destructiveness and memory. (p. 93)

In “Racial Enactments in Dynamic Treatment” Leary (2000) suggests something similar, although in the terms of racial experience in general, and the vulnerability of social discourses on race. She writes “racial experience may have something in common with

what Stern (1997) called unformulated experience—that is, experience that is not yet reflected on or linguistically encoded but that nevertheless remains part of our everyday psychic grammar” (p. 641). By psychic grammar Leary means that unconscious racial enactments are happening all of the time and “emanate from the sore spots that are the legacy” of our social history “to which each of us is heir” (2000, p. 652). Leary (2000) adds: “I think that the most common racial enactment has been our relative silence about racial issues” (p. 647).

Harris (2000) agrees with the fragility and vulnerability that Leary (2000) describes; however she adds another layer. In a response paper to Leary (2000), Harris (2000) writes:

Conversations about race are fragile, yes, but they are also brimming with pain. There is a dizzying, oscillating shift in the competitive hostility and multiple, often contradictory loyalties. This conversation is, I would say, haunted by history. I am using the word haunting to connect Leary's analysis to the work of Abraham and Torok (1970), who evocatively conveyed the impact of unknowable and unbearable anguish encrypted as a secret aspect of psychic life. Secrets, in their view, remain nuggets of disavowed experience, unknown or unconsciously transmitted and undecipherable to the current bearer. Race in America with all its visible and invisible history must live in part as secretly unmetabolizable trauma in any contemporary person. (p. 656)

The links to the racial history of the United States in connection with how whiteness and racial experience live in the psyche made by Leary (2000) and Harris (2000), are also a part of Altman (2000, 2006) and Suchet’s (2004, 2007) work. In fact, Suchet (2004), Altman (2006) and Harris (2000) make specific reference to slavery as a signifier of the unbearable and often unconscious aspects of whiteness, namely as the origin of its guilt and shame. Harris (2007a) sees in this history “the possibility that intergenerational transmission of trauma, including the traumatic construction of the self

in acts of domination and the continuation of privilege and/or power is a deep infrastructure of any white person's life" (p. 892). "We all carry the haunting presence of shame and guilt as the heritage of our history, soaked as it is in the trauma of oppression, whether that is slavery, apartheid, or anti-Semitism," writes Suchet (2004, p. 430).

Race and Melancholia

Several scholars reference whiteness as something that haunts (Harris, 2000; Straker, 2004; and Suchet, 2004, 2007). The use of the term haunting signals that these authors are talking of melancholia, as each explicitly does. Some excellent scholarship has been published in the last decade that utilizes Freud's concept of melancholia to theorize race, racism and the process of racialization on the individual, group and societal level. Below is a detailed reading of Freud's (1917) "Mourning and Melancholia" in order to situate the subsequent review of the work of Anne Anlin Cheng (2001) and David Eng and Shinhee Han (2000). This review will lead us back to Suchet (2004, 2007) and Straker (2004) whose work was influenced especially by the work of Eng and Han (2000) and who have come to understand whiteness via a concept of white racial melancholia. For all of these theorists, race, racism and racialization are processes of foreclosure, of defining and policing who and what parts of the self can and cannot be loved, what can and cannot be accessed or realized.

Freud's 1917 essay, "Mourning and Melancholia" is a literary gem; it is beautifully written, was likely the seed for Object Relations Theory, and has been adored by clinicians and academics for nearly a century. According to Freud, melancholia is a form of mourning that cannot end. It is the result of a real or imagined loss, from which the subject cannot grieve and through grieving love something or someone else. The

melancholic subject who cannot access the real loved or longed for object takes the psychic representation of the lost object inside the self through a process called identification. The loss has then become an integral part of how the subject experiences him or herself, it is no longer a loss of a loved or longed for object which resides outside of the self, but becomes a loss of and within the self. As Freud writes, “In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself” (1917, p. 246). The theorists that follow, expand Freud’s concept of melancholia to understand not only individual responses to race, racism and racialization, but also how race, racism and racialization function melancholically on a historical, social and cultural level. Freud makes clear early in his essay, “Mourning [or what sometimes becomes melancholia] is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (p. 243).

In her phenomenal work, *The Melancholy of Race* (2001), Anne Anlin Cheng’s overarching project is to address the subjectivity of the lost object, about which, she points out, Freud had nothing to say. Cheng positions the lost object as the racialized other of white racial melancholia. She writes, “Racialization in America may be said to operate through the institutionalized process of producing a dominant, standard, white national ideal, which is sustained by the exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others” (p.10). The racialized other is absorbed into, has always been necessary for, the production of the dominant, standard, white national ideal, but as the melancholic object, the racialized other serves the place of lack, Freud’s “poor and empty”, of that national ideal and is thus also always being rejected from that ideal. Cheng (2001) succinctly

points out the melancholic dilemma in which the American ideal is stuck: “If one of the ideals that has sustained the American nation since its beginning has been its unique proposition that ‘all men are created equal,’ then one of America’s ongoing national mortifications must be its history of acting otherwise” (p. 10), and she goes on to ask, “How does the nation ‘go on’ while remembering those transgressions? How does it *sustain* the remnants of denigration and disgust created in the name of progress and the formation of an American identity?” (p. 11). Although Cheng’s primary endeavor is to speak to the subjectivity of the lost object, she raises an important question about white American identity: How are white Americans, the subject of this research, impacted by their material proximity (through their own whiteness) to the melancholic structure of the “dominant, standard, white national ideal?”

David Eng and Shinhee Han’s (2000) “A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia” has been highly influential in the psychoanalytic literature; both Suchet (2004) and Straker (2004) draw on their work. Eng and Han, a professor of English and Comparative Literature and a psychotherapist and scholar of social work respectively, are responding to the rise of depression among their young Asian American clients and the neglected issue of race in psychoanalysis (p. 669). Eng and Han’s basic concept of how race functions melancholically is similar to what is also argued by Cheng (2000). Eng and Han (2000) write:

To the extent that ideals of whiteness for Asian Americans (and other groups of color) remain unattainable, processes of assimilation are suspended, conflicted, and unresolved. The irresolution of this process places the concept of assimilation within a melancholic framework. Put otherwise, mourning describes a finite process that might be reasonably aligned with the popular American myth of immigration, assimilation, and the melting pot for dominant white ethnic groups. (p. 671)

Eng and Han explain that the process of assimilation is a “negotiation between mourning and melancholia” and involves both the mourning for the loss of/foreclosure to access to the ideals of whiteness, and the mourning for the repressed parts of self and community that that have been repressed and/or denied in the process of assimilation.

For psychoanalytic writers such as Straker (2004) and Suchet (2007) white racial melancholia is an important way of thinking about the psychic consequences of whiteness. Straker who draws on the work of Eng and Han (2001) extensively refers to what she calls the “melancholia of the beneficiary” is an experience of loss that surfaces when a white person becomes aware of their complicity in whiteness—as beneficiaries (via white privilege) and inevitable bearers of (some of the violence/damage of) whiteness—alongside a conscious feeling of hate for the historical and ongoing violence perpetuated by whiteness. As Straker (2004) describes:

If melancholia is seen as the trace of the trajectory from love to hate of the lost object, then it follows that the apprehension of this horror may well serve to import the state of melancholia into the psychic domain of those who consciously acknowledge the problematic nature of the actions of their group and thus reject them. This will be especially so when one acknowledges not only one’s own limitations in influencing the actions of one’s group, but also that one is a beneficiary of these actions. (p. 410-411)

Suchet (2007) explains that through this melancholic trajectory, “The location of the hated other, is now inside” (p. 875). Said similarly by Suchet (2007) white racial melancholia:

[...] is the experience of loss, a diminishment in the sense of self as we see through whiteness. It is the recognition that under the mantle of whiteness there is the perpetration of violence, terror, and the infliction of psychological damage. It is with horror that we come to own the destructiveness that is a part of whiteness. The rewards and benefits given to whites automatically implicates us in the acts performed to attain those privileges. There is a realization of our

complicity as the beneficiaries of whiteness. We benefit despite ourselves, despite our beliefs, values, and ideals. (p. 874)

For Suchet (2007) the potential for unraveling whiteness, the avenue out of white racial melancholia is a kind of surrender to the contradictions of our racialization and the racism in us, a willingness to “live more deeply in race” (p. 884) and a “continual process of opening up” (p. 880). Suchet (2007) writes:

The dismantling of white authority is not a smooth process. There is no linear path to absolution. The shame, guilt, the melancholia, and the state of surrender will all coexist, processes that circulate to be triggered at different times. Moreover, it is not a process with closure, but an ongoing and open relationship between parts of the self, between subject and object and between past and present, to be continually reworked, reviewed and reconciled. The colonizer within can never be shed, only disrupted, over and over again. (p. 884)

However, Harris (2007a) challenges Suchet’s proposal of surrender as the way of unraveling whiteness, cautioning that it “too often defaults to submission and/or dissociation” and argues that “most white writing about racism stays in the realm of the melancholy” unable to shift toward mourning (p. 892).

Despite the risks of psychological paralysis, denial, self-soothing, and dissociation; white guilt is understood overwhelmingly by scholars who write about it to be an inevitable experience of whiteness, whether or not it ever reaches consciousness.

Kenneth Hardy (1995), a renowned family therapist, lectures and writes about the psychological residuals of slavery for black Americans. He argues that slavery is a powerful site for white guilt and shame:

For whites, slavery usually evokes feelings of shame and guilt. These feelings are often expressed through denial or anger in the effort to distance themselves from really thinking about slavery, or to suppress memories or other reactions associated with it. (DVD Psychological Residuals of Slavery)

Neil Altman (2006) gives an excellent analysis of white guilt:

Damage is done to people who are subordinated; acknowledging this damage forces one to confront one's own sense of destructiveness. The knowledge that one has hurt someone one loves and cares about is extremely hard to bear. This is a problem on a national level in the United States, where the damage done historically by slavery, discrimination, and genocide, and the damage done in a highly competitive, capitalist context, runs up against American ideals of equity and equal opportunity. When guilt cannot be tolerated [individually or collectively], the solution is often to deny that damage was done or to blame the victim. Thus arises a vicious circle of prejudice, in which prejudiced beliefs and discriminatory actions serve both to ward off guilt and to create further guilt. (p. 57)

Note that Altman (2006) names “slavery” in relationship to white guilt. It must be pointed out that Altman, like Hardy (2006) and scholars such as Dyer (1997) and Yamoto (2004), cautions against the pitfalls of white guilt. Altman (2004b) links white guilt to Mitchell's (2001) notion of ‘guiltiness’ and writes, it “could be defined as an effort to deny responsibility, to avoid the pain of guilt, with a too-facile apology or apologetic attitude” that prevents any real reparation or healing (p. 445).

For Gillian Straker (2004), shame and guilt, which she theorizes are processes of melancholia, are often disavowed—the “state of knowing but not believing what one knows—that is, knowing and not knowing simultaneously” (p. 411). As Straker describes it, consciously anti-racist white people often use the defense of disavowal, on one level they are aware of the violence and oppression that racism is inflicting on people of color and may be consciously working against it, but on another level they are also wedded to being blind to it—and as a result they end up fetishizing people of color, using them as fetish, to cover over the contradiction. According to Suchet (2007), “it [whiteness] is a fragile, covered-over space in which we both know yet disavow our knowledge of emptiness” (p. 869).

Whiteness has been described by several scholars as a fantasy of omnipotence (Altman and Tiemann, 2004; Altman 2006; Cushman, 1995; Layton, 2006). For Layton (2006) the fantasy of whiteness is a fantasy of wholeness and sameness—an attempt to avoid the feelings of lack, vulnerability or humiliation (Suchet, 2007). For Cushman (1995) it is an effort to construct a bounded, masterful self. For Miller and Josephs (2009) the fantasy of whiteness is a fantasy of Oedipal triumph. For Altman (2006):

The fantasy of whiteness is a way in which whites seek to ward off feelings of lack or of ordinariness, i.e., a lack of specialness or privilege and a sense of unfreedom or constraint. [...] What makes the fantasy of whiteness a pathological defense is the way it is paired with blackness as its disavowed double. The search for mastery becomes problematic when it becomes so desperate that it must entail the construction of a subjected group of people and the disavowal of one's own helplessness—i.e., when the experience of helplessness is warded off, rather than integrated with the experience of mastery. (p. 55-56)

Altman draws attention to how this fantasy of mastery has operated on the collective level, taking “the form of the mastery of other people, a sadomasochistic, dominant-submissive form” in the production of slavery, colonialization, and the ongoing discrimination and unequal access to housing, education, and employment (p. 56).

Drawing on the work of Morrison (1993) and Baldwin (1993), Altman (2006) writes about the disavowal of vulnerability and helplessness in the fantasy of mastery embedded in whiteness, “Like all defenses, a price must be paid for their use; as Baldwin in particular points out, there is a consequent constriction of experience of the human condition, with all its vulnerability and risk that can yield pain, but also joy” (p. 55). Altman and Tiemann (2004) conceptualize racism as a manic defense. According to these authors, racism, or we might insert whiteness here, functions psychologically in ways similar to the Klienian notion of the manic defense, through “projective

identification, intolerance of guilt with an associated foreclosure of psychic space, and denial of human vulnerability, or omnipotence.” It is the foreclosure of psychic space that is of interest here, because this seems to be something about which Suchet (2004, 2007), Straker (2004), and Harris (2000, 2007b) are alluding to—a loss of access to one’s psychic self and to connection with differently raced others.

Thandeka (1999a), spurred by the results of the “Race Game” described in an earlier section, wanted to know “what feelings lay behind the word *white* that were too potent to be faced” (p. 4). In an informal study conducted during workshops across the country, Thandeka (1999a) interviewed hundreds of white people about their earliest memories associated with the formation of their white racial identity. Faced with the loss of love, emotional (and sometimes physical) abandonment and exile, children and adolescents learn, implicitly and/or explicitly to repress and deny their experiences of and desires for connection with people of color. According to Thandeka, inculcation into whiteness for white children involves relational abuse at the hands of their white caretakers, community and peers.

The following is an example of what Thandeka (1999a) describes about how white children learn their whiteness via white people closest to them. A Southerner by birth and identity, Lillian Smith (1949/1994) in *Killers of the Dream* describes the confusing and psychologically damaging experience of her white racialization:

The mother who taught me what I know of tenderness and love and compassion taught me also the bleak rituals of keeping Negroes in their place. The father who rebuked me for an air of superiority toward schoolmates from the mill and rounded out his rebuke by gravely reminding me that ‘all men are brothers,’ trained me in the steel-rigid decorum’s I must demand of every colored male. They who taught me to split my body from my feelings and both from my ‘soul,’

taught me also to split my conscience from my acts and Christianity from southern tradition. (p. 18)

Smith's (1949) autobiographical account of learning her place in the racial landscape of her childhood also included an expectation that she would take on the role of the oppressor, of "keeping Negroes in their place."

Whiteness and Identification with the Aggressor

That the process of racialization into whiteness embeds a deep internalization of the aggressor/oppressor within white people has been acknowledged in contemporary whiteness studies since Peggy McIntosh's (1989) "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" where she writes, "My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor" (p. 1). Janet Helms's (1990) groundbreaking and seminal work on white racial identity formation includes the acceptance that one does and will oppress via their whiteness as a critical marker toward a positive white identity.

In "A Relational Encounter with Race" Suchet (2004), a white woman from South Africa who immigrated to the United States describes her analytic work with an African American woman who was mandated to treatment to avoid a prison sentence for domestic violence. Suchet draws particular attention to the racial enactment that ensued during their work. Suchet (2004) writes:

At the time, I was unaware of how the structure of the treatment recreated the racial dynamics of slavery. I was in the position of power, not only with respect to the institutional authority invested in my professional role or due to the fact that I was the one being paid, but ultimately her career and future were dependent on my assessment of her progress. She was, in fact, in a position of bondage toward me, her chosen white therapist. I had excised from consciousness the slave-master dichotomy. (p. 434)

It was through this process of realizing that she was inhabiting the role of the slave master, that Suchet comes to the conclusion that in order to stop the reenactment she must acknowledge the part of her that is identified with the slave master, with the racial aggressor. Suchet (2004) concludes by stating:

Race haunts our consciousness. Like a melancholic structure, disavowed and unacknowledged, its presence permeates our inner world. We need to own our racial identity and embrace a space where the horrors of trauma can be reenacted. As whites, this necessitates an identification with the aggressor. We cannot afford to dissociate the shame and guilt we carry as a consequence of being oppressors, historically and currently. (p. 437)

Suchet (2004) suggests that white collective consciousness has disassociated from its historical and ongoing position as the oppressor/aggressor (p. 433). In *Black Skins White Masks*, Fanon introduces the notion of “collective catharsis” stating:

In every society, in every community, there exists, must exist, a channel, an outlet whereby the energy accumulated in the form of aggressiveness can be released [...] The Tarzan stories, the tales of young explorers, the adventures of Mickey Mouse, and all the illustrated comics aim at releasing a collective aggressiveness. They are written by white men for white children. [...] And the Wolf, the Devil, the Wicked Genie, Evil, and the Savage are always represented by Blacks or Indians; and since one always identifies with the good guys, the little black child, just like the little white child, becomes an explorer, and adventurer, and a missionary ‘who is in danger of being eaten by the wicked Negroes.’ (1952/2008, p. 124-125)

Here, Fanon makes a critical point, that of identification with the “good” guy who is an “explorer, adventurer, and a missionary”, all of which are also the roles of the oppressor and the colonizer who takes, exploits and terrorizes. The white child’s identification with the “good” guy is so much smoother and less conflicted, for it is the white child who sees her own image in the face of that “good” guy. But as Suchet (2004) and others have revealed, underneath this easy and safely conscious identification as the “good” guy, is

the terrible unconscious reality that “the Wolf, the Devil, the Wicked Genie, Evil, and the Savage” are the disavowed and projected parts of the white people themselves.

Conclusion

The legacy of slavery is still resonant. The majority of scholarship on slavery is historical; those that study the psychological impact of slavery tend to focus on black Americans. Again, as Toni Morrison (1992) urges: “The scholarship that looks into the mind, imagination, and behavior of slaves is valuable. But equally valuable is a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters” (p. 12). It is in response to this need that this empirical qualitative study has been conducted.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study is an exploration of how contemporary white Americans remember and make meaning of U.S. slavery. Participants were asked to reflect on their memories of learning about, talking about, and knowing about the history of slavery in the United States. Participants were further asked to share their internal representations of slavery, to imagine their relationship with slavery, and to report their beliefs about the impact of slavery for themselves and on contemporary society. Scholars are increasingly interested in the study of whiteness, and scholars have been researching and writing about the economic, legal, social, cultural and psychological implications for black Americans since slavery's abolishment. However, there are no known empirical studies that address the question: Do contemporary white Americans experience psychological conflict in relationship to the history of slavery in the United States? A qualitative research design and method was employed to begin to explore this area of research. As a qualitative and exploratory study with 15 participants, this research does not attempt to represent the comprehensive psychological impact of the history of slavery on white Americans. It does however offer suggestive analysis that will hopefully be further developed in future research studies.

Sample

The data collected consists of the narrative responses of 15 white Americans who were interviewed about their memories and associations about slavery in relationship to

their personal histories. In total, one thousand minutes of audio data was collected. All data was examined and major themes in the participants' responses to the questions about slavery are reported. Due to this study's particular interest in the psychological implications of U.S. slavery for contemporary white Americans, the data that represented the participants' affective, cognitive and somatic processes, received greater in-depth analysis.

The sample for this study was limited to persons over the age of 18, who identify as "white" or "Caucasian," who were born in the United States, and who lived in the United States for at least 15 of their first 18 years of life. Participants were recruited through word-of-mouth and a recruitment letter (see Appendix A) that was sent via email to family, friends and professional contacts. Participants were recruited and interviewed in the San Francisco Bay Area and in the Dallas Fort-Worth Area to increase the diversity of the sample. I made an effort to recruit a sample that represented a wide range of age and of regional areas of birth and upbringing.

Data Collection

Data was collected through semi-structured and open-ended interviews conducted at previously agreed upon public and private locations or over the phone. The interview consisted of two sections. The first section contained demographic questions and questions about the regional, family and community environment in which the participant grew up. The second section of the interview consisted of questions about the participants' memories, feelings and associations related to learning about and being aware of the history of slavery in the United States. Both parts of the interview were semi-structured, including pre-established open-ended questions and follow-up questions

based on the individual participants' responses. Informal pilot interviews were conducted to assist in the development of the interview protocol. In addition, prior to conducting official interviews for this study, a full-length formal pilot interview was conducted with a colleague who met the participant criteria.

Procedures to protect the rights and privacy of participants were outlined in the proposal of this study presented to the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) at the Smith College School for Social Work; approval for this study was obtained prior to the collection of any data (see Appendix B). This approval indicated that the study was in concordance with the NASW Code of Ethics and the federal regulations for the protection of human research subjects. Each participant was given an Informed Consent letter that described the topic of research, the expectations of participation, participants' rights as human subjects, and the potential risks and benefits of participation (see Appendix C). Each participant had an opportunity to review the Informed Consent and to ask any questions about the study or the nature of participation, prior to signing the Informed Consent. I obtained a signed Informed Consent from each participant prior to conducting the interview. Per federal regulations, these documents will be maintained in a secured location separate from recorded data for three years or until they are no longer needed, at which point they will be destroyed.

Prior to beginning the interview, participants were asked to verbalize anything that came to mind during the course of the interview, whether or not they felt that it pertained to the question being asked. Participants were also reminded of their right to ask questions during the interview, to refuse to answer any question, and/or to stop the interview at any point. Participants were first asked a series of demographic questions

about themselves and their families, i.e. age, place of birth and upbringing, occupation and class. This section of the interview also included questions about how participants' experienced race and class within their families and communities and how they experience race and class in their current environments. The second, and longer section of the interview pertained to questions designed to elicit the participants' earliest memories associated with slavery, somatic responses to thinking about slavery, visual and auditory images associated with slavery, interpersonal experiences talking or hearing about slavery, known or imagined family heritage connected with slavery, responses to imagining oneself as a child in a slave owning family, beliefs about the personal and collective impact of slavery, and opinions about how slavery should be taught to children (see Appendix D for interview schedule).

Interviews were digitally recorded. Interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to one hour and thirty minutes, and together consist of one thousand minutes of recorded data. All interviews took place between March 8, 2010 and April 17, 2010. All audio data was transcribed by Datalyst, LLC after obtaining a signed Assurance of Research Confidentiality agreement (see Appendix E). All identifying information was deleted or disguised in the transcriptions.

Data Analysis

Data was examined by grouping responses and identifying major themes. Categories of common responses were created in order to draw comparisons. Some categories were already established via the interview questions, other categories arose through the data itself. Major themes, including significant similarities and differences in responses are reported. Due to the limits of this paper, only selected themes were further

analyzed, based on the criteria previously noted. This content was analyzed for its psychological implications. In this regard, I was particularly interested in the psychological implications of slavery for the 15 white Americans interviewed in this study, and therefore analyzed this data in order to discover if their responses evidenced psychological conflict.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This study explored how white Americans remember and make meaning of the history of slavery in the United States. This chapter contains the findings from interviews conducted with 15 white Americans. The interview schedule included two sections. The questions in the first section were designed to elicit the regional, spatial (rural, suburban, urban, etc.), socioeconomic, and racial environments in which the participants were raised. The questions in the second section of the interview focused on the history of U.S. slavery specifically, and were designed to elicit the participants' memories, associations, and ways of making meaning of that history in connection with learning about, knowing about, and communicating about slavery. These questions were designed to elicit the participants' cognitive representations of slavery as well as their affective and somatic responses to those representations in the process of recalling them. Participants were also asked to reflect on what the history of slavery means for them personally, what they believe it has meant for contemporary society, and how they believe it should be taught to children.

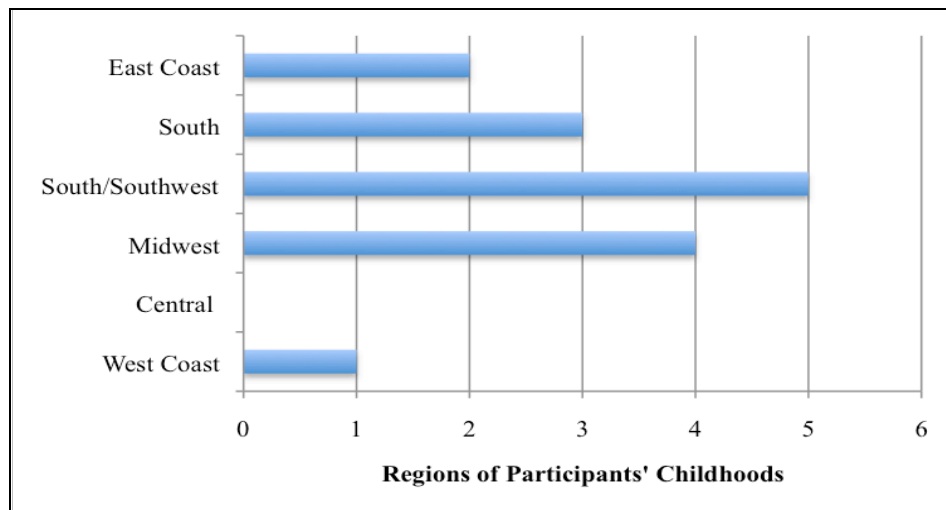
The data pertaining to the first section of the interview will be presented in the following order: demographics, characteristics of childhood environment, childhood class dynamics, and childhood race dynamics. The second part of this chapter presents the data gathered from the participants about their reflections about U.S. slavery. Major themes in

the data are presented. Particular analytic focus is given to data that deals with the affective, cognitive and somatic reactions and reports of the participants.

Demographics

Interviews were conducted with nine women and six men. Participants' ages ranged from 28 to 74, with a mean age of 53.6, a median age of 57. Ten participants currently live in the Dallas/Ft Worth area and 5 participants currently live in the San Francisco Bay Area. Eight in-person interviews were recorded in Dallas, TX, one in Fort Worth, TX, five in Oakland, CA, and one interview was recorded via phone in Oakland, CA with a participant in Dallas, TX. Information about the places of birth of participants and their parents and participants' parents' occupation was collected, however it did not prove to be significant for the data, as a whole, and so is not included. Participants were born in 9 different states, and spent their childhoods in a total of 10 states; 1 participant spent one year outside the country during his childhood. Figure 1 shows the regional break down of where participants grew up.

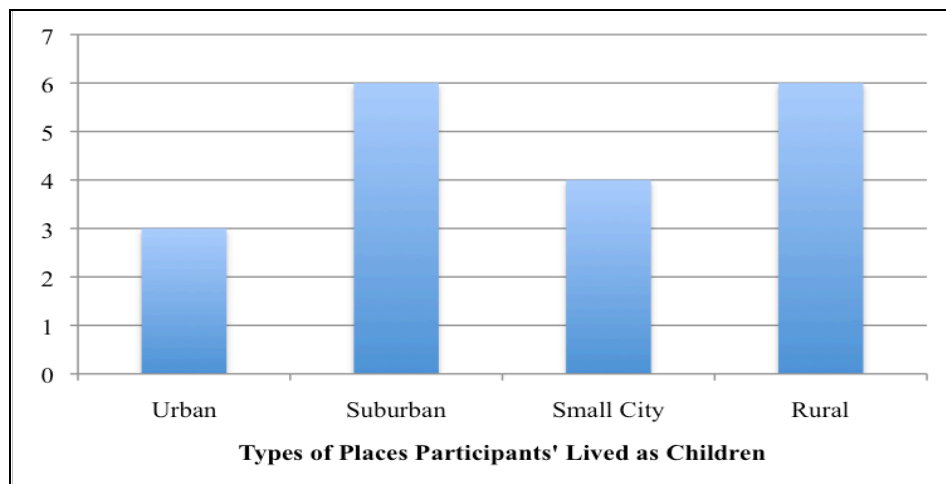
Figure 1.



Urban, Suburban, Rural

Participants grew up in significantly different environments in terms of population density. Four participants grew up in rural environments; of these, three grew up in very small agriculture-based communities and one grew up in a non-suburban small town near a large city. Three participants grew up in small cities, which were described by participants as an industrial town, a church and mill town, and a university town. Five participants grew up in suburban communities outside or within large metropolitan cities. One participant was born and raised in an urban environment; and one participant, who grew up in a small farming community, lived in an urban environment in her late adolescence. One participant spent the first half of her childhood in an urban environment and the latter half of her childhood in a small isolated city. One participant moved frequently as a child and grew up in places ranging from small agricultural towns to large suburbs. See Figure 2 for an overview of the types of places in which participants' spent their childhoods. Note that some participants lived in more than one type of place throughout their childhood.

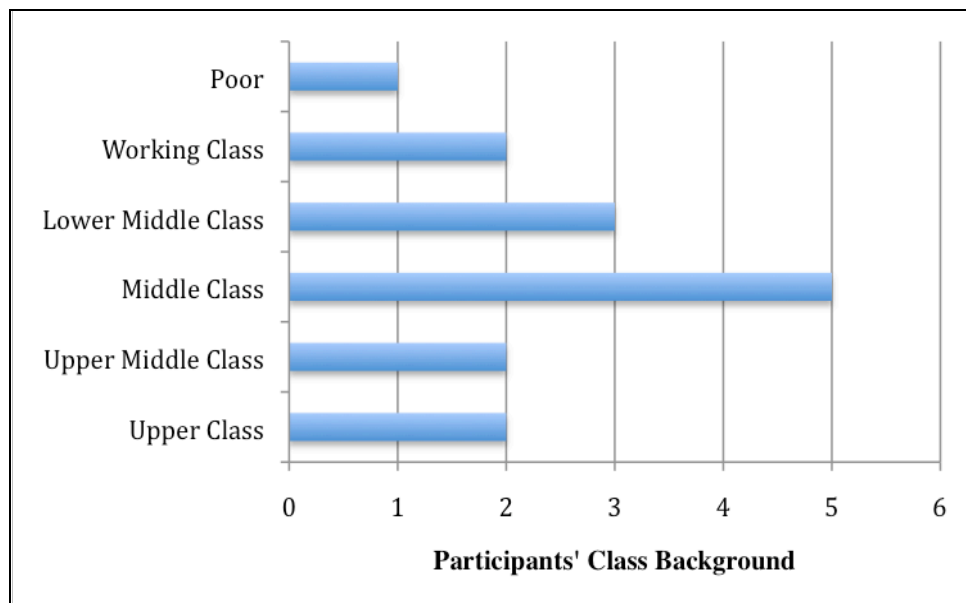
Figure 2.



Childhood Class Dynamics

Participants were asked to describe the class dynamics of their childhood communities and how their families fit into those dynamics. This information was sought in order to garner a more comprehensive picture of the participants' childhood environments. Figure 3 shows how participants identified their families in terms of class. Note that two of the five participants who said that their families were “middle class” designated this as an economic identification; both explained that their families were “upper class” in other ways; for one this was linked to education and access to fine arts and for the other it was linked to parents being highly self-educated and having a sophisticated mindset.

Figure 3.



The participants interviewed for this study reported varying degrees of awareness of class, as children. Those participants who grew up in homogenously classed and raced

communities were less likely to report significant awareness of class dynamics as children. Of these, three participants' accounts suggested that class dynamics made little impact on their childhoods. Two participants' seemed to evidence class awareness by giving details about class signifiers (i.e., houses, cars) while at the same time downplaying the effect of class on their childhoods. Nine participant's accounts evidenced considerable consciousness of class as children.

Childhood Race Dynamics

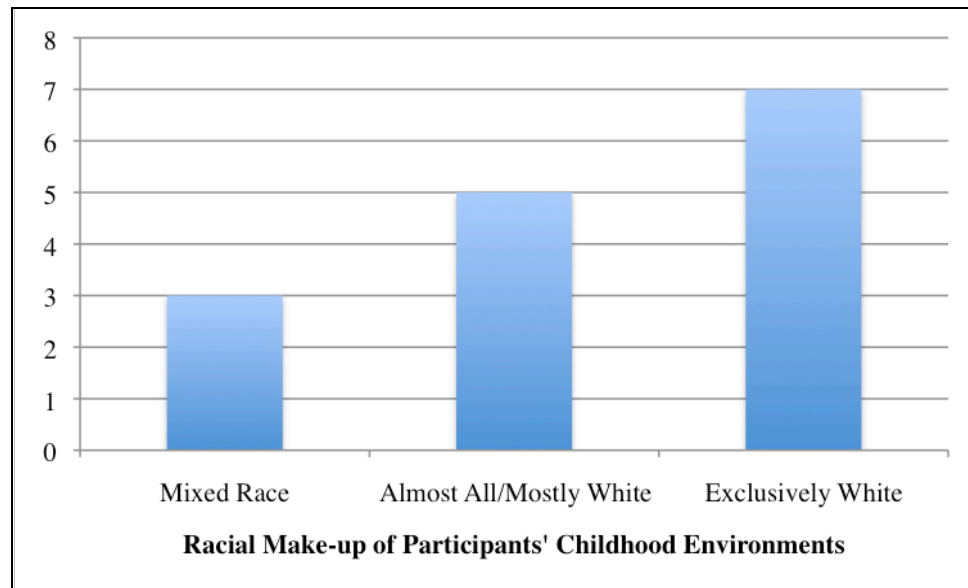
The following data includes the participants' responses to the following two questions, designed to elicit the participants' early experiences of racial dynamics: What was it like in terms of race where you grew up? How did you experience the relationships between people of different races where you grew up?

Seven participants suggested significant levels of awareness of race and race relations during their childhoods; six of these participants reported experiencing emotional distress, in varying degrees, in response to their experiences around race. Eight participants' accounts did not suggest much awareness or distress around race during their childhoods. Descriptions of various types of racial segregation were prominent in the vast majority of the participants' responses.

Participants' overwhelmingly initiated their responses to the questions about childhood racial dynamics by describing the racial make-up of their schools and communities (see Figure 4). Twelve participants reported growing up in exclusively or almost all white environments in terms of schools and social worlds. Of these, two participants reported a higher level of interaction with people of color during their high school years, and spoke of having friendships with black peers during late adolescence.

Three participants reported growing up in school and social environments with more exposure to people of color and higher levels of inter-racial social interaction.

Figure 4.



Significantly, without being prompted, 14 of the 15 participants offered specific details about racial segregation. The one participant who did not bring up segregation at all, reported that his early social environment was racially diverse. Of the 14 that did talk about segregation, only 1 participant, who grew up in the 1950s, described that she did not experience racial segregation in her childhood and wondered if this was peculiar. This participant explained that there were very few blacks, but that “we all hung out together. If you were in the Glee Club you were together. There was no color barrier if there was a dance; everybody danced together. [...] The blacks were just like us.” Another participant, who grew up in the 80s and 90s, described a kind of “de facto” segregation that occurred outside of school in friendship groups, but experienced his own

social life as racially integrated. For the remaining 12 participants, discussion of racial segregation in their schools, their neighborhoods, towns and suburbs, public spaces, and social interactions was an important focus of their responses to the questions about their childhood experience of racial dynamics.

Ten participants described some type of physical segregation in their communities based on race. One reported perhaps the most extreme example of physical racial segregation, in that there were no black people in his small town, the few black families he was aware of lived in a town 15 miles away. Another participant, who grew up in the 1940s and early 50s, lived in a large Midwestern city but spent her summers with relatives in the south. This participant experienced the “North” as “much more” segregated than the “South”, “in the South you would just have a little black area and a nice white area but they lived close by.” Two other participants, both from the South, described that their towns were physically split in two: one side for whites and the other side for blacks. One of these participants grew up in the late 50s and 60s, and stated that there was an area called, “across the tracks” which was only a couple of blocks away, but that he never went there, and on any given day would not see a black person on his side of town. The other participant, who grew up in the 70s and early 80s, described her town as being split into north and south by a river, “that’s just how it was and you didn’t cross that line. They came over to service our houses and do jobs that no one else wanted to do.” Three participants who grew up in suburban areas spoke about the physical segregation of races via references to the areas where black people or other people of color lived. One of these participants, who grew up in the 40s and 50s, reported:

Well, I just knew that, probably a lot of the blacks were on the south side or different parts of [large metropolitan Midwestern city]; they didn't really live on the north side of [the city]. And I really, no, it was not anything we even talked about or even thought about, because I was young, and all I was into was boys and music, all the things I told you about, and my girlfriends.

Significantly, the two participants who referenced the non-white areas of their cities simultaneously described them as dangerous places. One participant explained that “everyone would say, stay out of [the eastern part of the city], because you get shot down there and things like that and you would read it in the papers too about the crimes and things like that.” The other participant explained:

There were some neighborhoods you really wouldn't want to be in if you didn't understand the social conventions and weren't prepared to protect yourself late at night. And so, I guess I knew those parts of town existed and I always figured they just kind of felt the same way about things that I did. They were there and I was here, and it's kind of sort of the way it was.

Five participants spoke about the segregation of public spaces. One participant described that in the 60s in the industrial town in which they lived, the schools were integrated but that all other public and social spaces were segregated. This participant explained, “There was no public swimming pool because white people didn't swim with black people, so there were like a couple of white swimming clubs and literally no swimming pools for people of color.” Interestingly, another participant, who is of the same generation of the participant just quoted, also spoke about the racial segregation of swimming pools:

And I am also remembering as we are talking that even though I used to go swimming during the summer all the time I don't remember ever seeing a single black person at the swimming pool. So I don't know if that was some kind of formal thing that was going on or if it was just because of what I said earlier that there was an “across the tracks” and they [swimming pools] were on this side of the tracks and on this side of the tracks people went to the swimming pool, on that side of the tracks I guess they didn't, so I don't know.

Two participants specifically spoke about seeing the “signs” that designated segregated public facilities when they were children. While explaining the “total” segregation of her Midwestern city, one participant recalled, circa the 1940s, that her mother always wanted a bigger house and would take her driving to look at houses on Saturdays when she was a child: “I remember seeing a sign that said, ‘Only White Gentiles,’ you know, could buy in that area and I was trying to figure that out, mother just said, ‘Oh, well, don’t pay any attention, that’s a bad sign’.” The other participant recalled seeing “white drinking fountain” and “black drinking fountain” signs on a road trip to see relatives in the 1950s when she was a school aged child, this participant explained that she felt angry about the signs and so insisted on drinking from the “black” drinking fountain. Two participants recalled their experience of riding segregated transportation during their college years in the South in the 1950s. One of these participants made only a momentary reference but the other participant told an interesting story:

I went to college in the south and I guess that was the first time that I have really become very aware of “colored bathrooms”, “colored drinking fountains” and that sort of thing. And one day I needed to go into [town] and so I walked over and I caught the trolley and you had these little wooden bars that had things, stakes in them. And then if there were a lot of blacks that were there and very few whites you can move it up. And it said, “colored” you know. And so the trolley, as I was coming back to school the trolley was very, very full. And I was seated on the aisle on the last of the white section. And all the colored seats were full. And there was this little old black woman that had you know a couple of tubs or packages or something and there was nowhere for her to sit. And so I stood up and I said, “Oh please take my seat,” and she was like, “Oh no, no, no, no,” and I pointed out that none of the blacks were offering her a seat, and so I said, “Well let me hold your packages” and she said, “Oh no.” I could tell she was, you know, really afraid. So I just had to sit there but I felt so uncomfortable because my mom had trained me that you always would get up and let an older person sit down. So I think this was about the same time that Rosa Parks staged, you know, and Shirley, my roommate, said, “If you had stayed there longer you could have been the white Rosa Parks.

This is the same participant who noticed the “White Gentiles Only” sign as a child and whose mother told her not to pay any attention to it, that it was a “bad” sign. It is interesting that in this story, she is seeing those signs for the “first time” in late adolescence.

Five participants specifically referenced school desegregation in their responses. One participant mentioned it as a reference point and another participant referenced it loosely as something that she did not know much about, “[it] was somewhere else at another time and place.” A third participant reported that someone threw a brick through a window of their house because her mom was on the school board that was trying to enforce the federal desegregation laws. Two other participants reported that their parents took them out of public schools because of school desegregation. Of these two, one participant, who grew up in the Midwest and who would have been of school age in the 1940s, explained, “I started out, I think, at a public grade school, and then when they were talking about integrating the schools Daddy plunged me into this private school, which you know, I was happy there too, it was wonderful.” The other participant, who was in elementary school in the 1960s explained:

When the segregation of schools was mandated, there was a lot of violence in some public schools that were in the process of flipping over, one of which was the high school into which I would go. And my parents didn’t want me to be distracted by those extraneous things [...]. They pulled me out of the public schools before I would understand and put me in a private school, not out of trying to separate me from races, but rather to get me out of fights in the halls between two other kids or racial epithets and things going around.

Another participant, who described her town as one of the last towns to resist desegregation of schools, explained that there were no black children in her school until one black child entered her class in the 5th grade. She explained as follows:

I still remember his name because I was the only one who would speak to him, no one else would speak to him because that's just, it was like—okay, I was raised by a black maid, my mother was raised by the same black maid. And so we didn't understand how, my friends and everything, like, 'Why are you on the same plane as us? How are you sitting in class with us?' I actually played with my maid's son and her daughter, but it was in our backyard and not in front, um, in the public. So having this black child in our classroom was very uncomfortable for everyone, except for me because I thought he was really funny, he was a clown, he was a class clown and, he was just trying to fit in. [...] I was just, it hadn't really, I hadn't noticed that we didn't have any black children in our classes because I didn't know that that was different, because in our city that was just how it was, they went to their school and we went to our school even though segregation had long since been demolished. [...] But we didn't talk about it; it was just something you didn't talk about, that you didn't express your opinion one way or another, except of course by completely ignoring him; in a way that was how they expressed their opinion, my peers, that is.

One participant, referring to an experience in the late 90s, reported being shocked with the realization of how segregated her school was in terms of race. She became aware of this racial segregation when she decided, in her junior year, to get out of the college preparatory program at her public high school:

I got bumped down to the other classes and saw all these black people that I hadn't ever seen before that went to my school and were obviously there and I have never met them and it's like kind of freaking me out a little bit that they were tracking so hard that you wouldn't even like, ever see the other kids. They like have a whole separate wing of the school [...] there are actually two different diplomas.

Another participant reported a similar kind of tracking based on race when her children were in school in the 90s and early 2000s. These three participants' responses highlight the ongoing legacy of racial segregation in schools.

Two participants spoke specifically about the messages they received from their community around desegregation and the Civil Rights movement. One of these participants stated:

I remember Martin Luther King and I remember that the feeling was at the time in [small town] that he was basically a trouble-maker and I remember saying, “Well, you know, he is just trying to start up trouble” or you saw him as a trouble-maker. Of course that was in total ignorance of what they were trying to achieve. [...] I think it was just the big marches and everything and all that sort of thing that really kind of, you know, got everybody scared or concerned as to what this all meant.

The other participant recalled, “There was a lot of racial tension in [large city] because people, I think, didn’t like to be forced together and didn’t see a need for being bused long distances when a perfectly good school was close by.” Two participants reported being unaware of the segregation practices happening outside of their childhood environments until much later when these realities were made nationally known during the Civil Rights movement. One participant spoke about the shock she experienced when she became aware of the segregation practices in other parts of the country:

The whole issue of Selma and the bussing issue and then seeing film footage on TV where they had separate bathrooms for blacks and whites and separate films, it was like I could not understand, it was so confusing to me that that was going on in this day and age in what I had always thought was a free country. I just couldn’t conceive of all that.

These accounts draw attention to the collectively shared experience of federally enforced desegregation and the cultural effects and reactions to the activity and shifts of the Civil Rights movement. They also reflect that regardless of the specific era or whether it was implicit or explicit, racial segregation is a constant theme across most contemporary white people’s childhoods.

Eight participants spoke about there being some kind of parental, peer, or community prohibition around social relationships with black people. For two participants, both of whom grew up in the 40s and 50s, this foreclosure was described as a given of their early childhood worlds. For these two participants, as with another participant, relationships with black people were strictly bound to their role as providers of services. One participant, who grew up in the North in the 40s and early 50s, recalled being “shocked” when the dorm lady of her Southern college would not let her family’s African American dressmaker come up to her room. This participant described this woman as “our friend” and “a friend of the family” but added, “I mean we weren’t social, but she was very bright and we really liked her, she was lovely.” For this participant, being a “friend of the family” constituted entrance to private spaces, but it did not constitute social engagement. Another participant, who grew up in the 70s, stated the following:

Even as a child I knew that it wasn’t right to invite my maid’s children to my birthday parties and stuff because that just wasn’t done. I mean not because she was my maid’s daughter, but because they were black and they didn’t socialize, you weren’t allowed to do that. I remember that from a very early age, I never understood that either.

Three participants reported learning or knowing that romantic relationships across race were not allowed in their families. For two of these three participants it was something that was implicitly known; as one of these two participants stated, “I’m sure that my daddy wouldn’t have let me go out with one [a black person].” The other participant reported:

I knew that I would have received [disapproval] had I dated or gotten serious with a black girl or maybe a Hispanic girl but I am not sure, I don’t know. But I never

tried to push boundaries or tried to see what I could pull off to offend people, I just kind of went about my life.

The third participant on the other hand, spoke about the shock and sad disappointment she felt when she realized that social relationships with African Americans were foreclosed to her:

When I was in the 6th grade, I had the worst experience; it really made an impression on me and I never really understood it. I came home from school one day and told my mom that Bobby Garland had asked me to the dance. And I was really excited because he was the most popular kid in the 8th grade and he was president of his class, and he had asked me! My mother immediately said, “Well, you can't go.” And I said, “Why not?” And she said, “Because he is black.” I couldn't believe what she was saying. She told me, “I want you to know Sarah, that in this town, if you were to date a black boy, you might never be able to date another white boy again.” I didn't understand that at all, it just didn't make any sense and I thought, ‘Oh this horrible word, my mother is prejudice!’ I couldn't believe my mother was prejudice. I was so disappointed in her.

Two additional participants describe community prohibition on relationships with black people. One participant described that during high school in the late 60s it was dangerous for African American and white kids to be seen together. This participant explained that for African American kids the danger was of being physically threatened by police and other community members, and that the risk for the participant was less physical than it was the threat of social exclusion from peers: “I got a lot of flack from a lot of my white girlfriends about why I would be hanging out with somebody that was black” and “my family actually did get some threatening phone calls from some of my peers in my senior year of high school because I was hanging out with somebody who was African-American.” Another participant spoke about her early awareness and distress about what seemed a total foreclosure of any connection with African Americans:

My family, because they were so high class in their thinking, were not, racially prejudiced in words, but there was definitely a segregated society whereby it was

just sort of absent, the racial connections were absent from my life. That is why at age 4, I required of Santa Claus a chocolate baby. I wanted a black baby doll, I didn't think it was right that there were no black babies in the stores, and my parents couldn't purchase a black baby, there were none, so my grandmother had to hand-make the doll because I would accept nothing else for Christmas that year. And I named her Sharon after myself because I thought black was beautiful and I thought I might like to be black, and I liked, I wanted a black baby since maybe I was going to be black when I grew up. I just didn't see, I didn't understand why there was no black people around, so I decided to solve that with my request for a black baby for Christmas.

During our interview, this participant offered to show me the doll: "I have this doll, I can show you and she had my name, she has an "S" monogrammed on her dress, she was black. It's the only doll I kept." This is the same participant who reported that she insisted on drinking from the "black" drinking fountain out of rebellion against segregation practices and got into fights with her grandfather when he made derogatory remarks about African Americans. This participant described, "I felt pretty alone in my view in my middle class environment."

Another participant reported being actively engaged with anti-racism beginning in high school and throughout adulthood. I asked this participant to reflect on how she came to such an early awareness and concern about the racial dynamics around her:

You know I wish I knew, I mean I have tried to figure that out a lot because like I said, well you know until I was 8, I was in this all-white community, but I did spend summers in Tennessee and so my parents, whether it was verbal or not, passed on to me the idea that being overtly racist was not an okay thing, that you should be respectful to people and treat people well and that your language is really important, you don't call people names and things like that. So when I would be in Tennessee in the summers with my grandmother and my cousins, they would use the word 'nigger' for instance. And we played a game with my grandmother and my cousins. It was called "monkey on the sidewalk," where there is a sidewalk and there is grass on either side and one person is on the sidewalk and there is a monkey and you have to run across a sidewalk without being tagged by that person. My grandmother got up and played it with me and my cousins. Only it wasn't 'monkey on the sidewalk' it was 'nigger on the sidewalk'. I loved my grandmother and my cousins but I was so embarrassed by

the use of that word and I knew it was wrong, when people would walk by I would be really worried that they would hear my grandmother and my cousin saying that word. I was very worried about my parents finding out that my grandmother was racist, because I thought they didn't know and I thought they would not let me around her. And I think probably it [racial consciousness] relates back to my early years around that fear of losing relationship with someone I loved because of race.

These stories illustrate the relational context in which race was experienced and remembered by most of the participants.

The interview questions about how participants experienced race and racial dynamics during childhood elicited rich data from the participants. Their responses suggested complicated interconnections between race, class, family, peers, and community, collective experience and time. The most salient finding was the extent of racial segregation noted by participants. These are the racial landscapes within which slavery is remembered and imbued with meaning.

Slavery

The data collected in this study via interviews with 15 contemporary white Americans about how they remember and make meaning of U.S. slavery suggested that many participants have had and continue to have a difficult internal relationship with slavery. Major themes in the participants' responses to the questions about slavery are presented. Due to this study's focus on the psychological consequences of the history of slavery for contemporary white Americans, I analyzed in greater detail that data that evidenced affective, cognitive and somatic reactions to U.S. slavery.

Learning about Slavery in Childhood

Participants' responses about their memories of learning about slavery in school were surprisingly similar. Eleven of the 15 participants reported learning very little about

slavery in school. Three participants reported having no memory of learning about slavery in school. One participant initially recalled only learning “just general stuff” but then moments later recalled being given “the wow factor” which was “probably very shocking” to a seven year-old.

Four participants reported that their learning about slavery was vaguely implied in the context of learning about the Civil War, and four participants reported that their learning about slavery was in the context of the message: “and then it was abolished” and “they were freed.” As one participant described: “In school, I don’t remember anything being taught about slavery. The only thing I remember about is learning about Abraham Lincoln who freed the slaves.” Another participant pejoratively described her early learning this way, “It was sort of, we learned about pilgrims and Indians and Thanksgiving and slavery” and then in middle school we learned that:

Slavery was a bad thing, but it’s a thing in the past. [...] I mean why would you even talk about slavery rather than to say it ended. [...] I mean when I think back on it, it’s kind of horrifying, but that’s pretty much how it’s taught, certainly in my memory.

Another participant stated the following:

I think my education in high school and earlier saw it with a lot more rationalization and justification. Just, ‘Okay here is the South, and they needed the slaves to manpower the plantations and there were good slave owners and bad slave owners.’

Two participants who grew up in the same southern state, but separated by a decade and a half, described that slavery was only implicitly acknowledged in school and was something that was not talked about. One of these two participants, who went to a private high school but previously went to public school, stated:

I do vaguely remember in high school studying slavery and writing prohibitively against it and always being on the other side of it. But prior to high school it just, it wasn't in the textbooks we used it just was the unspoken, we don't want to go there whether we are proud of that history or not proud of that history.

This participant said, referring to talking with others outside of classes in high school, "You didn't talk about it in school, because we didn't want, you just didn't talk about it."

The other participant could not recall learning about slavery in school, he said, "probably in relation to the Civil War, but again I don't know," this participant went on to say, "I guess you could say that it's the thing that's not talked about, but it's like definitely, you know but never explicitly."

Three of the 15 participants reported having no memory of learning about slavery in school. One of these participants said, "it must have come up, I'm living in the deep south." Another participant stated:

I probably was taught, I don't know if I was taught, I can't tell you [...] I don't remember that it was particularly in school. As I said, really, growing up even in college, the way we did at our age, we were all into boys, clothes, or girlfriends. So we really didn't think about it much.

Another participant gave no evidence of school learning and stated: "I don't know, I think I grew up and because I was sort of experiencing a little bit of the offshoots that I just sort of accepted that."

Three participants learned about slavery to some extent from stories told by their parents and grandparents. One participant thought that she probably learned something about slavery from her parents because, "they did talk about things, like I say, they read." The two other participants learned about slavery via family stories of ancestors who owned slaves.

For one participant, the process of learning about slavery for the first time in high school was particularly painful because of her family's extensive connection with slave owning and her father's involvement in the Ku Klux Klan. This participant described that when she learned about slavery in high school, she "had flashbacks" of early childhood memories of seeing her father and other church men putting on white robes in her basement and the "whispers, it was always a whisper" among church members at the country club where they all ate on Sunday afternoons. It was while learning about slavery in high school that this participant "put it together" that those basement meetings corresponded to acts of racial violence in the town. She reported that she was horrified by the realization that those events were connected and "decided [she] wasn't going to think about it anymore and just blocked it out." This participant reported that she had not recalled those memories for over twenty-five years until she had a powerful re-memory of them during the recruitment process for this study.

Talking about slavery with others

Participants were asked if they remembered discussing slavery with others during their childhoods and adulthoods. For many of the participants in this study, the interview was the first time they had discussed slavery in any length with another person; for four participants it was the first time they recalled *ever* talking with another person about slavery. Eleven of the 15 participants reported that they did not remember talking about slavery during their child and adolescent years; one of these 11 participants did talk about slavery with peers during high school and college. Three participants' accounts evidenced that as children they had talked to others about slavery, namely their parents,

grandparents, and family members, because each of these three participants reported stories that they had heard as children.

One participant did not report either way about interpersonal conversations about slavery during her adult years. One participant reported extensive discussion and attention to slavery in her adult years in relationship with others. Four participants had vague memories of talking with others about slavery during their adult years. One participant said: “I want to say like I definitely had conversations about slavery.” Three of these four participants reported that they had “maybe” talked with another person about slavery during their adult years, for one it might have occurred when discussing “a book,” another remembered that when the TV miniseries “Roots” came out, “people were talking about it,” and another said “not really” but had a vague memory: “I think it was Jefferson that had an illegitimate child, that different people who have had black children maybe was mentioned. But I don’t think we really spent much time on that.”

Four participants reported not discussing slavery with other people as children or adults. One of these four reported that she did not recall having any conversations about slavery prior to the interview. Two of the four participants had very similar responses, a belief that “because everyone knows that slavery is wrong” there is “nothing to talk about”. These participants seemed to imply that any discussion about slavery would be a debate about whether it was good or bad, or right or wrong. Another participant had a similar perspective and reported that she specifically avoided conversations about slavery. This participant said in response to the question about having conversations with others as an adult:

No, not particularly, we'll have like dinner conversations when there are intellectual dinners or something and the topic comes up, and I just say it was a horrible time in our past and leave it at that. I don't ever participate in them, so no I don't have any memory of that. [...] Well I have such a starch line to it. I don't want to hear someone trying to make up excuses of why we did this to the human race.

Eight of the 15 participants explicitly reported that they never had a conversation about slavery with their parents. One of these eight participants had a parent who studied and talked extensively about the Civil War, but slavery was never part of those discussions. Another one of these eight participants, who came from a long line of slave owners on both sides of her family, reported that that aspect of her family history was "just known," but never talked about: "we didn't talk about it, it wasn't something you talk about." Three of the 15 participants' reports implied that they never talked about slavery with their parents via noting that their parents did not talk about race or by the fact that that they reported not having ever talked to another person about slavery. Three of the 15 participants reported detailed stories about slavery heard from their parents and/or grandparents. One participant reported that her parents read a lot and probably talked about slavery during her childhood.

Visual Images

Participants were asked to report what, if any, visual images they associate with slavery. In their responses to the interview question about visual representations about slavery, 11 of the 15 participants referenced an external source from which their visual images originated. Seven participants stated that some or all of their visual images came from reading texts, i.e. "books," "literature" or "slave journals." Two participants stated that some of their visual images came from images printed in history textbooks. Six

participants reported that some or all of their visual images came from movies or television, four of these six specifically referenced *Roots*, and two of the six specifically referenced *Amazing Grace*. Eight of the 15 participants mentioned *Roots* at least one time during their interviews. Two participants reported visual images that derived from things they themselves had witnessed as children. And one participant reported visual images from a recurrent childhood dreams.

All 15 of the participants in this study produced some response to the interview question: Do you have any visual images that represent slavery in your mind? Participants' responses varied, however several major themes did arise. Seven of the 15 participants' reports consisted of only violent visual imagery, 2 of the 15 participants reported only non-violent visual imagery, and 5 of the 15 participants reported both violent and non-violent imagery. The remaining one participant gave a very brief response with vague reference to violence and oppression. The term "violent" refers to visual images that involve physical and/or emotional abuse.

Six of the seven participants who reported only violent visual images gave vivid details. Their affective presentation, while reporting the vivid visual images of violence, varied greatly. Two presented with flat affect, one presented with sadness, one presented with quiet contemplation, and one presented with disbelief, as they gave their responses of the visual representations of slavery. Two of these accounts will be presented in the following sub-section on participants' who referenced slave ships in their interviews. Two participants' accounts of visual imagery will be presented below to show both a representation of the vividness of these six participant's visual imagery and to draw attention to the different ways that participants' responded affectively to sharing these

details during the interview. The following passage was spoken with a flat, detached affect:

Let's see, a black man hanging from a tree in shackles, the white hoods, the sticks with the flaming ends, torches, slave ships, bodies piled on top of each other crossing the ocean, that's probably, you know the initial ones that flash through my mind. The whips and the bloody black backs and you know that's probably about it.

Upon hearing this participants' response, I decided to check in with how the participant was feeling, and said: "Those are pretty tough things to see. What do you feel right now as we are talking?" The participant responded:

I'm pretty at ease with it. I mean when I talked to your [person who recruited the participant for the study], when I blurted it out, it brought up all sorts of feelings, but now, it's sort of, my mind has gotten back in control, I don't have any feelings about it. Just, uh, it is what it is.

The "it" that this participant was referring to was the recent re-memory, that she had "blocked out" for over twenty five years, of seeing her father and other church men putting on their white robes in her basement as a young child, and her disturbing adolescent realization that those basement meetings corresponded to racial violence in her town. This participant had this re-memory in the presence of the person who recruited her for this study. This participant reported that she feels "humiliated" about her father's involvement in the Ku Klux Klan and she explained that when she had the re-memory: "I got the whole thing, this tightness in my stomach. I was like, 'Oh my gosh, where did that come from' type of thing." The participant went on to say:

I'm very mentally strong, unless my mind is caught off guard I don't show emotion, I just don't. You know someone could get hit by a car, I don't react emotionally, I react okay I need to call 911, I need to do this, I need to do this and this. If somebody dies in our family, I don't react, it's like okay let me start making plans. So unless my mind is caught off guard which it did the other day when I blurted it out to your [person who recruited the participant for the study],

(nervous laugh) I don't react emotionally, you don't see emotion from me, because I just control it and that's how I, I don't know why that's just how I react. I control and I deal, and find a solution if there's, you know, an emergency or problem. So now that I am back in control and I'm not caught off guard I don't, I don't have any kind of emotion about it, it doesn't affect me one way or the other.

Another participant who reported vivid details of violence against enslaved Africans began to cry while reporting the visual images she associates with slavery. After noting that her visual images come from reading, this participant said, "somebody being snatched up in Africa someplace and thrown on a ship in chains [...] people being beaten, people being lashed, families being split up, or being auctioned off in a public square."

When asked to describe further, the participant responded:

They'd have a slave market and they would bring people and put them on the block to be auctioned off (long pause), heartbreaking (long pause, begins to cry). And like I said you would be reading a book or hear some of these stories about what it was really, really like to be put under the decks on the ship in the dark, you know, chained, you know, in their own waste for that whole trip, you know horrible, there's nothing good about it. (pause, wiping eyes). It's so clearly wrong, nothing right about that. Nothing could ever make that be okay and I think people just want to act like that never happened.

The responses of these participants reflect the intensity of experience that many participants reported and exhibited during their reports of visual images during the interviews.

Two of the 15 participants reported only non-violent imagery in response to the interview question about internal visual images. These two participants both initiated their responses with brief references to fieldwork and housework performed by slaves. Both participants quickly moved on to another topic. One participant began explaining the "agrarian" nature of the "Deep South." The other participant responded as follows:

Well, one of the images, that, kind of the image of literature in film, Uncle Remus, the fields, most of these images are black and white. It's the field with

the workers out there and the people serving in the big manor house. I frankly don't know what the demographic or the economic distribution was of slave ownership. I can imagine a lot of it was concentrated on larger plantations. I know one thing that I learned, that slaves are expensive, I mean owning a slave would be like owning a car. In fact, that may be an understatement, owning a slave might be almost like owning a house. I mean it's a very expensive proposition so I don't think most people, didn't own slaves, it's just too expensive. But the wealthy landowners might have a bunch but, you would have to be pretty well to do I would think to even have one slave. So I don't think it was a widespread thing, I don't think lots of people owned slaves, but that's my supposition about that, you don't need but to take one slave to make it a problem in my book.

Each of these participants shifted from describing their internal visual images to wondering about the economic structures of slavery.

Five of the 15 participants made reference to both violent and non-violent imagery. Four of these 5 participants used the word "cotton." Two of these 5 participants' responses were brief, with reference to "picking cotton," "a cotton field" and vague reference to violence. Another participant also referenced slaves "working out in the cotton fields" and "cleaning the plantation homes and bringing out the lemonade and stuff like that" and then made non-detailed reference to slave ships. One participants' response centered on "cotton fields," this participant recalled, as a child, associating slavery with picking cotton because that was something her mother had done:

So I didn't feel that sorry for them until I studied slave journals, because I felt sorry for my mom too for having to work so hard in the field or so for my grandmother. So I saw it as what they did working in the fields, but because I had a mother who had sometimes done that.

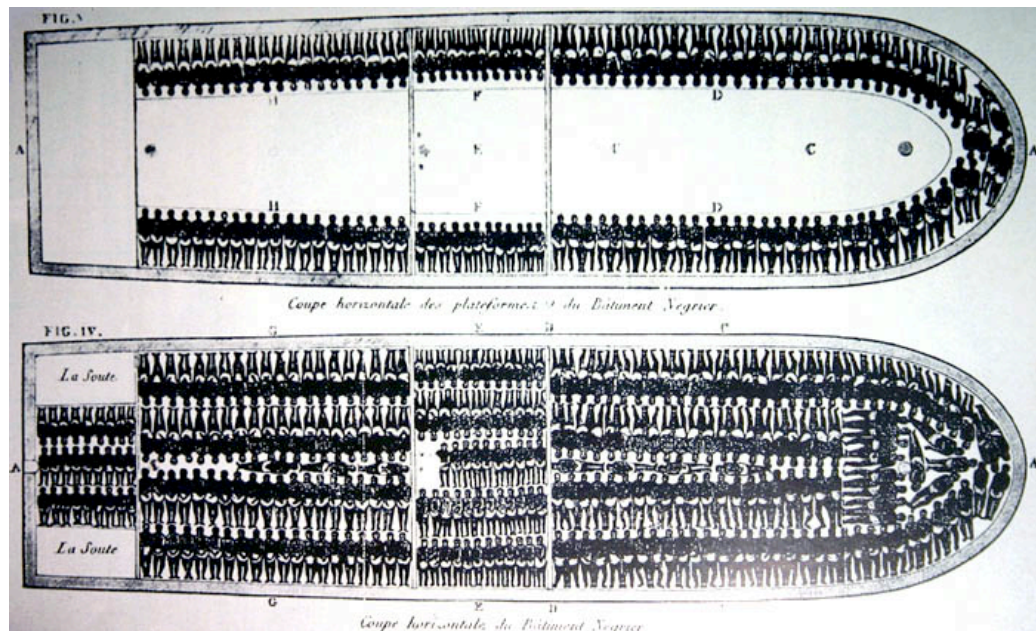
When asked what she remembered from the slave journals, this participant stated, "the total lack of power in their lives that they were strictly at the mercy of an economic system that took care of them." The remaining participant gave a detailed description of slave ships as "one of the really strong images," but when asked to reflect on the images

she had from Roots, which she had referenced as a source of her visual images, the participant reported remembering the more “positive” images of “resilience,” the welcoming rituals when a baby was born and connection with ancestors and old rituals.

Slave Ships

Reference to and imagery about the slave ships in which enslaved African were brought to the Americas was particularly prominent among the participants in this study. Ten of the 15 participants referred to slave “ships” or “boats” during their interviews. Six participants described imagery of slave ships in response to the question about how slavery is represented visually in their minds. Four participants referenced slave ships as a part of their learning about slavery in their primary and/or secondary school education. Two participants recalled and described the image of the “slave ship diagram” in their textbooks. The often reproduced, Brookes (1788) slave ship diagram is shown below, Figure 5.

Figure 5.



One participant reported that he did not learn much about slavery in school until he learned about the slave trade in college from a particular professor whose name this participant recalled during the interview. The participant described what he learned in vivid detail:

But [then] I found out the brutality of the slave ships and it was just horrid, you know. I remember him telling us about what they would, used to do to those people and how they stacked them in there and they would, you know, they would force these corkscrews into their mouths to keep their mouths open so that they could you know make them choke down food because a lot of them wanted to die. And the one's that they couldn't get their mouths open you know they just busted out their teeth.

Later in the interview, this same participant returned to this imagery when reflecting on how slavery is represented visually in his mind:

Horrid beyond belief, I mean I couldn't imagine it, doing that myself. I can see why they wanted to die, three months trip across the ocean in deplorable conditions where you're stacked on top of each other almost like pancakes and the human excrements and just the horrid existing conditions you know couldn't move out of your bay you know and it was just awful. I mean I just can't imagine.

One participant's description of somatic reactions to thinking about slavery was intimately connected with the image of slave ships, which this participant referenced as "boats":

I feel it in my extremities when I kind of go numb, because I am not breathing correctly. I mean I literally felt it in movies and things about, where I just feel I'm not breathing. Like maybe, if I, maybe the stress of the thought inhibits my breathing pattern and I feel tingly rather than feeling tummy or anything just feel rage about people not being treated –when I think of those boats and the way they were put in the bottoms of the boats to be brought over, I just get livid that we could do that, that people could do that to each other. So yeah, I feel it. Just talking about it now, I'm feeling my lips are kind of numb.

Another participant reported that she had recurrent dreams in her childhood about being on a slave ship. The following series of responses were produced to the question about

how slavery is represented visually for the participant (follow-up questions appear in brackets). The participant spoke very slowly and quietly as she described her visual imagery:

Yeah, well this is sort of intense, but I am just gonna go for it. I think I like was a slave in the past life. And I have this recurring dream or I've had it when I was younger where I like have images of like being on the bottom of the boat, like chained, literally, and like laying down and it being really, really dark, and I'd get like that imagery of the like—blackness (so quiet that almost inaudible). [...] Yeah, that's the most vivid thing to me, and then there was like another part of that, where I was like in a, in a like space where I like hid, there was another black [person], like in a dark space in the boat and I have had that imagery too (long pause). [Is it hard to remember those dreams?] No, it's not, it's just like it makes me think and feel like I'm in the dream. It has like a feeling, it's like an imagery that has like a feeling associated with it. It's just kind of like cold and damp. And like very dark (long pause). Yeah, it feels like that, that's because it's just very abstract like when I was younger it was much more vivid to me. [What was it like when you were younger?] It was like I was there, like sometimes, when I was dreaming, it was like time travel or something, it wasn't like just like a dream it was like a whole crazy thing. [...] But it was intense it was just dark, it was sad, it was more like to me it was more like tragic and like melancholy than very brutal, I mean there was like an emaciated sort of depreciated feeling, gray feeling, that was horrible but it wasn't like, it wasn't bloody or anything.

This data suggests that for many of the participants, memories and visual representations of the slave ships produced intense emotional experiences.

Auditory Images

Ten of the 15 participants reported auditory images associated with slavery when asked: What auditory images or sounds do you associate with slavery? One participant's auditory associations were not collected due to my failure to ask the question in the make-up interview, the first full-length interview was unfortunately not audio recorded due to a technical oversight. Four of the 15 participants reported no auditory images. One of the four who did not report auditory images rather spoke about a visual image “that came right away” about the violent murder of a gay man about which she had seen a

play. Three of the four participants who did not produce any auditory images specifically reported that they did not have any. One simply said, “No,” and then reported a sensory image, and another said, “I don’t have any auditory images personally,” however the third participant gave an interesting response to the question:

No, I guess what you would be getting at would be like if they were whipped or something, but I don’t know, I don’t have any sounds at all that I associate. And I think you know, and maybe I am not that good a subject for this sort of thing because you know mine are also mixed in [with experience].

Imbedded in this participants’ response is an auditory image.

Seven of the 10 participants who reported auditory images made some reference to songs and singing, their responses included “field songs,” “work songs,” “black folk music,” “spirituals,” “gospel” and “slavery songs.” Four participants’ responses focused solely on non-violent auditory images, and three of those focused solely on songs and singing. One participant reflected on, “how they used spirituals to get them through a hard life,” another participant stated, “I get slaves calling for dinner and the songs that they would sing, the spirituals, gospel, uplifting things.” Two participants made reference to the “hidden messages” in slave songs or folk tales.

Five participants’ responses focused on violent auditory images. Two of these 5 participants gave brief responses. One participant, initially said only “chains” and then added, “Yeah, people being in bondage against their will.” The other participants stated only: “Beatings, whips, not educated locals, crime, pity, I don’t know, just throwing it out there.” Three of the five participants who focused on violent auditory imagery in their responses evidenced considerable emotional affect. One participant was crying herself when she reported having the auditory image of “the cries of people in pain.” The two

other participants' reports of auditory images associated with slavery led to childhood memories, a memory of painful empathy that had to be experienced alone for one, and uncertainty for another. The first participant began her response to the auditory question as follows:

Well, yeah chain gangs, um, which (pause) I don't think they, I don't even know that they had chain gangs during slavery because they probably didn't need to do that 'cause they had control over them, but when I was a kid, when we would drive through the south, there would be chain-gangs where guys were chained together in those black and white uniforms working on the side of the road with an overseer, you know, standing with a rifle or standing up on a horse. (Momentary sarcastic laugh) And that always reminds me, that's an image that takes me back to slavery, because I mean it came out of slavery in my mind and it would be all black men, all chained together, all working with shovels and hoes alongside the road, we'd just be driving down the highway, you know, there they'd be.

When asked what she heard, the participant responded: "Sometimes singing, sometimes the person in charge yelling, you know, (in a deep angry voice) 'Boy, boy, boy, get up!' something like that." I asked this participant if she remembered talking to her parents or brother in the car as she witnessed it. The participant responded:

No, not my brother, he would have made fun of me. I, I was, you know as a little kid I was sensitive. I picked up on the pain I think and it made me unhappy and you know it was more like I would say something and they would sort of pat me on the knee or it wasn't really something they wanted to talk about, because it was pretty embarrassing and I think it was part of the south, they wanted to leave behind. So I, my memory of being a little kid around this kind of stuff was that I observed a lot and I didn't say much to adults 'cause it didn't seem like something they wanted to talk about.

The participant whose response raised questions about her childhood memory, began her response to the auditory question this way:

Screams of agony when they're beating and they're torturing and you know hanging them and burning them and, auditory? Talking to you now, words of anger and control as far as one human being over another. That's about it; there is always a control issue. [...] I can hear sounds of when they're castrating to teach

others a lesson, and dying a slow death by burning and being whipped and grown men crying and that's what I associate with slavery.

This is the same participant who “blocked out” the memory of seeing her father and other church men putting on their white robes in her basement as a young child. After the participant gave the above response, and perhaps due to the vividness of her account, I asked: “And those images and learning, those things had happened, came from your own research in high school and later in [graduate] school, is that...” The participant cut in and said:

Yeah I think so, I mean like I said I blocked a lot of that out. I don't think I actually saw anything like that. Maybe I did, maybe he took me along one night or something, I don't know, I, that would be to me, I mean, there's a lot of my younger life that I know I mentally blocked out for other reasons not slavery, but I don't think (said as if a question, pause) that I saw it. I think that was from videos, and reading, and books, and visualizing. You know when you read a passage if you're into it, you can just, it comes alive, you can hear these horrible moans and cries and things like that, well I can anyway, when I get into something like that, I, I'm sure, 99% sure it came from just the research and you know like *Roots*.

The interview questions about visual and auditory images and somatic responses brought up intense memories and intense imagery and feelings for many participants, suggesting that the representations of slavery held in the participants' minds and bodies are psychologically impactful.

Somatic Reactions

Participants were asked during the interview if they were experiencing any somatic reactions, or physical feelings in their bodies, as they talked about slavery. Seven of the 15 participants reported having physical sensations during the interview. Eight of the 15 participants reported having no somatic reactions or physical sensations.

However, the response of one of the eight participants who reported no somatic reactions, did suggest some kind of reaction. This participant responded:

Not really, no. I can't think, nothing conscious. The usual tingling is if somebody is approaching 50 years old. But nothing that I can identify especially, but I am not uncomfortable talking about slavery, I mean it's just a very matter of fact about it, it happened and I can't change that. [...] I don't feel guilty over slavery because I couldn't have done anything to stop it, I was kind of disassociated molecules at the time, what can I do?

Checking in with his body, this participant offered the absence of guilt, suggesting that, at least a consideration of guilt came to mind.

Seven of the 15 participants reported or evidenced having somatic reactions during the interview, either in direct response to this interview question, or at other points in the interview. For example, one participant, drawing her hand to her chest said, "Well right here, my solar plexus tightens up a little bit." Another participant who was still crying, which began when she reported her visual imagery of slavery, paused for a long while after the question about somatic feelings was asked, she then said, choking up a little, "Like heaviness of heart." I asked, "You feel it in your chest?" and the participant responded: "Yeah, literal heaviness of heart; mostly a kind of tightening in the abdominal area and in the chest. That heaviness here (brings hand to chest) and just kind of tightening up you know." Another participant described that in addition to feeling livid and rage when thinking about or being faced with what was done to enslaved Africans, she feels inhibited breathing, tingling in her extremities, and numbness, after describing these somatic reactions she said: "Just talking about it now, I'm feeling my lips are kind of numb."

Two participants experienced intense somatic reactions during the interview. For one participant, somatic reactions occurred as soon as the section of the interview with questions about slavery began. The following passage recounts the exchange between myself and the participant (my questions appear in brackets). The initial question was: “So when you think about slavery, U.S. slavery, what kind of comes to mind, first off?”

This participant responded:

I don't know. I wasn't around then, but back then, it was like the norm you know just how things were, go over there, buy some. I mean from what I've heard, apparently their own people ended up, rounded them up and sold them as slaves and they worked for us and did things and we took advantage of them hardcore. So I'm sorry. [When do you think you first heard about it, heard about slavery?] A long time ago my mom told me things growing up. She was a teacher; she believes that people need to know about history so it doesn't repeat itself. [What did she tell you?] She just told me stories about slaves back in the day mostly of my family. I guess one of my great grandfathers, there was lot of money [...] I guess the family had a lot of land, had slaves back in the day, couple of them hung around just to take care of the kids when slavery was abolished but that was in New Orleans area so New Orleans was kind of one of those places that was kind of integrated and it wasn't that big of a deal after the Civil War. [Can you tell me about some of those stories she told you?] She didn't really tell any stories she just told me that this is what happened. [That this is what happened, what happened?] I don't know. Our family used to own people and they worked for us and I don't know too much more about that but. I'm sorry I know this is about slavery and I really don't know what to... [No, it's whatever you know about it or don't know, it's not about facts. What do you think, when your mom told you, like as now sitting here, what do you think it was like for you to hear that history, your family history?] It's probably really sad, but then again as a young kid I probably didn't care too much. I mean I really don't right now. I mean I'm not sitting here beating myself up because the thing that my family's done in the past. I have really no opinion on them, you know am I going to you know say, 'Yeah they should take all those niggers and fucking chain them back up and make them work the trenches again?' I can't, that's stupid.

At this point I decided to ask the participant to report if he was having any somatic reactions, and said: “This is a question I have been asking every single person I've

interviewed. As you are sitting there talking about it, do you feel any feelings in your body?" The participant responded:

Yeah like tenseness, tingling just kind of like, I don't know, just kind of upsetting a little bit but I mean I'm cool with it. [Where is the tingling?] Just right up here in my arms (puts hand on his upper arm), feel kind of weak, you know I'm nervous, nerves are starting to get to me, but I don't know. [I appreciate you telling me about this.] My heart is beating a little bit differently, definitely.

There is a lot happening internally for this participant, as this passage shows. This participant remained in a state of uneasiness throughout much of the interview and got up to use the restroom several times. At one point I stopped the interview to ask if the participant would like to end the interview. After describing my motivation for the study in significant detail, the participant appeared to be more at ease and decided to continue with the interview.

The other participant who experienced intense somatic reactions also did so soon after the interview questions about slavery began. This participant assumed that I was asking him a "moral question" when asked if he had had any thoughts come up about slavery since he agreed to participate in this study. The participant reported that he could not recall when or how he learned about slavery as a child. Pulling for more information, I asked: "Do you remember ever discussing slavery in school, like in History class or anything like that?" The participant responded:

Not overtly. It must have come up, I'm living in the deep south and knowing what that meant, knowing something about what it meant to be a southerner, and you know the southerners are hospitable and the men are gentlemen and have respect for women and so on and so forth all of that stuff that didn't come from my mom and my dad, that came from the ambience. It was just how it was and it's not some kind of artificial thing it's something that's literally true. As you are a participant in the social structure of the Deep South these are the things that a white man is about, he has honor and respect and I am having a chill from saying that these are fundamental things to being that I became.

At this point I said, “Can you tell me more about that?” and the participant responded: “I don’t know. I’m having a rush from it, it’s like there is just something fundamental about how you would engage another human like the idea of hospitality [...]” Noticing the participant’s somatic reaction, I responded, “Well tell me about, you were having...” The participant cut in and said, “Yeah I was having a reaction from it.” The participant went on to describe the physical sensations that he was having, he seemed surprised with what he was feeling and continued to look at and touch different parts of his body:

Just like a deep primordial, this is fundamentally who, I am having it now just, because, I just said that I am having it now, that’s the deepest thing in, [...] I am getting it now it’s like no that’s about the deepest you can go in me as a man today and as a boy then, as there are things that, I guess the word would be, completely intolerant of you know that I would stand up for and defend. I’m getting a rush from saying that shit. (Holds out his hands and is looking them). [It’s in your hands?] It’s in my whole body but definitely get’s out to my fingertips. It’s like a rush. [Like energy?] Yeah like energy that’s flowing up out of my center and running up through my shoulders and into my hands, wow! It’s some very deep primordial thing about honor and respect and discipline and hospitality you know things that I did not run into as an adult that made me different from other people, fundamentally different. [...] I am having this total reaction. Now I got it all the way up to the crown of my head it’s like it’s just primordial to me that this is a proper way to be among the humans [...].

This participants’ response suggests that talking about slavery, or trying to remember how and when he learned about it, brought up issues of identity and a sense that my questions about slavery, which the participant initially assumed were “moral questions,” might threaten that deeply valued and embodied core sense of self. The data evidences that for some participants, talking about slavery and being asked questions about slavery, can produce considerable somatic reactions and emotional affect.

Participants' imagined or known ancestral relationship to slavery?

Participants' were asked what they thought their families' relationship with slavery might have been during the time of slavery. I did not ask this question of the three participants who revealed earlier in the interview that their families had owned slaves during slavery. Four of the 15 participants reported that their families were slave-owning, 2 participants' thought it could be possible that their families were slave-owning, 6 participants reported that they did not think that their families were slave-owning, and 1 participant was certain that her family was not slave-owning. One participant implicitly refused to answer the question, suggesting some discomfort with the question. Note that I did not ask the participants if they thought that their families owned slaves, yet the participants' responses suggest that that is what they heard. This question caused perceptible anxiety for at least 5 of the 15 participants.

Of the four participants who knew that an ancestor had owned slaves, one participant reported learning as an adult that a great uncle had owned slaves and said, "I feel like part of my job in this lifetime, is to do some healing of my family lineage." Three of the four participants whose ancestors were slave-owners, revealed this information very early in the interview process; the fact that these participants revealed this information prior to being asked is meaningful, but not surprising considering that it is likely that their associations to slavery would in part be connected to that family history. One of these three participants had heard many stories about his family's past wealth and slave-ownership, some of which were recounted early in the interview. When this participant began telling some of the stories he had heard about his family, he reported feeling somatic symptoms like "tingling," "tenseness" and "weakness," he said,

“I’m nervous, nerves are starting to get to me.” Another of the 3 participants who shared their family’s slave-owning past early in the interview, evidenced what I perceived as a flat and detached during parts of the interview but reported having struggled with this knowledge, and family lineage, for much of her life. For example, when describing the difficult details she found out about slavery as an older adolescent, she stated:

I mean you know ripping families a part and forcing them to work harsh long hours, and killing them, and hanging them, and torturing them, and uh, you know, just all of it, it’s horrifying to me that that happened and then it was extra, uh, horrible that my family was directly involved in it.

The last of the 3 participants who spoke openly about her family’s slave-owning history did not evidence or report distress about it. This participants’ family history was deeply linked with slavery; the last descendent of one of the ten “slave families” who stayed on her grandfather’s land after the Civil War had grown up with this participant’s mother, his mother the nanny of this participant’s own; he was still serving her family when she was a child and she spent a great deal of time with him during the summers of her childhood which she spent with her extended family in the south. This participant reflected: “because I was sort of experiencing a little bit of the offshoots [of slavery], I just sort of accepted that” and later, talking about the black maid in her college dorm who was “straight out of *Gone with the Wind*, I swear,” this participant reported: “it all seemed so normal.”

Neither of the two participants who thought that it was possible that a family ancestor had owned slaves seemed particularly uncomfortable with the question. The tone of their speech was relaxed as they pondered the possibility. Each gave some reason why they thought it was possible, for one it was because one side of his family originated

in a southern state, for the other it was because he had met “many” black people who shared his last name and referenced the practice of ex-slaves adopting their masters’ last names.

The one person who had no doubt that her family had ever owned slaves because of their post-slavery immigration to the United States, said, “I felt good about that. I don’t have white guilt, my family was not involved, like I mean, maybe in like Greek times.” This participants’ report that she “felt good about that” and does not have “white guilt” suggests that there is some experience of relief that her family had no relationship with U.S. slavery.

Six of the 15 participants in this study reported that they did not think that their family ancestors owned slaves. Three of these six did not exhibit noticeable uneasiness with the question, however each did offer at least one reason why they thought that no one in their family had owned slaves, for one it was that her family came from the north, and for two it was because their families were historically “poor.” One participant did exhibit slight uneasiness in that he offered, before the question about family history and slavery was asked, “I don’t think my family going back was slave owning” and “my grandfather was the slave, he was like the cousin that was put to work on the family farm when his family’s farm went bust and his parents passed away.” In this participants’ response to the question about family history in relation to slavery, he stated:

[...] I mean they are all to varying degrees involved in, some of them were involved in agriculture, but like certainly not of, they don’t project the air of class of someone who would expect to be waited on you know, kind of do things themselves.

This participant seems to be grappling with two qualities that he imagines a family that had owned slaves would possess, one of those qualities his family does not have, but the other, involvement in agriculture, it does. This participant, like another participant who is discussed directly below, associated involvement in agriculture with slavery, which caused some doubt about their family's slave-owning status.

Two of the five participants who did not think their family ancestors owned slaves exhibited noticeable uneasiness with the question. One participant gave this response to the question:

No, I know perfectly well both on my mom's side and my dad's side that my mom of course would never have been involved. Her family is from Germany and had been German and Irish. My dad's family, I don't know any farther back than one generation before him and possibly one before that so it seems to me his grandmother was part Cherokee, these are stories, was part Cherokee so I don't know. It never dawned on me and I don't recall anybody ever saying that my family was farmers, were farmers and whatnot. I know my dad's father was a policeman, a sheriff so it seems to me they were more likely cowboys and whatnot in Texas, which is not the same as being. My experience of my own dad is he knew nothing about farming so I don't see how that's possible, if you take my meaning. It's like no, if your dad was a farmer, you would know something about it and as I recall him now and recall my life with him, I can honestly say I am pretty sure he didn't know a single thing about farming.

This passage suggests how this participant, in the process of responding to the question, convinces himself that his paternal family could not have owned slaves because his dad "knew nothing about farming." The other participant who exhibited considerable discomfort with the question began his response with: "I am quite sure that nobody owned a slave. I mean I know my mother's family were pretty basic farmers" and then began talking about how they made their "own slaves" by making babies and reported that he did not think his father's family had owned slaves either. I then asked the participant: "Do you imagine that sitting here right now would feel different if you did

think that your family ancestry was slave owning? What do you think that might be different?" To this the participant responded:

I haven't thought about that one. I don't think I would, I think the first thing I would do is stop myself and say wait a second, [participant says his own name], don't be so high and mighty, you do all the bad things yourself [...]. I don't think that's worse, than, morally than a lot of things that go on today, I mean it was bad don't get me wrong, I'm not cutting it any slack. But I don't tend to say they were bad and I would be oh so much better, I don't think I would have owned slaves if I went back there. On the other hand, in our culture these days, we are exposed to things that, I'd almost ask the question the other way, I would ask my ancestors take a look at the world I'm living in and what do you think of it. And I think they would just be like oh my gosh, oh my gosh, you're in Sodom get out of there, how can you do this, how can you pay \$180 a month to bring those cable channels into your home that have that on it! And you get after me for owning a slave! At least I keep my slave well fed and he's in little house, you've got pornography coming to your home. (Pause) Good point. So who do we think we are, I mean we all have our issues and I think it's good of us to evaluate what happened back then, but I think it would be healthy of us to evaluate what's going on here right now. We tend to discount our own circumstances in favor of pointing fingers at somebody else.

For this participant, being asked to imagine what it would be like to be a descendent of a family that owned slaves brings up considerable anxiety about judgment, judging others and being judged. This participants' response evidences discomfort with the question, as well as discomfort with discussing U.S. slavery in reference to the people who enslaved. At one point in the interview, this participant said: "You seem to be interested in bringing up 150-year-old history but not very keen on bringing up stuff that could actually be solved right now."

Participants' Imagined Experience of Slavery

Participants were asked to imagine what it might have been like to be born into a slave-owning family during slavery. This question was designed to elicit the participants' experiential reactions to the fantasy of an intimate experience of slavery as a

white child. During the first interview conducted in this study I did designate “white” child in the question. However, in all of the subsequent 14 interviews, I stated the question, after posing it as a “pretend” question, in this way: “What do you think it might have been like to be born into a slave-owning family?” Interestingly, 3 of the 14 participants who were asked this exact question immediately assumed the position of a slave child born into a slave family and began their response from that perspective. I did not correct their mistake during the interview, but when they had completed their response, asked them to imagine what it would be like to be a “white child born into a slave-owning family.” Another 3 of the 14 participants, upon hearing the question, asked me for clarification. Their questions were virtually the same, for example, “The family that owns, not the family that’s the slave?” and “Not to be a slave enslaved?” Only 8 of the 14 participants heard the question correctly. This dynamic will be further explored in the discussion chapter.

Personal Impact of Slavery

Each participant was asked if they felt that the history of slavery had impacted them personally? Five participants specifically reported that slavery had not impacted them personally, six participants specifically reported that it had, and four participants gave mixed responses. The four participants who gave mixed responses reported a lack of direct personal impact but felt that growing up in a society with the history of slavery and its aftermath had impacted them indirectly. One of these participants said:

Sure. I mean it's in the general, if it's several layers or several steps removed, but it's sort of behind you know some of those issues then, certainly, I don't feel directly affected, but I am sure it's part of the experience of growing up, even just in the U.S. in general like, you know, it's not just the South, but I mean the North

wasn't exactly like a bastion of liberals and equalities as much as they might portray it as such and so you know all sorts of racism everywhere.

Of the six participants who reported that slavery had impacted them personally, three drew attention to the negative consequences for white people. Two of these 3 specifically related the personal impact of slavery to the real or imagined experience of being called a racist. Three participants reported feeling that slavery had personally impacted them for different reasons. One participant pointed to her childhood experience of forced desegregation and her professional experience as an educator dealing with the "white flight" that "was terrible for public school education." Another participant described her ongoing discomfort and uneasiness when interacting with black people, which she describes as a consequence of being a descendent of slave-owners and growing up in a family with entrenched and active racist views and behaviors. The last participant reported personal impact far beyond any other participant:

I went through a period of many years probably, where I felt just, gosh what's the word I want to use, just incredible shame and guilt and sort of anguish at what it must have been like to be owned by someone. I mean I think one of the things that most profoundly impacted me was the idea of children being taken away from parents, women being raped. And so I read a lot and I thought about it a lot, talked about it a lot, to the point where people didn't want to talk to me because it's like you are so depressing. I felt a lot of horror and shame and had a lot of anger around it and got really angry at white people for a long time for our history and tried to make people talk about it, like I'm gonna get in your face and make you talk about this! And then when I was, see it would be, I was 40 years old, I had a chance to go to week long unlearning racism training with about 12 other people, it was a faith-based training, people working in different aspects of social justice with different churches. And we spent a week, really looking at race and culture and sexism. And you know by about the fifth day, what happened to me was, I spent about half a day just sitting and just sobbing, you know I think it was all that pain and anger and anguish around slavery and how we treated people that came out, it was sort of cathartic, and allowed me then to think about and talk about slavery and the impact it has on our country today and the world today in a less emotional way and in a way that allows me to communicate better about it. But I carried a tremendous amount of pain with me for many many years and was

really lucky and not that it all went away, all the pain, but it was in a supportive setting, I was really able to touch deeply you know what that was about, and release a lot of that and not only did I cry, but I talked a lot.

Of the five participants who reported no personal impact from slavery, 3 participants simply answered the question “No.” One participant, stated, “unfortunately not” and linked the lack of personal impact with not knowing about slavery, “in my formative years I didn’t know, I didn’t know.” Another participant connected the lack of impact in this way:

I am not sure that it has overall in my life because the lifestyle I had, it never stopped me from getting a job. I’ve never had any violence occur in my life that involved a black person [...]. So I really have not been impacted, other than not being able to go to the dance with Bobby when I was 12 years old.

Embedded in this participants’ response is evidence that one of things that thinking about the personal impact of slavery brings up is the fact that she has not been the victim of violence at the hands of a black person. Interestingly, there was one other participant, who when asked at the end of the interview: “How did it feel to talk about all of this?” reported: “It was okay, you know I didn’t have any issues, I wasn’t attacked, raped or robbed.” This participant then recounted a story about a colleague whose daughter was murdered by a black man. A few moments later, the participant said: “Some people are robbed, some people are mugged, some people are raped, some people had things happen to them, you know; I’m sure they [other participants in the study] talked about that. It’s not easy.” This participant imagined that other participants in the study who might have been “robbed, mugged or raped” by black people would have difficulty talking about slavery. But like the participant quoted above, talking about slavery seemed to raise, in some way, an imbedded, perhaps unconscious, fear of violence at the hands of black

people. Another participant stated in reference to the black man who was a descendent of the slaves that her family had once owned and with whom she spent a great deal of time during her childhood:

I will say that, [he] was one thing because I knew him and trusted him, but I have got to say that if I saw a bunch of black boys coming down the street I would be a little scared of them.

This participant, who is not identified with being anti-racist, as the two above seemed to be, is able to own her fears directly. For the purpose of this study, what is meaningful is how these three participants' responses reflect the personal experience of white fear of black violence, a cultural narrative that scholars have linked with slavery.

How the history of slavery impacts contemporary society

All 15 of the participants in this study reported a belief that contemporary American society has been impacted by slavery. However, participants differed greatly in their conceptualizations of this impact. To the specific interview question about the contemporary impact of the history of slavery on society, 7 of the 15 participants focused on black Americans. These participants seemed to locate black people as the primary site of the history of slavery's social impact. Eight of the 15 participants' responses to this specific interview question suggested a sense of the social impact of the history of slavery as shared among both black Americans and white Americans.

Many participants reflected on the social impact of slavery throughout their interviews. This data has been included in the following analysis of how the participants' made meaning of the impact of slavery on contemporary society. Ten participants reported a belief that the history of slavery has impacted contemporary white Americans. Five of these 10 participants specifically linked the history of slavery with an ongoing

sense of racial superiority and/or racism toward black people in the white community; three participants noted negative psychological consequences for white people; and three other participants stated that white people are victims of unfair treatment because of the history of slavery.

Ten participants reported a belief that black Americans are currently impacted by racism, 6 of those 10 linked the negative impact on black people with slavery specifically. Five participants made some statement to the effect that as a society “we have come a long way.” Three participants reported a belief that black Americans are no longer oppressed and have equal opportunities. Six participants reported a belief that black Americans use slavery and/or the history of racial oppression as an excuse for their present difficulties.

The above thematic breakdown of the data is reproduced in table form in Figure 6. These themes are presented in greater detail in the following paragraphs.

Figure 6.

- 7 Participants’ responses to the interview question about the impact of the history of slavery on contemporary society focused on black Americans.
- 8 Participants’ responses to the interview question about the impact of the history of slavery on contemporary society addressed both black Americans and white Americans.
- 10 Participants reported a belief that the history of slavery has impacted contemporary white Americans at some point during the interview.
- 5 Participants specifically linked the history of slavery with an ongoing sense of racial superiority and/or racism toward black people in the white community.
- 3 Participants reported a belief that white Americans are psychologically impacted in negative ways as a result of slavery.

- 3 Participants reported a belief that white Americans are victims of unfair treatment as a result of slavery.
- 10 Participants reported a belief that contemporary black Americans are impacted by racism and racial oppression.
- 6 Participants reported a belief that contemporary black Americans are adversely impacted by the history of slavery specifically.
- 6 Participants emphasized a belief that we have come a long way as a society in terms of racial oppression.
- 3 Participants reported a belief that black Americans are no longer oppressed and have equal opportunities to white Americans.
- 6 Participants reported a belief that some black Americans use slavery and/or the history of racial oppression as an excuse for their present difficulties.

Five participants linked the history of slavery with an ongoing sense of racial superiority and racism toward black Americans among white Americans. One participant gave this response to the interview question about the societal impact of the history of slavery:

Absolutely, because so much of the behavior that people have in today's world comes out of that. I think on the part of people like myself, it's like confusion and not understanding why people have that behavior or hatred and thinking they are just bad people. Well in fact, they are bad; it's been generated by the world they grew up in. And now being a so-called free society, we can question, but you can't if you're in a situation where you can't move out of your situation and you have a lack of education. So on the poor black child's side, it's affected them terribly because more of them have less education than they would have if we hadn't had slavery. And they have to work very hard to live within the rules of the white, the way the whites set it up for them.

This participant's response reflects an element that was present in the responses of all of the 5 participants who focused on the persistence of racial superiority and racism among white Americans—the impact of the social and historical context in which white

Americans grow up and the intergenerational transmission of a sense of superiority and racist attitudes toward black Americans. Each of these five participants, and four additional participants, commented on current individual and/or institutional white racism toward black people. Interestingly, three of these five participants, including the participant quoted above, spoke about this impact as something “out there,” in other white people. In other parts of the interview, two participants reported a belief that some white people “probably wish” that we still had slavery. Two of these five participants however, acknowledged their own susceptibility to a sense of racial superiority and/or racist reactions to black Americans. These are not the only two participants in the study who acknowledged their own racism, two additional participants, for a total of four participants in this study, identified having to struggle with racism.

Three participants spoke about the collective impact of slavery on white Americans in the sense of a shared psychological distress, using terms like shame, guilt and wound. One participant stated that the society is “impacted greatly in terms of the national shame and guilt.” Another participant stated:

I’m sure that in terms of a collective psyche, it’s had a huge impact on white people and I think that’s one of the reasons we have such a hard time talking, still talking about slavery and racism today, because it’s such a wounded place, because how could we have let that kind of stuff go on and how do we continue to let it go on.

This participant draws attention to the collective silence among white Americans around slavery and racism, as something that is too difficult for the white collective to face. One participant who referred to slavery as a national wound, also referred to the societal consequences of slavery as a “national curse.” Another participant described slavery as a “national sin.”

Three of the 15 participants in this study reported that contemporary white Americans unfairly suffer due to the history of slavery. Each of these participants complained of discriminatory treatment based on being white; of being censured in their speech and feeling persistently at risk of being called “racist.” As one participant described in his response to the question about how the participant conceives the personal impact of slavery: “Just how folks act these days, how folks treat white people you know. It’s like I’m such a fucking asshole, I’m a jerk, I’m a fucking racist you know? No!” Each of these three participants affectively expressed anger around these issues during the interview, and the two participants whose responses appear below, specifically reported feeling “angry” toward black people who claim that they are racially oppressed. One of these participants spoke at length, throughout the interview, about what he sees as the contemporary societal impact of slavery. For this participant, the problem is that black Americans have developed a “victim mentality” and white people are labeled racists if they “make a negative comment about somebody of African American descent or practically any other ethnic group.” This participant suggested that black leaders like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton perpetuate the “victim mentality”:

I would say that the black leaders in the black community keep the blacks more suppressed now or just as suppressed as they were when they were slaves because they keep promoting this, you poor victim you, you are just a poor victim and you deserve this and you deserve that and if you don’t get it, you get mad and you make trouble you know something like that and you make a big ruckus.

Another participant stated, “I think that slavery is the fuse that can be used to light a situation and it’s a tool” and “a way to get a bully pulpit and get people riled up and cause trouble.” This participant also used slavery as a metaphor for what is going on currently, but as an enslavement of white people, who unlike the “protected classes,”

“can't say anything hardly without crossing some imaginary line” and that “Now you have created slavery of another kind. It's not enslaving the body, it's enslaving the mind and you have now enslaved people in terms of their thoughts. What an interesting theme to develop! We have created a reverse slavery?” For these two participants, societal level racial oppression against black people no longer exists, and the claim of racial oppression is deeply interconnected with an experience of feeling blamed. Interestingly, and in some contradistinction, both of these participants made specific statements about the racial oppression of black people stemming from slavery and persisting through the 60s and 70s.

In total, six participants reported disapproval of black Americans who use slavery and/or the history of racial oppression as an excuse for their current difficulties. One participant, who talked at length at other points in the interview about the systemic socioeconomic oppression of black Americans, had the following response to the specific interview question about if, and how, contemporary society is impacted by slavery:

I think only in the sense that it's still part of the black dialogue about being oppressed. I believe the blacks are oppressed in the United States. I think recalling the part about slavery is a pointless way of characterizing what they need to have happen. I think if you want things to change you don't call those things into account, you call the current state of affairs into account. And when I say that something is systemic, I mean in the operation of the system now at this moment. [...] I think it's pointless, yeah, because anything that you might want to say about it is hearsay. No one that I know personally, and I live with black people, no one that I know personally has any personal knowledge of anything about that time period and no one in their families so far as I know from conversation. [...] Now someone who has that, I guess that would be a proper reason for someone to bring it up in a conversation about inequity in United States, is if your lineage has it and the stories passed through your lineage to you, then I accept that you have yourself some experience of these things or some knowledge of them from personal experience. But I don't have it and most of the people I know don't have it.

For this participant, present-day systemic racism against black people is a given; however it is “slavery” as a signifier of racial oppression that the participant finds specifically problematic. The societal impact of slavery is only meaningful in its im-“proper” use in black people’s dialogue about racial oppression, which he described as pointless.

Throughout the interview, this participant voiced concern about the authenticity of representations of slavery, at times he expressed suspicion of the negative representations of slavery and treatment of blacks as “caricatures” but at other points made statements like: “if you can characterize something, it happened.” Slavery becomes something that needs to be fixed in the past, severed from the present. This participant, as well as two participants quoted prior, drew attention to the length of time between now and the abolishment of slavery, all three specifically pointed out that no one living during slavery is alive today. As one of these participants put it:

I see the effect that it's had on this country since that time which has been, I don't want to say, one could say that it's almost a national curse, then this country has paid for slavery ever since it was instituted. To this day, there is this enduring anger by people who were never slaves against people who were never slave owners and yet it persists as the elephant in the room on almost any discussion, people who were never victims angry at people who never victimized them. And so it's a serious wound that this country's had to endure.

At a later point in the interview the same participant stated while making a similar point: “So what is this national flagellation that goes on, what are we doing, why are we beating ourselves up over this. [...] Why don't we just kind of not talk about it in the hopes that maybe it can settle down.” The accounts of these participants communicate a perspective that the history of slavery antagonizes the present.

Many participants, including those discussed above grappled with contradictory perspectives during the interview. One participant’s response to the question about how

contemporary society has been impacted by the history of slavery is exemplary of this process:

Oh yeah, definitely because you know I think it's very, because let's face it, if, there are sometimes when I get to the point where I think, 'Okay enough already of your complaining.' But we did force them to come over here. And, but I do think as a group a lot of them just sort of, you know, just thought well you did this to my ancestors and so I am just not going to do anything. You know a lot of them do, have become educated and you just kept them, just well I mean our President that you know when I think a lot of, I guess a lot of that, I think they are awfully sensitive I mean...

At this point I asked the participant: "Have you had experiences where you have noticed that?" The participant responded:

Oh no, I haven't had any experiences I guess I still don't have that much contact with them, except for my yardman. But anyway he is, you know, I think there is a lot of resentment but I think we have done so much to try and help them and so many of them just don't want to even try to better themselves and you know get an education and take care of, they just want to live off of welfare and everything and, not all of them. You know I think they are just some now. And I think that, and they are saying a lot of them are, you know, getting education and prospering but yeah I mean wouldn't you, yeah I mean that was a terrible blight on our nation's history I think.

These passages show how this participant, during the telling of how she makes meaning of the contemporary societal impact of slavery, shifts back and forth between two, somewhat contradictory, points of view.

How should slavery be taught?

Participants were asked: How do you think slavery should be taught to children?

All fifteen participants stated that children should be taught about slavery. One participant added this disclaimer:

I believe as a historical reference it is fundamental that our children know that this is part of our history and to the degree that we can teach it in the absence of moralizing then we should teach it. But if we make it a moral issue then I believe it's best left unsaid, I believe it's something that should simply be in the closet,

because then you are getting into a whole can of worms that's really not proper to talk about outside of the context of having experience of it.

Fourteen of the 15 participants stated something to the effect that children should be taught, "what happened." Six participants emphasized the need to teach children more of what "really" happened. Four participants spoke specifically about the need to teach the more difficult details, using phrases like "the hardcore stuff" and "more of the bad stuff." For example, one participant said: "You know, tell it like it is. I think they should read about the horrible things that the whites did to the blacks and it should be an open discussion unlike where I grew up where it was never discussed." Six participants stated that children should be taught that it was wrong, and six participants stated that slavery should be taught so that it is not repeated. Two participants stated that children should be taught not to judge other people because of their skin color. Five participants emphasized the need to teach children the historical and economic "context" or "bigger picture" within which slavery arose and existed. Only one participant stated that the teaching of slavery should be linked with the present:

[...] we need to start with the slavery and then layer in the other things and say this is how it happened, and it's kind of a horrible history but it's our history and we need to be able to learn from it so that we can not repeat this sort of thing and be able to take a look at our institutions and policies and understand why people are the way they are and start to change it. You know, kids don't learn the truth and complexity of that history and they go along like my friends in high school saying 'Who cares, it was 100 years ago, it doesn't make any difference.' So I feel like people in this country don't understand the impact of our history you know how it impacts our life so directly.

Three participants had specific concerns about how learning about that history impacts black children versus white children. One participant raised concern about how learning the explicit details of slavery might interfere with the friendships between "black and

white kids,” one participant was concerned that it could give white kids “ideas” and that “some of the black people are probably embarrassed,” and another participant, referring to a teacher who taught that George Washington had children with his slaves, something that this participant appreciated, said, “But, you know, in a way if you get into that stuff, some black kids’ll get all angry.” Three participants wondered how and when to teach slavery to young children. One participant stated:

I think they give you that, like a wow factor and they are like you beat them with a whip and then they kick them down and chained them and it was like very severe, like brutal. And like, I’m sure that that was the reality, you know what I mean, and I believe that that should be effectively portrayed in history but not to tell a seven year old, that’s all.

Another participant had this to say:

I think that there are ways developmentally to start teaching kids from early on about the importance of community and supporting each other and understand how we all got here. We can frame it in a more positive way depending on the age, but kids still need to understand what happened and need to have more in their minds other than turkeys and Indians and pilgrims.

Conclusion

These were the major findings that emerged in the analysis of the data. The data suggests that how these 15 white Americans remembered and made meaning of the history of slavery during their interviews is psychologically meaningful. Some possible implications for this data in understanding the psychological consequences of the history of slavery for contemporary white Americans will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how contemporary white Americans remember and make meaning of slavery in the United States and to assess whether they show evidence of psychological conflict in relationship to that history. This study examined the narrative responses of 15 participants who racially identify as “white” and who were born and raised in the United States. Participants represent a diverse range of age, gender, regional location during childhood years and childhood class position. Participants were asked to reflect on their memories of learning about, talking about, and knowing about the history of slavery; to share their internal representations of slavery and how they imagine their familial, personal, and imagined relationship with slavery; to report their beliefs about the impact of slavery on themselves personally and on contemporary society; and to share their ideas about how slavery should be taught to children.

This study was born out of the hypothesis that slavery—as signifier, symbol, and historical reality—has deep psychological implications for contemporary white Americans. The prevalence and depth of the participants’ affective, somatic and cognitive reactions and reports during the interviews overwhelmingly support this hypothesis. The previous chapter detailed many salient findings that will hopefully inspire further research, inquiry, and discussion. In this chapter, I will draw on the psychodynamic and psychoanalytic literature on whiteness to further explore and analyze

some of the key themes that arose in the data. Specifically, I will discuss (1) participants' anxiety around the questions that put them in intimate contact with slavery and their attempts to distance themselves from that history; (2) participants' internal visual and auditory representations of slavery; and (3) participants' pervasive silence and lack of interpersonal experiences talking about slavery. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the study's strengths and limitations, implications for psychodynamic and psychoanalytic scholarship on whiteness and whiteness studies scholarship, implications for clinical social work practice, and implications for further research.

Intimate Encounters with Slavery

In "A Relational Encounter with Race," with white psychoanalysts and psychodynamic clinicians positioned as the primary reading audience, Melanie Suchet (2004) states:

Race haunts our consciousness. Like a melancholic structure, disavowed and unacknowledged, its presence permeates our inner world. We need to own our racial identity and embrace a space where the horrors of trauma can be reenacted. As whites, this necessitates an identification with the aggressor. We cannot afford to dissociate the shame and guilt we carry as a consequence of being oppressors, historically and currently. (p. 437)

Race, and specifically slavery, did seem to haunt the consciousness, and the unconsciousness, of the contemporary white Americans who participated in this study. The question regarding participants' imagined ancestral relationship with slavery and the question that asked participants to imagine what it might have been like to be born into a slave-owning family elicited fascinating data. It was particularly within these responses that I noticed the intricate psychological (cognitive and linguistic) defenses used by

participants to distance themselves from identification with the masters of slavery and to ward off the shame and guilt imbedded in that unconscious identification.

What struck me most about the participants' responses to their known or imagined familial ties with slavery was how many, especially those whose family history was *unknown* to them, exhibited an anxious attempt to construct a barrier between themselves and slavery. This is not to suggest that those with known ancestral ties to the masters of slaves were unaffected, two participants revealed quite extensive psychological distress. For one of these participants, whose response is detailed in the previous chapter, this distress was quite literally and hostilely disavowed from consciousness but came through via intense somatic symptoms as that family history was spoken aloud.

Interestingly, the majority of those whose family history in relationship to slavery was unknown seemed compelled by a desire to *not* be a descendent of slave masters. This is suggested in the fact that so many of these participants offered "evidence" to substantiate their claim, as if to plead for their innocence. This need for innocence is likely an unconscious attempt to expunge themselves from the shame and guilt associated with being the racial heirs of slavery. One participant's response exemplified this process. This participant was certain that her family could not have been involved in U.S. slavery due to their post-emancipation immigration to the United States, she stated: "I felt good about that. I don't have white guilt, my family was not involved, like I mean, maybe in like Greek times."

Three participants' speech was markedly tangential, they produced intricate narratives that were clearly being formed in the interview process itself and that seemed to be driven by a nagging fear that it was possible that their ancestors had owned slaves.

For example, the lengthy response of one of these participants culminated when he finally arrived at the “evidence” that satisfied his doubt:

My experience of my own dad is he knew nothing about farming so I don't see how that's possible [that ancestors were slave owners], if you take my meaning. It's like no, if your dad was a farmer, you would know something about it and as I recall him now and recall my life with him, I can honestly say I am pretty sure he didn't know a single thing about farming.

But still there is some doubt, “I can honestly say I am pretty sure,” and the impossibility is hanging on the somewhat arbitrary basis that his dad “knew nothing about farming.” I am not suggesting that these participants' ancestors actually were slave owning, but rather pointing out the anxiety that was elicited in not knowing for sure, and what seemed for some, a desperate attempt to convince themselves (and perhaps me) that they were not a descendent of slave masters.

Two participants stated that they thought that some people probably wish that “we” still had slavery. One of these participants, who identified as politically progressive and color-blind, seemed to get pleasure in the fantasies to which she returned several times throughout the interview about what it would have been like to have slaves. This participant stated:

It [slavery] was horrible, it was cruel and unforgiving. You know, I'm sure that there is, and this is conjecture, I'm sure there is a huge population in the South that would be just as happy if it was like that still because they had a wonderful freedom to do whatever they wanted with these people and didn't have to do any work. I mean can you imagine the entitlement they felt that they had these people who worked for them and they would beat up if they wanted to and nothing ever happened to them because it was allowed in this country?

What struck me most was how apparent the unconscious identification with the oppressor was in several of the participants' responses. The unconscious identification with the oppressor is disavowed and projected onto other “bad” people.

The question in which participants were asked to imagine what it might have been like to be born into a slave owning family also produced intriguing responses among the participants. This question was specifically designed to interpolate the participants' into the position of the slave master's child and to elicit their reactions to their own fantasized proximity to slavery. That three participants heard in the question a request to imagine what it would have been like to have been born a child in a *slave* family is a palpable example of a strong psychological defense against identification with the slave master, i.e., oppressor. And that three additional participants responded with confusion and immediately paused to ask for clarification, "The family that owns, not the family that's the slave?," suggests that almost half of the participants were so defended against the fantasy, that they struggled to—or simply could not—*hear* the question.

In "The House of Difference," Harris (2007b) draws on André Green's notion of "psychose blanche" to suggest that some qualities of whiteness, born from centuries of being the privileged and the oppressor, may reside so deep in the unconscious that they are beyond symbolization. Perhaps for these participants imagining themselves in the contradictory position of a child, who is dependent on her family, and the position of the enslaver, was too unbearable—so that it escaped symbolization—meaning that it refused thought or comprehension. Another way to think about these participants reactions to the question is to draw on Julia Kristeva's (1982) notion of "abjection": "There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable" (p. 1).

Admittedly, this was a difficult question, one of fantasy and projection. I was not only asking the participants to imagine what it might have been like to be a slave owner, but to imagine what it might have been like to be born *into* a family of slave owners. This question asks participants to imagine themselves in a contradictory position: that of a child, who is intimately vulnerable and dependent on the care of others, and that of someone who will presumably grow up to dominate others as slave master. The fact that the position of the child is imbedded in this question likely has something to do with many of the participants' difficulty, including those who were able to hear it the first time around. The child's position in relationship to the parents is much more akin to the position of the slave than the slave master in terms of power and domination.

Even among those who did hear the question, many imagined, hoped, that they would have rebelled in some way. For example, one participant responded: "I've thought about that. I still maintain that I'd be exactly as I am now. I would be some sort of rebel and run away to the woods or something and I would become like a crazy earth goddess lady." The resolution of anxiety for this participant was a fantasy that she would have exited the system altogether, would have "escaped" as she put it. Another participant said:

I think I would've been a voice to do everything I could and make their lives better. I think I would've been, I like to believe that I would've been on those trains heading north to get to freedom. If I was going to fantasize who I want to be, it would be Tubman getting them out of there.

This participant seems to be simultaneously occupying the positions of the rebellious white child, the abolitionist, and the escaped slave helping other slaves escape.

I will use one particular participant's response to explore the possible psychological processes suggested in many of the participants' responses, especially those who could not *hear* the question. This participant was interviewed twice due to a technical problem with the recording equipment during the first interview. Both times the participant misheard the question. This participant imagined herself as a slave girl whose mother would "try to protect her from whatever violence could come" and would "prepare her in some way to have the strength to face up to whatever sexual relationships might occur." This participant referred to white masters raping black slave women several times during the interview, but notably never used the word "rape." When redirected to the position of the white child, this participant imagined that as a white girl child "you are probably protected from seeing any violence" but:

If you were a boy, you would be seeing the whippings of your parents and friends, the brutal whippings. So, clearly you wouldn't want to go there [question things]. If you were a girl you probably wouldn't see the beatings and things like that, but maybe as a boy because they would be expected to do that one day; but definitely not the girls, they would not have seen that.

The imagined boy child is both slave child and burgeoning slave master—both exposed to witnessing the relational violence of slavery. Furthermore, in both girl child positions the participant creates "protection" around her imagined self—however as the slave girl she will inevitably be raped by a white slave master, which "probably occurred at a young age," yet as the white girl child she will not even have to *see* the "violence" and "brutal whippings" of slavery. There is in this participants' response a kind of disavowal, a simultaneous knowing and not knowing (Straker, 2004). The participant refers to the brutalities of slavery while at the same time denying her imagined child self's knowledge of them.

Kristeva (1982) describes the experience of abjection:

When I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable *object*. The object is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. [...] The object has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to *I*. (p. 1)

In fact, this participant predominately uses the first pronoun “I” when in the position of the slave child, however in the position of the white child, she only uses the second pronouns “you” and “they.” This linguistic distinction suggests that imagining herself as the white child of slave owners, who as a girl child will not even *see* slavery’s violence, was more terrifying than imagining being a slave child who must be “prepared to have the strength to face up to whatever sexual relationships might occur” at the command of the white master, and “probably at a young age.” But all of these things, rape, violence, brutal beatings, the expectation to dominate, seeing and not seeing are *named* and *imagined*—these are objects, they are not the abjection that Kristeva describes. We cannot know the details of what is “ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable” – but it may be, at least in part, the slave master oppressor that is never named – the *who* enacting “the whippings and the brutal beatings,” the *who* commanding “the sexual relationships that might occur.” This is the same *who* that protects this participants’ fantasized white girl child self from witnessing any of it.

Asking participants to become so intimate with slavery broke the rules—the tacit rules of whiteness—where we agree to symbolically “forget” our role as oppressor—“out of mind, out of sight.” I too felt my anxiety surge each time I began to ask one of those questions. However, what participants have not forgotten, and are far more willing to speak about, are their internal representations of slavery via the marks of violence on the

black bodies of the enslaved. These questions—*Do you have any visual images that represent slavery in your mind? Do you have any auditory images, any sounds that you associate with slavery?*—unearthed important new information about how we consider contemporary white Americans’ internal relationship to slavery.

The sentimental and/or fantastically benign focus of some participants’ internal images likely reflect the collective denial, forgetting, and prettification of slavery that has been well documented by scholars. However, many participants’ reports of visual and auditory internal representations of slavery were gruesome and graphically violent—a phenomenon that has been little documented or analyzed. One participant reported having this internal visual image:

Let’s see, a black man hanging from a tree in shackles, the white hoods, the sticks with the flaming ends, torches, slave ships, bodies piled on top of each other crossing the ocean, that’s probably, you know the initial ones that flash through my mind. The whips and the bloody black backs and you know that’s probably about it.

This image was delivered in a surprisingly detached tone; such affective detachment was prominent in many of the participants’ similarly graphic accounts. Only one participant seemed to feel the intense pain of her internal representations of slavery—she cried as she put words to them and reported a somatic “heaviness of heart.” At times during these interviews I was reminded of what it feels like to sit with a client as he matter-of-factly tells the graphic details of the trauma he has survived, whose sensory memories of the trauma cannot yet be integrated with the emotional pain engendered by them. As Harris (2000) says, “Race in America with all its visible and invisible history must live in part as secretly unmetabolizable trauma in any contemporary person” (p. 656). Unmetabolized as these graphic sights and sounds seem, they are nevertheless consciously retrievable.

Why aren't these traumatic images repressed? Do these extraordinarily violent and graphic images cover over something even more difficult to think, feel, see or hear? Furthermore, how do these internal representations influence white people's relationships with black people, and vice versa?

Hartman (1997) argues that the "heinous and grotesque examples" of slavery's violence—even in empathic revulsion of it—can serve to refuse the "sentience" and subjectivity of the enslaved. In "making the [black] body speak" the horrors of slavery "the dispossessed body of the enslaved [becomes] the surrogate for the master's body since it guarantees his disembodied universality and acts as the sign of his power and dominion" (Hartman, 1997, p. 21-22). In fact only a few participants' internal representations included white people's bodies; the closest most participants got was a reference to "they." In the passage above, slavery is literally represented by the hanging, piled, and scarred black bodies of the enslaved; the white body is disappeared, and replaced with inanimate objects, the instruments of terror. And the relationship between the two, where their subjectivities might meet, is gone.

It bears considering if there is an element of the "complicated nexus of terror and enjoyment" that Hartman (1997) describes embedded in some of the participants' horrific images and in their telling. Are these images of tortured black bodies that "come to mind" reminiscent of the long history of spectacle of white violence against black people? Do these images remember the mass spectacle of lynchings, where crowds of white people would gather to watch, and postcards would be made and sold as souvenirs? (Hale, 1998).

Despite their likely perverse origins and symbolic mirrorings, the reality is that these horrible and graphic images of tortured black bodies *do* live inside the minds of many of the white participants in this study and presumably many contemporary white Americans. Along with Harris (2007a), “I want to honor the possibility that intergenerational transmission of trauma, including the traumatic construction of the self in acts of domination and the continuation of privilege and/or power is a deep infrastructure of any white person’s life” (p. 892). I think it is important to include as a part of this traumatic construction of self, the position of witness, real *and* imagined. What is the trauma of witnessing the black people you love—how many white babies’ first love object and attachment figure was a black woman?—being tortured, terrorized, and degraded by the white people you love and belong to? What part of the participants’ self is witness to the horrific images of slavery they see and hear? What part of the self is the oppressor, looking at his/her terrible crime?

The pervasive lived experience of racial segregation among the participants and their conscious or unconscious awareness of the ongoing oppression of black people in the United States cannot be separated from how these internal representations function. Real *and* imagined, past *and* present, oppressor, victim, *and* witness—are intimately entangled and are all being mediated via these graphic and grotesque internalized images of slavery. Intense guilt and shame, however strongly defended against, are undoubtedly a part of this mediation. They are haunting. Unable to be forgotten, repressed, or metabolized—they are locked inside the participants’ minds some place alone, yet waiting silently to be spoken.

The presence of these images among contemporary white Americans becomes even more profound when considered alongside the participants' pervasive interpersonal silence around slavery. The extent of this silence bears repeating here. Eleven of the 15 participants specifically reported having no memories of talking about slavery with other people during their childhoods. Talking about slavery during adulthood was also rare among the participants interviewed. Aside from the participant who spent years talking about and mourning slavery, only four participants reported having a memory of talking about slavery during their adulthood years. However, for each of these four, their memories of talking about slavery were vague and for three of these participants the recollection was noted as a single event. As one participant fittingly put it: "It's not something you talk about."

In 1965, James Baldwin wrote:

The history of white people has led them to a fearful, baffling place. [...] They do not know how this came about; they do not dare examine how this came about. On the one hand, they can scarcely dare to open a dialogue which must, if it is honest, become a personal confession—a cry for help and healing, which is, really, the basis of all dialogues—and, on the other hand, the black man can scarcely dare to open a dialogue which must, if it is honest, become a personal confession which, fatally, contains an accusation. And yet, if neither can do this, each of us will perish in those traps in which we have been struggling for so long. (1998, p. 724-725)

This study suggests that talking about slavery is infused with confession for white people, driven by intense shame and guilt. There were many moments during the interviews when I noticed the word "confession" pass through my consciousness, when participants seemed to shift from description into confession. At those moments I was intimately aware of my power as the inquisitor—both garnered and given, despite my deep commitment to bring to these interviews a stance of compassion and curiosity. The

findings revealed intense emotional and psychological conflict in relationship to slavery among participants—but also, I think, a yearning for dialogue, a cry for help and healing, a need for interpersonal connection around this destructive and devastating history that we all share. In the safety of a white dyad, many participants, often unbeknownst to them, were able to express their internal horror of being the white heirs of slavery.

Implications for Theory

This study serves as a call to the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic community to deepen and expand their engagement in analyzing the psycho-dynamics of whiteness. The findings alone provide a wealth of material for further analysis. An important motivation for this study was to integrate whiteness studies scholarship and psychoanalytic and psychodynamic scholarship on whiteness. It is critical that we shift the punitive voice from which current whiteness studies and anti-racism discourse often speaks. We need to include in our theories an understanding of the deep psychological structures that accompany belonging to whiteness. Not to expunge white people of responsibility, but to more effectively foster their responsible engagement in reparative action. Shame and guilt arise when denial is broken through.

Implication of this Study for Clinical Social Work

This study serves as a reminder to clinical social work that slavery, as historical artifact and ongoing symbolic force with enormous destructive consequences, is very much alive in contemporary white Americans. For the disproportionate number of white clinical social workers practicing in the United States, this study encourages them to explore how the history and symbolic structure of slavery lives in their psyche. As

Suchet (2007) empathically warns, “The colonizer within can never be shed, only disrupted, over and over again” (p. 884).

The “haunting presence of shame and guilt as the heritage of our history, soaked as it is in the trauma of oppression, whether that is slavery, apartheid, or anti-Semitism” writes Suchet (2004), is a part of the white Americans we may treat as clients and work with as colleagues. An ethical clinical practice will attend to the traumatic construction of the white racialized self. This will mean developing the ability to hear and respond to white clients’ capacity to commit violence against people of color as well as their racial pain, shame, and guilt.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has several limitations. The small sample size of 15 participants, compared with the large participant pool of *all* people who identify as “white” and were born and raised in the United States, limits the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, while considerable diversity was achieved in terms of age, gender, geographic region of upbringing, population density of childhood environment, and childhood class position, at the time of interviewing, all participants occupied middle, upper-middle, or upper class positions. I increased diversity by conducting interviews in two separate metropolitan areas (Oakland, CA and Dallas-Forth Worth, TX), however greater diversity would likely have been achieved by conducting interviews in multiple regions of the United States.

This study also has important strengths. The qualitative design and methodology allowed me to garner novel and significant data. The length of the interviews, which ranged from 50 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes, provided the necessary temporal space

to explore this topic. Interview questions that were direct in nature and asked participants for specific information were far more fruitful than the more general questions. As has been thoroughly noted in this discussion, white people have little to no experience talking about slavery, and doing so breaks long-held rules of silence and forgetting. While the newness and difficulty of talking about slavery may have caused the participants to withhold certain thoughts and feelings from the interviewer, it also likely made possible the participants' production of and my access to the raw and spontaneous material that was so rich and compelling.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Letter

Does the history of slavery still speak to white Americans?

A Call for Participants!!!

My name is Ryan Parker and I am conducting research to explore how white Americans of all ages and genders feel, think and remember learning about the history of slavery in the United States. This research is part of my degree for a Masters of Social Work from Smith College School for Social Work.

Participation includes a brief (5-10 minute) pre-interview over the phone and a 45-60 minute, one-on-one interview at a convenient location. Participants must be at least 18 years old, have been born and primarily raised in the United States, and identify as “white” or “Caucasian.”

If you are interested, and/or have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact me at the information provided below. If you are unable to participate in this research, but know of others who may be interested, please let me know and/or forward this email.

Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,
Ryan Parker
(Phone)
(Email)

APPENDIX B

Human Subjects Review Approval Letter



SMITH COLLEGE
School for
Social Work

Smith College
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063
T (413) 585-7950
F (413) 585-7994

January 28, 2010

Ryan Parker

Dear Ryan,

Your amended materials have been reviewed. You have done a careful job and resolved the diversity issue very well. We appreciate your efforts to get diversity. It's just difficult to do it. We are glad to now give our final approval to your study. I appreciated the very clear way you indicated all of the changes in your documents. It made the job of reviewing them so much easier!

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your recruitment and with this very interesting study.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Alan Schroffel, Research Advisor

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Letter

January 25, 2010 (date)

Dear Potential Participant:

My name is Ryan Parker and I am conducting a study that explores what the history of slavery in the United States means for white people who were born and raised here. The data will be used for my thesis as part of my Masters in Social Work degree through Smith College School for Social Work, and possible future presentations and publications. To qualify for the study, you must identify as “white” and/or “Caucasian,” have been born in the United States, and have spent at least 15 of your pre-adulthood years (0-18) in the United States.

Participation in this study entails taking part in a one-on-one interview, that will be audio recorded, and that will last about an hour, at a location and time that is convenient for you. The interview will include demographic questions pertaining to your gender, family and class history, and region of birth and upbringing. The interview involves open-ended questions about your early and ongoing experiences of being aware of the history of slavery in the United States and related experiences of race in the United States. The interview is designed to allow you to talk freely about whatever memories, thoughts and feelings arise while considering how you experienced and continue to experience this history.

Your experiences and perspectives can contribute to how the field of social work and other fields of study understand how this period of American history does and does not impact white Americans. You may also gain personal benefit from sharing and reflecting on this topic. However, there are potential but limited risks associated with participating in this study, which include the possibility of your having uncomfortable feelings while talking about your personal memories, thoughts and feelings associated with the history of slavery in the United States. I will provide you with a list of mental health professionals in case you wish to explore the feelings that arise in the course of the interview or afterwards.

Your confidentiality will be maintained in this study. All interview data will be coded; any identifying information will be altered to protect your confidentiality. I will review the data from your interview with my research advisors only after all identifying information has been removed. You will not be identified in any way in the final report of this research, which will include a written thesis, public presentation, and possible future publications. I will personally transcribe all audio data. Per federal regulations, all

materials from this study will be stored in a locked/password protected location for at least three years, or until no longer needed for this research, after which they will be destroyed.

Your participation in this study will be on a voluntary basis and will include no financial benefits. You may decline to answer any questions during the interview. You may withdraw your participation in this study at any time, before, during, or after the interview, until April 1, 2010, as the final report will be written at that time. Information you have contributed during the course of your participation in this study will be destroyed upon your withdrawal. In order to withdraw from this study, please communicate your wish to withdraw to me at the email and/or phone contacts provided below. Also, please feel free to contact me at anytime before, during, or after participation if you have any questions or concerns. You may also contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974 if you have any questions or concerns about this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will be valuable for the completion of this research study.

Ryan Parker
(Email)
(Phone)

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE INFORMATION AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Please keep a copy for your records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher: Ryan Parker

Date

APPENDIX D

Interview Schedule

Demographic Questions

1. Where were your parents born and where did they grow up?
2. Where were you born? How old are you?
3. Where did you spend your childhood years? (i.e. region, rural/suburban/urban, regional history, industry, etc.)
4. What did your parents do for work?
5. What was it like in terms of class where you grew up? How did you experience the class dynamics where you grew up? How did your family fit into those dynamics?
6. How do you identify yourself in terms of class?
7. What was it like in terms of race where you grew up? How did you experience the relations between people of different races where you grew up?
8. Where have you spent your adult years? Were/are class and race dynamics significantly different in the places you have lived as an adult from that of your childhood?

Primary Questions

1. Since agreeing to participate in this study about slavery in the US, have you had any recent thoughts about the topic? Can you tell me a little about what thoughts came to mind, and/or what feelings you felt, since you agreed to participate?
2. When did you first hear about slavery? How old were you? Where were you? Who were you with? What was the context? (teacher, parents, friends, siblings, movies, books?) [*If is having trouble: Can you tell me some of the memories that you associate with slavery?*]
3. *If hasn't already answered:* What did you learn? What do you remember learning about slavery when you were little?

4. Do you remember talking about slavery with other people? Do you remember overhearing discussions about slavery? (school, friends, family?) [*If yes: Can you tell me what you remember about those conversations?*]
5. How did you make meaning of that history? Were there particular feelings that you associate with learning about slavery? With knowing about slavery?
6. What visual images come to mind when you think about slavery?
7. What auditory images come to mind when you think about slavery?
8. *Whenever seems appropriate:* Do you have any feelings in your body, physical or emotional, now as you think about slavery?
9. Some people have a particular story, image, idea about slavery that represents what it was? Is there a story that comes to mind when you think about slavery?
10. What do you think your own family's history was with slavery?
11. What do you think it might have been like to be born into a slave owning family?
12. Do you think the history of slavery is important for understanding/has impacted our society today? *If yes: How?*
13. Do you think the history of slavery has impacted you? *If yes: How?*
14. How do you think slavery should be taught to children?
15. Is there anything else you would like to say in relation to this topic and/or the questions I have asked you?

APPENDIX E

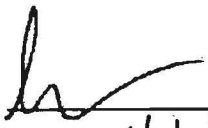
Assurance of Research Confidentiality

Assurance of Research Confidentiality

This thesis project is firmly committed to the principle that research confidentiality must be protected and to all of the ethics, values, and practical requirements for participant protection laid down by federal guidelines and by the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee. In the service of this commitment:

- All professional transcribers for this project shall sign this assurance of confidentiality.
- A professional transcriber should be aware that the identity of participants in research studies is confidential information, as are identifying information about participants and individual responses to questions. The organizations participating in the study, the geographical location of the study, the method of participant recruitment, the subject matter of the study, and the hypotheses being tested are also be confidential information. Specific research findings and conclusions are also usually confidential until they have been published or presented in public.
- The researcher for this project, Ryan Parker, shall be responsible for ensuring that all professional transcribers handling data are instructed on procedures for keeping the data secure and maintaining all of the information in and about the study in confidence, and that that they have signed this pledge. At the end of the project, all materials shall be returned to the investigator for secure storage in accordance with federal guidelines.

PLEDGE I hereby certify that I will maintain the confidentiality of all of the information from all studies with which I have involvement. I will not discuss, disclose, disseminate, or provide access to such information, except directly to the researcher, Ryan Parker, for this project. I understand that violation of this pledge is sufficient grounds for disciplinary action, including termination of professional services with the project, and may make me subject to criminal or civil penalties. I give my personal pledge that I shall abide by this assurance of confidentiality.

 Amer SHAH, MWAGINC Member, DATAIST LLC Signature
4/2/10 Date
Ryan Parker Ryan Parker
April 2, 2010 Date