

Syracuse University

SURFACE at Syracuse University

Theses - ALL

5-14-2023

The Body Knows: Embodiment and Whiteness A Rhetorical Analysis of White Bodies Engaged in Antiracism Work, Otsego County, New York

Kerry Lynn Mess
Syracuse University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/thesis>

Recommended Citation

Mess, Kerry Lynn, "The Body Knows: Embodiment and Whiteness A Rhetorical Analysis of White Bodies Engaged in Antiracism Work, Otsego County, New York" (2023). *Theses - ALL*. 718.
<https://surface.syr.edu/thesis/718>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by SURFACE at Syracuse University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses - ALL by an authorized administrator of SURFACE at Syracuse University. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Abstract

Multiculturalism, diversity, inclusion, equity, antiracism, belonging... The humanities, social sciences, and rhetorical scholarship have all slowly given attention to questions of race and racism. Situated at the intersection of somatic psychology and rhetorical studies, this thesis uses a somatic theory lens to explore how symbolic systems, specifically language and bodies, are intertwined to understand the embodied or material effects of racism we have not yet accounted for. I borrow Karma Chávez's language of "abstract" and "actual" (2018) to observe the rhetorical dynamics, patterns and strategies, of white bodies accounting for themselves and apply Resmaa Menakem and Douglas Robinson's somatic theories to these accounts as a means to examine wider systems of white-body supremacy and explore the pressing questions of how to engage whiteness in ways that resituate and decenter white bodies and hold us accountable for the systems we benefit from. I first examine core ideas of Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and the role of the body in white-body supremacy. I then engage in examining vernacular accounts of whiteness through case studies of four individuals participating in *Looking in the Mirror: Cooperstown Reflects on Racism* series in Otsego County, New York. This exploration has two parts based on where participants happened to be on the continuum of embodiment at the time. I first examine two participants who tend toward the more disembodied or abstracted side of embodiment; I then examine two participants who tend toward the more embodied side of the continuum. I conclude by returning to the pressing questions of how to engage whiteness in ways that resituate and decenter white bodies and hold us accountable for the systems we benefit from.

The Body Knows: Embodiment and Whiteness

A Rhetorical Analysis of White Bodies Engaged in Antiracism Work, Otsego County, New York

By

Kerry Lynn Mess

B.S. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1994

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in

Communication and Rhetorical Studies

Syracuse University

May 2023

Copyright © Kerry L. Mess 2023

All Rights Reserved

Acknowledgments:

Life is a journey, and we all stand on the shoulders of gentle giants willing to hold us up and help us move forward, some knowingly and others from afar.

I am first and foremost grateful to Resmaa Menakem. His work—*My Grandmother's Hands*, interviews, the *Guerilla Muse* podcast—helped me make sense of my own white experience and became the driving force behind this thesis project.

Thank you to Donna Pasternak, Marshall George, and Chris Goering for your glowing recommendation letters and enthusiastic support of my graduate school journey before it began.

Thank you to Dr. Kendall Phillips, my adviser. Your patience and willingness to stick with me through the left turn from education to racism and whiteness are deeply appreciated. As an educator, I know the pain we sometimes experience wading through student writing. Thank you for putting up with my writing for three full semesters. My academic writing is still a work in progress, but your example and generosity of spirit have definitely moved me along that road.

Thank you to my committee members: Dr. Diane Grimes, Dr. Gretchen Lopez, and Dr. Keven Rudrow. Your support, feedback, knowledge, and example as educators and writers were incredibly encouraging and insightful throughout this journey.

Thank you to my friends Aumma, Chelsea, and Frida. Aumma, your constant encouragement and positivity were often what I needed; Chelsea, your kindness and openness were so incredibly generous—thank you for being such a good teacher; and Frida, your willingness to share your own project process and your reminder to me that if the thesis process were not hard, I would be doing something wrong gave me the strength to keep pushing through.

Finally, thank you to my family, especially my beloved husband Raymond and my mother-in-law Chris, both of whom put up with me coming home to isolate and get the work of

teaching and learning done. Raymond, your understanding of this process and unwavering support of my pursuits is the best gift you could possibly have given me in graduate school.

Table of Contents

Introduction: The Body Knows 1

Chapter 1 9

 Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies 9

 Accounting for White-Body Supremacy 17

 The Body’s Role in Racism..... 23

 Methodology: The Vernacular 29

Chapter 2: Whose body matters? Unintegrated embodiment, abstract and absent bodies 34

 Examining Social Stance: The Language/Abstraction 35

 Examining Social Stance: Abstracting the Actual Body 41

 Abstracting Moral Stances 50

 Avoiding Political Action through Abstraction..... 57

Chapter 3: Whose body matters? Embodiment and actual bodies 63

 Actual Bodies and Personal Stances..... 64

 Personal Stances to Moral Stances 70

 Moral Stances Mean Social Action 76

Conclusion: Returning to the Body 90

 Limitations..... 93

 Future Studies 95

 Implications 96

Bibliography 100

Vita 112

Introduction: The Body Knows

While teaching high school English in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, I grew more convinced each year that certain powers-that-be in the city did not want children who did not look like me, a female of European descent who presents and identifies as white, to succeed. I was not alone in my convictions and constantly questioned the disparities between groups of students I taught in an International Baccalaureate school. I witnessed in my students that the gaps were not a lack of capability. Aradhana Mudambi (2021) argues *achievement gap* is a microaggression as it suggests something wrong with the student whereas *opportunity gap* suggests something wrong with the system and those who run it. I spent almost a decade working to build a culture of reading in my school through The Education Network, an organization that contends education is a network of conversations, and I wondered about American culture at large and how it had shaped the rhetoric of failure in education I encountered.

While I had used John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me* (1996) for years with freshmen, it was not until I read Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility* (2018) and Ibram X. Kendi's *How To Be An Antiracist* (2020) that I began to apprehend the depth and intricacies of racism's systemic underpinnings in U.S. society. Kendi's directness and straightforward definitions answered many questions I'd wrestled with in my own work as an educator. *Stamped from the Beginning* taught me the history; Kendi's language lit the way to understanding, a gift for the mind. DiAngelo's work taught me something of the barriers to understanding—*white fragility*: the process of internalizing a superiority we cannot or will not admit—and introduced a possible response, the concept of *racial humility*. White people cannot, in some sense, trust ourselves as we have investments in the system we do not even realize we have (Tippett et al., 2020). DiAngelo's racial humility was a gift for the heart.

By July 2020, in the midst of waves of protests over George Floyd's murder and the COVID pandemic, I wondered how all this reading would support me in a move across the country from a solidly Black neighborhood in Sherman Park, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to a small rural town in predominantly white Otsego County in upstate New York. And I questioned what impact the *action* of protests would have: Was there adequate reflection to sustain and speak a true word and actually transform our corrupted world (Freire, 2018)? I doubted it and wondered how this was possible. Resmaa Menakem's *My Grandmother's Hands* (2017) filled in the missing piece: the body. Menakem taught me not just the psychological impact of race and racism, but its physical impact on all bodies in the U.S., how trauma, a "soul wound," embeds itself in our bodies in multiple ways, including our genetics. For Menakem, healing our individual selves is the pathway to healing the nation's racist systems of what he calls white-body supremacy.

Menakem rejects the phrase "white supremacy" as its abstractness moves people "to the head...and we end up having an intellectual conversation and not how [white supremacy]...actually impacts the body" (Breakfast Club, 2021). Similarly, Karma Chávez (2018) argues, rhetorically reducing "actual bodies to abstract conceptualizations" is a "reductive and totalizing move [that]...enforces and animates systemic oppressions" (p. 248). This reduction allows white Americans to claim to be "good people," rejecting the thought that we are racist because we do not rationally espouse the idea of white supremacy despite implicitly accepting it as the universal standard for humanity. To counter this tendency toward abstraction, Menakem uses *white-body supremacy*, defined as "the supreme standard by which all bodies' humanity shall be judged both structurally and philosophically" (Sounds True, 2021). By adding body between white and supremacy, Menakem concretizes the concept: Anyone of European

descent who believes we have escaped being racist must contend with the fact we cannot escape our bodies, the system of benefits that comes with them, or the ways in which that system has been absorbed into our bodies.

In April 2021, not long after finishing Menakem's book, I learned that Friends of the Village Library and the League of Women Voters Cooperstown Area had cohosted an online antiracism series, *Looking in the Mirror: Cooperstown Reflects on Racism*, through the Cooperstown Library in response to George Floyd's murder. Organizers held seven 90-minute zoom panel discussions between September 2020 and April 2021: "History, Demographics, and Current Issues," panels on five societal sectors—tourism, education, healthcare, arts and monuments, and law enforcement—and "The Next Steps." I had missed the series, reached out to an organizer, and then lost touch. But the series resurfaced for me in a graduate course on Inequality and Intergroup Relations. I proposed studying the series to explore how a group concerned about racism in a predominantly white area tackles the issue and what it takes for people in a predominantly white area to sustain the work of social justice/antiracism to effect lasting societal change, which I felt required building a community culture of healing and care. In the writing process, I made contact with several other *Looking in the Mirror* organizers and again encountered critical whiteness studies, an area I have always been suspicious of: My own question, "Do whites really need to study ourselves given we're almost always the center of attention?" mirrors Ruth Frankenburg's, "Why talk about whiteness, given the risk that by undertaking intellectual work on whiteness one might contribute to processes of recentering rather than decentering it, as well as reifying the term and its 'inhabitants'?" (1997, p. 1).

I began questioning the supposed *invisibility* of whiteness. Did whites invent the term [white] invisibility to excuse or exonerate our unwillingness to see the material impacts of

racism? Menakem’s work forced me to consider how imprecise language—white supremacy—and invoking a rhetoric of white invisibility perpetuate racism: Those of us in white bodies generally take our color or race for granted, including the built-in systemic advantages we receive because of our bodies’ exterior, yet we *feel* the meanings behind the enthymemes of whiteness in our bodies (Jackson, 2006; Robinson, 2016). Menakem’s rejection of “white supremacy” and his philosophy of *somatic abolitionism*, a living embodied philosophy of antiracism (2022), reveal whiteness’s contours in the clear light of day, exposing whiteness as anything but invisible, especially to those bodies deemed “of color.”

The irony of our language is that science defines white as the sum of all colors in the spectrum while black is defined as the absence of color, yet white people deny we have color in a racial sense; that is for “Other” people. And yet, one could counter that the notion of whiteness as universal could stem from the scientific definition of white as representing all colors. Either way, I spent years explaining to students that they never had to apologize when using the descriptor “white” or phrase “white people” in class only to learn each time that other white teachers didn’t like hearing Black students say, “white people.”

While these white teachers’ words seem an obvious marker of racism and white fragility, Menakem challenges all of us to turn the mirror on ourselves, examining not just words and deeds, but gut feelings and impulses, those limbic, pre-thought bodily responses, we experience in quotidian situations. He aligns with multiple rhetoricians who maintain that intersectionality requires a critical self-reflexivity to open ourselves to questioning and critiquing our own practices (Calafell, 2020; Jones, R. G., 2010; Lacy & Ono, 2011; Moon & Flores, 2000). Without this deep interrogation, antiracism is merely *nonperformative*: Antiracist speech acts do not actually “do what they say” as they do not commit either individuals or groups to act

(Ahmed, 2006, p. 198).

Having watched the 2020 summer protests from behind the COVID pandemic and the busyness of major life upheaval, I wondered what would change when all those well-meaning white people holding Black Lives Matter signs went home. How would their behavior or interactions with systems change? I had to question how I could do this myself, recognizing my own all too often complicity in white systems of oppression: Where have I completely missed my own whiteness? How am I “unconscious” of what surrounds me like a sea?

My stumbling on the Cooperstown antiracism series afforded me an opportunity to wonder: If whiteness is not invisible, where does it hide such that those of us in white bodies can claim “not knowing” or “not understanding” how our advantage operates in society? In an antiracism context, how do we as whites account for our whiteness? What rhetorical strategies do we use when attempting antiracism work? Like Jennifer Lin LeMesurier (2014), I am interested in how symbolic systems, specifically language and bodies, are intertwined to understand the embodied or material effects we have not yet accounted for to answer how we sustain honest antiracism work, particularly in predominantly white areas to build culture absent in whiteness (Baldwin, 1998; Roediger, 1994; Menakem, 2017).

If our rhetorical practices “systematically form the objects of which [we] speak” (Foucault, 1989, p. 11), exploring such questions requires a *critical rhetoric*, one that accepts power as part of social life and critiques western colonial thought to unmask power’s discourse (Lacy & Ono, 2011; McKerrow, 1989; Ono, 2011). Given the nature of racism in the U.S. as both systemic and individual, “held in our bodies, our hearts, our psyches, our spirits, *and* our minds” (Berila, 2015, p. 34), we must reach beyond examining discourse in political and public realms at large. White people must start work with ourselves, “from the ground up,” to situate

ourselves in the everyday of vernacular conversations, both verbal and nonverbal, to understand how whiteness works, make it visible, and humanize ourselves so we can recognize the humanity in the “Other,” people of the global majority (Calafell, 2020, p. 412; see also Baldwin, 1993). I engage with Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and the somatic work of Resmaa Menakem and Douglas Robinson, recognizing that despite the tensions within and among them, each holds a piece of the puzzle to understanding and thereby dismantling racism. Exploring their intersections allows for an understanding of how we are rhetorically situated in a “canvas [of whiteness] upon which everything else is painted” (Kendrick, 2005, p. 395). The awareness created provides a means to begin decolonizing our minds by dismantling the oppressive messages within (Berila, 2016), to decenter whiteness, and to dismantle white-body supremacy, providing an opportunity to build something new.

My thesis will analyze the *Looking in the Mirror: Cooperstown Reflects on Racism* series to identify and understand the rhetorical patterns and strategies white bodies use to account for our whiteness. In examining the presentations in this series, I began to identify divergent patterns by which white participants accounted for their whiteness and their bodies. For some, as I explore more fully in Chapter 2, their accounts of themselves and their place in Otsego Country took on an orientation of abstraction, a form of erasing their own white-body identity. For others, as I discuss in Chapter 3, their accounts struggled to identify their actual bodies. In borrowing Chávez’s language of “abstract” and “actual,” I seek to observe the rhetorical dynamics of white bodies accounting for themselves as a means to examine wider systems of white-body supremacy.

In order to do this, in Chapter 1, I review key literatures related to Critical Race Theory, Critical Whiteness Studies, and white-body supremacy. I also draw upon rhetorical scholarship

to develop a clearer framework for examining the vernacular rhetorics of everyday citizens engaging in this kind of public forum. In Chapter 2, I focus on the orientation of “white body abstraction” by examining two participants who address issues of racism in relation to tourism (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbaS_RY0dQc&list=UU55qfGwnH4Z0zVezDitur2Q&index=16) and to local policing (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUSRoe9F9dc>). In Chapter 3, I focus on the orientation of “white body actualization” by examining two participants, one who speaks as the mother of biracial children (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sAPeMeNzS8&list=PL0JXyHtjFD5q4lhivvdw3N2CA70GRbeLL&index=49>) and the other as a medical professional (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLuy2Pu2aug>). In the conclusion of this thesis, I try to return to the pressing questions of how to engage whiteness in ways that resituate and decenter white bodies and hold us accountable for the systems we benefit from.

I approach this project with both eagerness and dread. I expect my learning and findings will help me understand Otsego County, where I live, and support my growing involvement in antiracism efforts while ideally providing the field of rhetoric with tools to connect people and address racism beyond the walls of academia. It is certainly a project not only about understanding my local area, but also about understanding myself. And I worry about my own investments in whiteness and how they may blur my vision and thus obscure an understanding of how whiteness operates in our bodies. I am mindful of my need for critical self-reflexivity, to be much more vigilant in observing my own responses, assumptions, and thoughts as I work through critical rhetoric to understand how to become human(e) and live somatic abolitionism. As Warren (2001) argues, “[i]n locating and critically analyzing how whiteness gets made...we have hope” (p. 463).

Given my positionality as a white female, I use first person plural pronouns (we/us/our) to refer to white people both for ease of reading and as a reminder of my own complicity in white-body supremacy: I, too, have a white body, which has been largely untouched through the implications of rhetorical strategies of whiteness.

Chapter 1

The past decades have seen growing attention to questions of race and racism across the humanities and social science. Rhetorical scholarship has also been deeply involved in examining systemic racism and seeking to develop antiracist strategies. In this chapter, I seek to review some of the key scholarship in this area and use it to develop a framework for exploring the ways everyday white people account for our bodies and the systems that benefit us.

In the following sections, I first examine core ideas of Critical Race Theory and antiracist work followed by an examination of Critical Whiteness Studies. I then explore the role of the body in white-body supremacy. Finally, I discuss my methodological framework for engaging in and examining vernacular accounts of whiteness and consider ways my study of Otsego County's public forums might develop.

Critical Race Theory and Critical Whiteness Studies

“There isn't a Negro problem; there is only a white problem...

The problem is white because only whites can resolve it.” –Richard Wright

The separation of the races is not a disease of the colored people,
but a disease of the white people.” –Albert Einstein

Antiracism efforts to address bad actors and/or bad systems have focused largely on the mind and policy, which simplifies the complexities of racism. This approach misses entirely that racism grew out of a European response to individual and collective bodies; racism has always and continues to have documentable material impacts on bodies. Antiracism efforts cannot succeed, then, without acknowledging and addressing the importance of the body in addition to individual actors and societal policies.

To explore racism's connections to mind, policy, and the body, I begin by exploring both

racism and antiracism through a Critical Race Theory lens. I define terms and discuss the limits of framing racism/antiracism work in binaries. I then examine how Critical Whiteness Studies, in conversation with Critical Race Theory, has reified whiteness rather than decentered it when it excludes the body in its work.

Led by scholars and activists as an extension of critical legal studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT) engages in interdisciplinary exploring and challenging of race, racism, and power relationships (Delgado & Stafancic, 2017). It focuses on systems and how they operate, recognizing that white-body supremacy is integrated into legal, cultural, and political structures in the U.S. (De La Garza & Ono, 2016). CRT rejects claims of neutrality or objectivity and a historical approach to the study of race, advocating instead for examination of race through a historical contextual lens that recognizes how the past shapes and informs the present; and it honors experiential knowledge from underrepresented groups (Orbe & Allen, 2008).

I use Ibram X. Kendi's (2020) definitions of race, racism, and antiracism. He begins discussing people: A racist is a person who "believes problems are rooted in groups of people..." whereas an antiracist is one who "...locates the roots of problems in power and policies" (p. 9) and supports antiracist policy through actions and ideas. Antiracist ideas are those that assume racial groups are equal and all developed with no genetic racial differences; none needs improving. Kendi (2020) then shifts to structures, providing a series of definitions distinguishing various facets of racism. Racism marries racist policies through political, legal, and educational structures and racist assumptions of white superiority to produce and normalize racial inequities. Discrimination is the manifestation of racist policy.

For Kendi (2020), there is no middle ground, "...there is no neutrality in the struggle with racism. The opposite of 'racist' is not 'not racist.' It is 'antiracist'" (p. 9). While this argument

makes sense, it has rhetorical limits given the current state of American society. First, Kendi's initial definitions—he does deal with class, gender, and sexuality in later chapters—focus solely on race without acknowledging the intersectionality of CRT. While CRT maintains that racism is the underlying structure of U.S. society, it resists Kendi's tendency to essentialize individuals (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This essentialism makes the truth in Kendi's argument hard for many white people to swallow: It is indeed terrifying to build a foundation, a cultural identity, on shifting ground, negative definitions and oppressive beliefs (Roediger, 2001). While Kendi's language helps clarify what racism is and is not, whites caught between an essentialist binary of antiracist/-ism (good)/ racist/-ism (bad) feel little room to engage in the critical self-reflexivity required to move to the “uncomfortable level of self-implication” (Jones, 2010).

Robin DiAngelo (2018) argues that binary frames create a “false dichotomy” (p. 72). Because white people do not like to see ourselves as “bad,” we use the good/bad binary to view racism as “beyond the pale of respectability...the problem (indeed, the moral failing) of a small fringe of violent and verbal white supremacists and of Black activists” (Roediger, 2001, p. 84). Resmaa Menakem concurs, arguing we white people like to view racism as episodic—committed, of course, by that small fringe—rather than structural (McDermott, 2023). And while this “small fringe” seems to have grown much larger and louder in the last 15 years, American society still has a large contingent who view Obama's presidency as the watershed that led to a post-racial era. As the deaths of innocent Black women and men at the hands of American police officers illustrates, we are far from such idealism. David R. Roediger (2001), like Menakem who rejects the term “white supremacy” for this very reason, argues that these audiences whom one might label “good white people” are certain we do not espouse racism and therefore believe we are not racist despite claiming a white identity.

As a Critical Race Theorist, Kendi would agree with Roediger's assessment; his focus on binaries aims to dismantle such "comfortable" white thinking, a necessity in addressing racism. For Kendi (2020), racism originates in individual thoughts about race which generate systems that perpetuate racial inequity. However, a reduction of white-body supremacy to an essentialist binary, antiracist (good)/racist (bad), renders the binary somewhat ineffective: For whites who want to view ourselves as "good people" (DiAngelo, 2018), we use this binary to obscure racism's structural or systemic nature. As Susan Heckman (1999) argues, defining identities, particularly from a Western frame, is a slippery slope as identity is not only about sameness but also about difference, about both personal *and* social. Binaries create an either/or paradigm, but the complexities of identity and white-body supremacy **demand a both/and approach**. An inability to accept difference as well possibility destroys individual creative potential and the power of interdependence (Lorde, 2007) necessary for a decolonial, antiracist world. Thus, we need both the clarity of Kendi's definitions and a way to view the complexities of racism beyond the good/bad binary.

Acknowledging the validity of CRT, Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) "casts whiteness as a problem, and...insists that both the origins and reproduction of white identity demand an explanation" (Roediger, 2001, p. 73), particularly because white people have such an investment in whiteness (Jackson, 2006; Lipsitz, 2018; Tippett et al., 2020). CWS scholars acknowledge that whiteness or white-body supremacy acts as both text and context. As the prevailing standard or "cultural location of humanity" (Warren, 2001, p. 457), whiteness is the *context* in which all people in America operate, always present in the background from historical to present, often unnoticed by whites the way the canvas underneath a painting receives no attention. Whiteness is also *text*: As an external phenotype marker for individuals, whiteness acts as an automatic

identifier. This, of course, is tricky given the mixing and blending of ethnic groups and wide range of skin tones in all shades. Nonetheless, this power of the body to communicate without words, action, or agency by the body's owner is not, but acts "as a cultural representation" or hierarchy of individuals, which "has effects in the world" (Warren, 2001, p. 460). In a Foucauldian sense, whiteness is the discourse in which we operate; it upholds and maintains systems. Race is written on our bodies, but the discourse of whiteness must be enunciated and performed (see Warren, 2001) for it to maintain its central position. Thus, whiteness is both thrust upon us—we do not choose our skin color or the systems and advantages tied to it from birth—and is chosen, consciously and unconsciously, through social interaction with and in the world; it forms those of us in white bodies perhaps as much as we form it.

Framing whiteness as problem or choice, however, has consequences. John T. Warren (2001) contends that viewing whiteness as choice is a reduction similar to Kendi's binaries; it does not account for the complexities of white-body supremacy or its performativity. Whiteness as problem taps into whites' shame, the foundation for white fragility. DiAngelo (2018) argues this fragility around race and racism originates in the internalizing of the subconscious, bodily charge of racism as an attack on person/character rather than recognizing systems are also at play; it raises the specter of "I am bad," a painful place for most people. As a white woman, DiAngelo understands the implications of this place and the need for white people to take responsibility for our racism—something Black writers and scholars have long pointed out for us—without the potential dehumanization that comes with the "bad person" label, a dehumanization perpetuated both by individuals and the systems of racism.

Focusing primarily on systems rather than also involving people is equally problematic. Valerie Kaur (2017) employs this binary in her antiracism work, maintaining that focusing on

bad actors does not produce results the way focusing on bad systems does. While the underlying system of white-body supremacy must be addressed, we must also recognize that individuals make up and participate in the systems. Whiteness is complex and intersectional as it is “systemic, yet enacted at an individual level” (Potapchuk et al, 2005, p. 53). Ruth Frankenburg (1997) argues whiteness occurs in this interplay between individual and systemic, which makes whiteness more a process than a thing and “plural rather than singular in nature” (p. 1). Thus, whiteness emerges in different locations and spaces in different ways. This means white people, while not accountable for the system of white-body supremacy set in place hundreds of years ago, have responsibility for recognizing our individual upholding of or complicity in the system.

Shame manifested as white fragility, however, keeps us from acknowledging white-body supremacy’s role in day-to-day life. James Baldwin (1993) argues that the price of the ticket for admission to first class citizenship in the U.S. was becoming white, giving up culture and customs to a large extent to blend in and thereby gain unearned advantage:

No one was white before he/she came to America. It took generations, and a vast amount of coercion, before this became a white country. ... America became white—the people who, as they claim ‘settled’ the country became white—because of the necessity of denying the Black presence, and justifying the Black subjugation. No community can be based on such a principle—or, in other words, no community can be established on so genocidal a lie (p. 178).

The shame surrounding this lie causes white people to have actual cognitive difficulties recognizing racist behavior (Mills, 2007). Because whiteness as context is hegemonic and omnipresent, lurking in background as the standard against which all systems and people are measured, “[w]hites cannot understand the world that they themselves have made” (Taylor, 2006, p. 74). Mark L. McPhail maintains racism is a “shame-based psychological phenomenon that is normative in Western societies by virtue of the counterfactual character of the moral and epistemological beliefs and values espoused and enacted by those societies” (McPhail & Frank,

2017, pp. 283-284). Shame comes from both our concern about how others view us as well as our own view of this, a loss of face (Robinson, 2016). Thus, those of us in white bodies continually work to save face by being “good people.” As such, shame hinders us from acknowledging we do know and see what Isabel Wilkerson (2020) calls the *grammar* of white-body supremacy, a set of systems, rules—a political alliance of sorts (Roediger, 2001)—and the baggage of beliefs that come with them that we innately know but cannot necessarily (and do not want to) define or describe.

White-body supremacy presents an “adaptive challenge” (Heifetz, 1994, p. 35) that we cannot fix through procedural or structural means because white society’s actions and structures do not align with our moral claims of equality and justice but with unspoken or unacknowledged beliefs about who and whose bodies matter. Consequently, even when these underlying white-body supremacy assumptions are exposed, they are immune to change or transformation (McPhail & Frank, 2017) because white shame makes us invest in *looking* “good” (p. 283) over addressing internalized white-body supremacy. Lewis R. Gordon (1995) explains this through an analysis of Sartre on consciousness: To be conscious, we must engage in some form of self-reflection, asking about what I see, do, and where I am. If one chooses not to admit what I see, do, or where I purportedly stand, this is bad faith or an effort to hide from myself or from my freedom and responsibility. When we white people worry about looking good, the external “look” does not match the internal existence; we abstract ourselves, hiding from ourselves and the internal state of our actual bodies and feelings. Thus, we cannot address our internal state; we are too invested in protecting it by hiding from it. This inability or unwillingness to be honest with ourselves about the structure of American society is what inclines some scholars to suggest whiteness is invisible.

Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek (1995) argue “‘White’ is a relatively uncharted territory that has remained invisible as it continues to influence the identity of those both within and without its domain...[it] resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours” (p. 291). Framing whiteness as invisible, however, allows for abstraction and “distance” from racism. Gordon (1995) argues that racism functions by making its “noxious values so familiar and frequent that they cease to function as objects of observation and reflection; they, in short, become so unreflective and so steeped in familiarity that they become invisible” (p. 38). This unreflective hyper-familiarity reinforces white fragility, allowing white-body supremacy to adapt, and, as McPhail (2017) and Menakem (2017) argue, racism to persist, which explains the difficulty in mapping its contours.

Roediger (2001) argues that whiteness studies as a project of white scholars continues to keep whiteness at the center of all things and ignores insights of people of the global majority. Other scholars (Ahmed, 2004; Flores, 2016; Frankenburg, 1997; hooks, 1997; Hunter, 2021) have pointed out that regardless of white people’s ostensible blindness to it, whiteness is “boldly apparent to those who do not [have it]” (Potapchuk et al, 2005, p. 53). Sara Ahmed (2004) posits that whiteness maintains its power over others by being seen everywhere at all times. Wilkerson describes our world as one where white people are continuously “surrounded by images of [our]selves, from cereal commercials to sitcoms, as deserving, hardworking, and superior in most aspects of American life” (Wilkerson, 2020, p. 268).

The invisibility of whiteness, then, is not so much an inherent quality as a need to keep the genocidal lie of white-body supremacy unquestioned or unnoticed. This is not automatic; it takes work as a contingent of the population does desire to keep white-body supremacy in place. Peggy McIntosh (2020) argues white bodies are taught to be blind to white privilege. Shannon

Sullivan (2006) agrees, “White privilege goes to great lengths not to be heard” (p. 5). Sullivan argues that rather than invisible, whiteness or white privilege is unconscious. The distinction is important: Habits are both in the mind (psychical) and in the body (somatic), and Sullivan argues against the binary dichotomies sometimes present in CRT and CWS, making the case that racism is both in the mind and body; it is in individuals as well as systems in the world we live. If white-body-supremacy manifests as habits, “things we do and say ‘without thinking’” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 4), this explains the functioning of whiteness as invisible even though it never has been.

Shona Hunter and Christi van der Westhuizen (2022) maintain that whiteness “has not been invisibilised everywhere,” nor has it ever been (p. 8). Frankenburg (1997) argues that invisibility happens only when whiteness achieves hegemony, which is never a fixed or stable state. Throughout U.S. history, from time to time, white-body supremacy has been outed, causing surprise and backlash from white bodies. Maggie Potapchuk et al. (2005) describe this experience: “it can feel like taking a solid hit in the gut, the floor dropping away from your feet, and many other experiences that one feels when the enormity of the negative impact of our actions is dropped squarely in our laps” (p. 53). Thus, the consequences of a white-body supremacist system and the resulting white fragility are not just about systems or in our minds; they are felt in our bodies.

Accounting for White-Body Supremacy

Our refusal to engage the body in addressing white-body supremacy allows for some antiracism strategies’ complicity with how whiteness operates rhetorically (Crenshaw, 1997). White fragility enables the belief that “racism is an aberration in American society,” which manifests in a “psychological resistance to social and institutional change” (McPhail & Frank, 2017, p. 285). Cheryl E. Matais & Colleen Boucher (2021) argue identifying strategies of

whiteness requires active avoidance of a Western, colonial epistemological standpoint. If we return to Kendi (2020), who defines *biological antiracist* as one who recognizes that race is a social construct as there are no genetic differences between and among people, then Warren's argument (2001) that "race comes to exist through our expression of it" includes the body: White-body supremacy is "constituted through the repetition of acts, verbal and nonverbal, that continue to communicate difference" (pp. 460-461).

Nakayama and Krizek (1995) argue for exposing "whiteness as a cultural construction as well as the strategies that embed its centrality" (p. 297) as a means to baring the rhetoric of whiteness to understand how white-body supremacy shapes our everyday lives. In his principle of specificity, Michel Foucault (1972) posits that discourse is a violence we do to things or impose upon them, thus giving them their regularity. To examine this, we must engage in Foucault's principle of exteriority, not burrowing into some "hidden core of discourse," but examining the appearance and regularity of discourse to identify its "external conditions of existence" (p. 229). We must also recognize the political technology of the body, the ways in which "the body itself is invested in power relations" (pp. 36, 38) and in which power relations are written on the body.

Matais & Boucher (2021) argue for a critical study of whiteness rather than critical whiteness studies, which must operate from two premises: White-body supremacy operates at all times, and studying whiteness must enable us to understand clearly how people of the global majority are oppressed. Such study must also examine the "direct behaviors, rhetoric, or emotions of whites themselves" (p. 5), which includes taking the body into account. Alice McIntyre argues we can identify specific, predictable discursive patterns whites use, "white talk" when asked about connections between white privilege and institutional racism (Bailey, 2015).

McIntosh (2020) identifies five myths that keep white-body supremacy in place, “creating the psychological underpinnings for whites’ refusal to face racism” (p. 57). These myths—manifest destiny, meritocracy, white racelessness, monoculture, and white moral and managerial superiority (2020)—offer a useful framework around which to categorize identified strategies of the rhetoric of whiteness.

Manifest destiny promotes the notion of “divine right”; that is, white people had a God-given right to settle the continental United States, initially through the Doctrine of Discovery, which became Manifest Destiny in the U.S. McIntosh (2020) argues this robs whites of any moral or ethical awareness of living on stolen land. Rhetorical strategies that arise from this myth are the notion that whiteness represents nationality, being American is being white (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995); whiteness is patriotism and masculine for defense of the country (Crenshaw, 1997); and whiteness is universal, which makes all whites “insiders” (Jackson, 1999). White-body supremacy presupposes white people are the universal standard as ordained by God (see Kendi, 2016).

Ironically, the meritocracy myth operates from the opposite perspective: It is not God, but the individual as the unit of society who is responsible for whatever they do or do not have. This assumes social systems or circumstances have no bearing on people’s experiences and thus denies existence of any systems of privilege or oppression (McIntosh, 2020). Rhetorical strategies that arise from this myth are viewing whiteness as a scientific classification with no attachment to history (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995); promoting ideologies of individualism and objectivity that manifest in “color-blind statements” (DiAngelo, 2018); and making whiteness “guilty and fair* space,” which assumes through white-body supremacy standards that all people

* Given the multiple and potentially confusing connotations of “fair,” I will use “open” in its place when referring to this strategy in the following chapters.

are alike regardless of social positioning (Jackson, 1999).

White racelessness, which, like meritocracy, allows white people to detach from any sort of social positioning and perhaps provides safety or an escape hatch from the discomfort of acknowledging race. Numerous rhetorical strategies fall into this myth: an active silence that refuses to acknowledge white advantage (Crenshaw, 1997) as white people refuse labels (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995); negative definitions as white people define ourselves by what we are not, “Other” or having color (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995), a form of definition by dissociation (Crenshaw, 1997); incompleteness manifested through difficulty defining terms such as “American” or “citizenship” because we see whiteness more as an identifier rather than a racial identity (Jackson, 1999); othering, defining race as a characteristic of non-white Others (Crenshaw, 1997); code language such as using “crime” to mean “Black” or “immigrant” to mean “Brown,” which absents whiteness by avoiding mentioning, identifying, or speaking of whiteness (Frankenburg, 1997); deflection by shifting the conversation focus to class, gender, an individual or group (Frankenburg, 1997); and rhetorical silence through reluctance to bring up race or racism (Crenshaw, 1997).

Rhetorical silence rests on the assumption of whiteness as universal, which masks privilege by masking the existence of whiteness itself (Crenshaw, 1997). This silence undergirds the monoculture myth, the U.S. as a melting pot that assumes assimilation into a single American culture experienced more or less in the same way by all (McIntosh, 2020). Rhetorically, this happens when white subjects perform whiteness as normalized in daily life, popular culture, and in academia (Frankenburg, 1997). It also happens enthymematically, where people rely on connections, the sense “we all know what this means,” rather than explicitly describing the subject at hand (Crenshaw, 1997), assuming we all experience American culture in relatively

similar ways.

The assumption of a universal American experience contributes to the myth of white moral and managerial superiority: Whites see it as natural to be in charge of the world and its affairs (McIntosh, 2020), which excuses accountability for our thoughts and words, our bodies, our actions and movements, our consumption and pollution. Nakayama and Krizek (1995) argue that rhetorically whiteness is power. Ronald L. Jackson II (1999) identifies this power in transcripts of white students at historically Black universities; whiteness is immutable for these students who do not believe they have the time, age, or maturity to consider their white identity and do not see such self-reflection as necessary. This type of privileged power allows us to claim innocence in the face of racism, often labeled as “unintended,” and to blame others for racial trouble (Crenshaw, 1997). Others here are identified as outsiders, either those not white or extremists. Despite a rise in overt acts of racism in recent years, a fair number of us cling to the rhetorical strategy of attributing racism to white supremacist groups (Gordon & Crenshaw, 2004) as a way to distinguish ourselves or “the mainstream” from extremism. This strategy allows us to dissociate from others in our same group, something not afforded to people of the global majority.

Distancing leads to apologia, which suggests we feel a moral superiority to have the right to apologize for the group. Dexter B. Gordon and Carrie Crenshaw (2004) identify various ways apology manifests rhetorically. In addition to invoking a rhetorical silence that denies any problem, we rest on the notion that we are not responsible for slavery today as it happened before our lifetimes and before some of our ancestors’ lifetimes; we believe we have evolved out of such a racist structure. We admit apologies will not repair ongoing “injustice” (white-body supremacy) and just want to move without any commitment to a change in material white

advantage. The strategies of apology render whiteness an uninterrogateable and immutable space: We do not see a need to change or adjust ourselves or our behavior or a need to account for ourselves in our interactions with cultural others unless it is comfortable for us to do so (Jackson, 1999).

Further evidence of white moral superiority manifests in white speakers attributing our goodness to the content of our messages regardless of how they are delivered (Bailey, 2015). White fragility assumes lack of intent cancels out any impact of behavior (DiAngelo, 2018). Yet to understand how whiteness operates, we must examine how any claim we make rhetorically functions in conversation. Impact is what counts: how words, silences, and behaviors land on recipients' bodies (DiAngelo, 2018). While most strategies of whiteness focus on language, I want to add to the conversation by examining whites' language in tandem with how our bodies communicate and account for our whiteness.

Ignoring intentions ignores the presence and importance of the body in communication. Reading bodily comportment allows for identifying if not strategies of, at least manifestations of whiteness. The content of a message from a white body ill at ease, restless, fearful, or anxious belies the unconscious habit of whiteness and its supposed moral and managerial superiority. Nonverbal cues such as white bodies tightening or withdrawing, white hands tensing up or white eyes darting around for a safe place to look or exit (Bailey, 2015) signal whiteness uncomfortable with or unable to account for its own reality. McIntosh (2020) argues that examining how white bodies respond to assertions that our place in the world is arbitrary from our birth even though our position at birth provides us with orientations to different hierarchies in society can expose the shaky ground our internalized superiority rests on.

Mark L. McPhail and David A. Frank (2017) call for rhetoricians to “assertively

investigate and interrogate the discursive dimensions of racial difference and identity” (p. 290) in service of exploring racial reconciliation and abandoning what Charles Mills (1997) calls the Racial Contract. Since systems are comprised of individuals, studying vernacular discourse of specific contexts and individuals provides an opportunity to analyze the systemic from the inside out. I accept Nakayama and Krizek’s invitation to become reflexive (1995) by marking the ways white people account for ourselves both in word and in flesh, recognizing not only symbolism of whiteness in language, but the materialism of whiteness in the body.

In examining how these patterns of white-body supremacy manifest in social transactions, we must look not just at verbal discourse, but also at the body’s role in “rituals, spoken words, silences, grimaces, reactions, signs and symbols, body gestures, gazes, projections, denials, myths, and complex emotions” (Yancy, 2015, p. xi). Sullivan (2006) argues for a both/and approach: To change large, impersonal systems requires digging up the roots of racism planted in our individual, psychosomatic habits, beyond or beneath the rational mind.

The Body’s Role in Racism

While Kendi and most CRT and CWS scholars view racism through (Western) cognitive and political frames, Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) argues,

...all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is, a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth...You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body (p. 10).

Menakem (2017) agrees, arguing that for the past 30 years efforts to address white-body supremacy haven’t succeeded because efforts have focused on the mind while white-body supremacy “lives and breathes in our bodies” (p. 5). Understanding the body’s role requires challenging the disembodiment, the Cartesian duality of mind/body, that pervades Western

culture (Berila, 2016). A. Abby Knoblauch and Marie E. Moeller (2022) argue that as the brain is part of the body, the body is part of the mind; gut is mind. This notion of gut as mind originates from an understanding of the vagus nerve, what Menakem calls “the soul nerve” (2017, p. 138), the longest nerve in the body. It reaches most of the body, and its largest part with more neurons than the entire spinal cord is in the gut. Most of the soul nerve’s work happens outside our consciousness (Menakem, 2017).

Sherry Shapiro (1999) cites Peter McLaren as advocating that the body doesn’t just incorporate ideas, but also generates them; it generates knowledge (Calafell, 2020), the theory in the flesh (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981), which arises from our soul nerve. So while our discourse shapes our thinking, it is also the materialization of symbols in social structures (Shapiro, 1999) and rhetorical energy present in the body: physical actions, facial expressions, and gestures (Robinson, 2016). Robinson (2016) argues that for Aristotle as interpreted by Jeffrey Walker, rhetoric is always “affective-becoming-conative-[and sometimes becoming] cognitive” (pp. 128-129). It is critical to note from a somatic perspective that rhetorical affect does not always become thought although it is always embodied.

As creatures who have bodies, we are always *embodied*. Shapiro (1999) argues that *embodiment* is the process by which our bodies become the vehicle for socialization. Yet if we accept Douglas Robinson’s and Menakem’s somatic approach, we are often largely unaware (or unconscious) of this process and its workings. The body is text, social and relational, always mediated by interaction with other human bodies (Knoblauch & Moeller, 2022). As such, it contains imprints and manifestations of power and ideology (Berila, 2016). Rhetoricians (Garrett, 2011; Flores, 2016) argue that rhetorical meanings circulate on and around bodies that, regardless of their actions, are already raced. Much as we may try, we cannot escape this as

others' perceptions of us in the world impact how they relate to us, which impacts our lived experience (Garrett, 2011); as Robinson (2016) argues, perception is reality. If our bodies, however, are “brilliantly complex systems that operate in a myriad of ways *beneath* the layers of our consciousness and *before* we have rational thought” (Berila, 2016, p. 41), our perceptions arise from something much deeper than cognitive consciousness, the aforementioned “affective-becoming-conative-[which sometimes becomes] cognitive” (Robinson, 2016, pp. 128-129). This is the unconsciousness Sullivan (2006) describes.

Somatic theory posits that we begin with emotions and desires (affect); they turn into motivation (conation), often from normative or conformational pressure—the perceptions, expectations of others or group assumptions and norms—that are “so bodily that we hardly even notice it happening” (Robinson, 2016, p. 130). Thus, approaching antiracism primarily with an intellectual lens through policy or education allows oppression “to remain deeply entrenched in our very beings” (Berila, 2016, p. 41), which accounts for the adaptive nature of white-body supremacy McPhail & Frank identify. Erik A. Garrett (2011) argues the study of racism is “dirty business” (p. 14) because it reveals to us things we would prefer not to know about ourselves: To combat this, we must understand the nuances of lived, racialized embodiment.

Menakem argues that white-body supremacy is trauma passed down intergenerationally and “quite literally lives in our bodies, our cells, and the expression of our genes. This is the case for bodies of all skin tones; bodies of colour are not exempt” (quoted in Hunter, 2021, p. 353). If we accept Heidegger's premise that our human condition relies on understanding that we carry our history into the present (Shapiro, 1999), we understand this happens through our genetics, our bodies. Citing Menakem, Hunter (2021) contends white-body supremacy requires a denial of the history of human connection. This state of *disembodiment*—white people's unawareness of

our bodies' role in socialization—which relies on the Cartesian duality of mind/body, limits our rhetorical perspectives, but as Knoblauch and Moeller (2022) posit, attention to bodies can help us recognize the rhetorics we push outside the margins.

Similarly, Karma R. Chávez (2018) argues close attention to rhetors' and critics' bodies can enhance critical judgment and widen the focus of rhetorical practices. Indeed, as Shapiro (1999) explains, we have not been serious in theorizing the relationship between individual and society, which requires bridging theory and experience, mind and body, rational and sensual. In short, we need to come into our bodies. Only then will we be able to access and understand our unconscious acceptance of established interpretations of the world and “normality.” Without this bridge of the body, we fail to recognize the hegemonic colonial consciousness embedded within our perceptions and interpretations, perpetuate coloniality, and limit our human potential (Shapiro, 1999). But before we can unlearn the systems of oppression rooted in us, we must unearth them. Berila (2016) compares this process to weeding a dandelion: If we only attend to the top of the plant, the flower and perhaps stem just below the soil, we never access the “root system of oppressive ideologies” (p. 41), and the weed resprouts.

Unearthing the roots of oppression first requires attention to bodies to understand power relations. Chávez (2018) calls for a recognition of how we view and understand bodies, either as abstract or actual, as these views shape societal power relations. Established interpretations of the world and current rhetorical perspectives are associated with white male bodies, rhetors and rhetoricians whose bodies are validated and invisibilized (Chávez, 2018); they are abstracted and thereby absented from attention, both to themselves and others. [The passive voice in the preceding sentence provides a model for this sort of absenting abstraction.] Thus, disembodiment or unintegrated, abstracted white bodies use position (or absence) to dictate power relations. bell

hooks (1997) describes this phenomenon, “[i]n white supremacist society, white people can ‘safely’ imagine that they are invisible to black people since the power they have historically asserted, and even now collectively assert over black people accorded them the right to control the black gaze” (pp. 168-169). These abstracted white bodies then engage in attention to actual bodies as a form of power and control, “consistently marking and racializing others” (Frankenburg, 1997, p. 6).

Paradoxically, as absented white bodies, we also engage in abstracting bodies of the global majority, expecting them “to assume the mantle of invisibility, to erase all traces of their subjectivity...so that they could be better—less threatening—servants” (hooks, 1997, pp. 168-169). While hooks refers here to Black people in the periods of slavery and Jim Crow, the use of white-body supremacy to erase or abstract Other bodies that do not fit its paradigm persists. When global majority bodies are at a sufficient distance to be perhaps curious but ultimately irrelevant in the white world (see Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2022), we tend to abstract them to maintain distance as in the case of reducing people to statistics. Second, when others’ bodies are too close for comfort, often seen as dangerous, we tend to objectify them, a process of dehumanization that subjects them to inquiry either to increase or create a sense of distance or control. Thus, abstracted whiteness and white bodies work both to other and erase bodies of the global majority as necessary to maintain white-body supremacy’s systems of oppression. This reduction to abstraction is “a totalizing move...[that] enforces and animates systemic oppressions” (Chávez, 2018, p. 248).

Despite the deeply seeded roots of racism, Kendi (2020) argues all people engage in the struggle to “be fully human and to see that others are fully human” (p. 11). Sikh civil rights lawyer and activist Kaur (2020) contends this struggle to be fully human necessitates an

individual's ability to wonder about others—attention to and engagement with actual bodies, our own and others'—acknowledging each individual “[is] a part of me I do not yet know” (p. 7). This is the antithesis of oppressive dehumanization, which requires dissociating from embodied experience (abstraction), making it easier to hate and harm others, which in turn dehumanizes the one committing harm (Berila, 2016).

Kaur's wonder requires a generosity of spirit, accepting other bodies as fully human regardless of their race, position, orientation, or culture. It is a relational understanding of actual bodies that forms our sight (Berila, 2016). This energy, from Aristotle's *energeia*, a “working within,” is synonymous with *entelekheia*, entelechy or soul (Robinson, 2016); it is a realization of potential, both in ourselves and others, which makes us human. The language that emerges from embodied living demands we “listen to our bodies, feel our emotions, release our passions, and reunite our critical powers of thinking with our feelings in hopes of a fuller humanity” (Shapiro, 1999, p. 27).

Embodied living requires what I will call integration—integrated embodiment or integrated embodied living—by which I mean how aware we are of our (and others') actual bodies and the messages they communicate to us, or an awareness of the body's rhetorical energy (embodiment). Human beings are always embodied; we have and cannot escape our bodies. Embodiment, however, as a *process* of socialization is a continuum representing how aware we are of our bodies' role in intra- and inter-personal communication and human relations. The more integrated our embodiment, the more we attend to the messages of the actual body and the more likely we are to be aware of that which is typically unconscious or under the surface of thought, which in turn, allows us to be more aware of and sensitive to others' bodies and experiences.

Bernadette Calafell (2020) celebrates the performative turn in rhetoric for centering others' identities. Yet it is a mistake not to engage whites in returning to our bodies, not as a way to reify whiteness but to seek the potential knowledge we may gain "about embodiment, affect, reflexivity, and decoloniality that previous approaches may have not attended to" (Calafell, 2020, p. 413). Engaging whites in a return to our bodies requires a communicative praxis that integrates embodiment and necessitates the Aristotelian turning in to transform ourselves and collective society (Berila, 2016). Because such praxis is both collective and individual, it requires a study of the vernacular to unearth the nuances buried in our bones.

Methodology: The Vernacular

Much of the literature on strategies of whiteness is either theoretical or broad in nature, covering general strategies of whiteness, or it examines particular instances in which strategies of whiteness are at play. These instances tend to be from public realms, politics or media, rather than from particular, localized settings. While these investigations are important, they miss out on the fact that while white-body supremacy operates within systems, it is made up of individuals who either explicitly or complicitly maintain these systems through individual every day words, bodies, actions, and inactions. Gerard A. Hauser (2022) calls these "mundane transactions of words and gestures that allow us to negotiate our way through our quotidian encounters" (p. 11) the vernacular. And while these conversations are not in the public sphere, we engage with public problems through such exchanges.

Habermas's definition of public opinion as a shared awareness by a particular group in society also recognizes the context-specific nature of discourse; individuals of a group are sensitive to certain attitudes and beliefs, and public opinion encourages certain opinions and expressions while discouraging others (Hauser, 2022). Even as the prevailing "public opinion" of

the global north, white-body supremacy takes different forms in different places and contexts. Robert Asen (2015) argues that democracy affords an appreciation of the interplay between individual and community, and it is local communities that offer promising forums for examining discourse. Asen (2006) asserts that the sociability of citizenship, defined as a process of public engagement manifested through multimodal and everyday acts in a pluralistic public sphere, is context-specific.

In accordance with the need to locate white-body supremacy in specific, geographic contexts, Sara L. McKinnon et al. (2016) argue we need to collect and document as the first step to identifying certain cultural processes, body knowledge, and embodiment, which are often difficult to access solely through texts. Hauser (2022) argues for recovering our awareness of our vernacular discursive practices by considering how actual individuals, members of various publics, engage in discourse. This presumably allows us to understand how the vernacular shapes our public lives as citizens.

Like Hauser, I aim to explore vernacular discursive practices for how they shape our public lives (2022). Given that whiteness has often been presented as invisible despite its permeation of every facet of society, it seems necessary to interrogate how it operates in local, vernacular settings to understand the entrenched and often ignored impact of white-body supremacy. To do this responsibly without merely reifying white-body supremacy requires a fine-edged critical rhetoric. We must accept Kent A. Ono's charge to challenge approaches from continental and colonial ideas of critical rhetoric by addressing power as a fundamental dimension of social life (2011). Locating approaches of whiteness in their geographic and embodied specificity (Wanzer-Serrano, 2018) can allow for an understanding of how white-body supremacist power operates, shaping our communication practices and thus our lives.

In a discussion of ordinary democracy, Karen Tracy (2007) cites Iris Marion Young who ascribes four components to democratic talk: narratives, language choice, tropes, and greetings. James P. McDaniel and Bruce E. Gronbeck (2007) provide four imperatives—place, time, performativity, and the doxastic—for characterizing ordinary democracy, all of which add to the necessity for context-specific explorations. They conclude rhetoricians must examine the surface features of discourse—Foucault’s exteriority principle—to identify discernable patterns to develop interpretations of what is present and absent.

Gronbeck (2007) takes this a step further, applying Aristotle’s three characteristics of drama to understand rhetoric, discourse in the service of power, in vernacular settings. In exploring how whites account for our whiteness, it makes sense to explore *ethoi*, the verbal and physical maneuvers individual speakers use to construct themselves as worthy of or deserving a voice. We must also attend to *dianoia*, how individuals’ viewpoints are used in the practices of decision-making; and finally, we must attend to how the arrangement and interrelation of individual voices, bodies, and frames create *mythoi*, discursive formations.

Tracy (2007) contends ordinary speech is the mechanism by which people create and combine the public and social authority of discursive formations. In everyday settings, social membership and citizenship go hand in hand. We speak as citizens and neighbors, and in small or local societies, we may feel incredible pressure for social acceptance, which plays a role in how we act and interact. When social demands and civic autonomy are at odds (Tracy, 2007), they reinforce the adaptive nature of white-body supremacy. If, as Suzanne Marie Enck (2016) argues, rhetorical criticism provides the ability of “seeking (and sometimes growing) common ground with others in the hopes of producing ‘humility without humiliation’” (p. 93), then a study of the vernacular, what Rachel C. Jackson (2017) calls “local rhetorical inquiry” can be

used as a “decolonial research methodology” (p. 292). Studying how white-body supremacy manifests itself through individual white bodies accounting for our whiteness in localized public spheres can, ideally, provide an awareness of the not so invisible but often unconsciousness of whiteness to move white people closer to racial humility (DiAngelo, 2018).

To do this, I will examine and analyze how white bodies account for whiteness through the Village of Cooperstown Library’s *Looking in the Mirror: Cooperstown Reflects on Racism*. The antiracism series, sponsored by the Friends of the Cooperstown Village Library and the Cooperstown League of Women Voters, aimed to respond to George Floyd’s murder in the local, Otsego County, New York context. It took place on zoom between September 2020 and April 2021, and consisted of seven panel discussions: The first “History, Demographics, Current Issues” and last “The Next Steps” bookend explorations of five societal sectors: tourism, education, healthcare, arts and monuments, and law enforcement (Friends of the Village Library of Cooperstown, n. d.). The zoom environment is both helpful and challenging. Recorded videos allow for repeated access to participants’ rhetorical embodied discourse and performance. Given they were generally in the comfort of their own homes, however, it is impossible to ascertain whether participants would have acted similarly when put in the same physical and public space with other panelists who did not always look like them.

In the following chapters, I focus on four white-bodied participants in these public forums. Rather than use names, I have elected to identify the participants by their roles in Chapter 2 and by their initials in Chapter 3, corresponding with participants’ respective orientations toward white-body supremacy. While these were public events and remain available on YouTube, I want to avoid personalizing my analysis or targeting any of these individuals. As DiAngelo (2018) argues, viewing people through the “good” or “bad” binary reduces racism to

isolated acts, an abstraction that facilitates racism’s adaptation (see also McDermott, 2023); it dehumanizes people and fuels the shame that “reinforces adaptive impulses and results in denial, projection, and an investment in innocence and moral neutrality” (McPhail & Frank, 2017, p. 284), all of which reify white-body supremacy. Rather than reduce and abstract people as “good” or “bad” individuals, my analysis seeks to identify patterns in their rhetoric.

I aim to use critical (textual) analysis through close reading, supported by grounded theory. This means I first identify or “*define* what is happening in the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46) by naming data chunks to categorize, summarize, and account for each piece of data, what Kathy Charmaz (2006) calls initial coding. A number of scholars (Calafell, 2020; Garrett, 2011; Marinelli, 2016; Werner, 2017) argue for a rhetorical engagement with or study of the body in communicative acts. Thus, the initial coding process simultaneously explores language about whiteness that employs, invokes, describes, or suggests the body as well as physiological indicators (Marinelli, 2016) or material symbolic actions (Werner, 2017) that accompany the language used to identify “patterns of action and interaction” (Sandel et al., 2019, p. 56). Then I examine the initial coding to identify the most significant and/or frequent codes (Charmaz, 2006)—focused coding—to identify categories or territories, in this case, strategies of whiteness. Using initial and focused coding, I look for patterns in the data, overlaps and distinctions in the ways different white bodies employ strategies of whiteness and to what effect. Examining the interplay of dynamics between language and the body allows for an organic identification of whiteness strategies and leads, ideally, to emergent themes (Jackson, 1999), stances. Identifying how and what kind of stances various participants take can help us understand the body’s role in racism and how to use it to dismantle white-body supremacy.

Chapter 2: Whose body matters? Unintegrated embodiment, abstract and absent bodies

While we are always in our bodies, the western Cartesian frame privileges the mind, so we are often unaware of our bodies or at least the charge and power of rhetorical energy we each carry within. White-body supremacy is a narrative discourse privileging white male bodies as the standard for humanity, the abstract ideal for all to achieve, purportedly representing concepts such as beauty and power, safety and validity. This abstraction distances white males as irreproachable and therefore, untouchable whereas the white (male) gaze either objectifies bodies of the global majority as objects for inquiry, or it abstracts them as curious but ultimately irrelevant when distant enough (see Skinner-Dorkenoo et al., 2022) and thus also invisible while in plain sight. Living in a society that privileges the abstract body over the actual body disconnects us from the nuances of the stories buried in our bones; this is where racism lies.

We cannot unlearn systems of oppression rooted in us until we unearth them. We cannot enact a theory in the flesh without engaging an entelechy “working within” the flesh, both ours and others’, to understand the stories that create the nuances of lived, racialized embodiment. In this chapter, I analyze how a marketing director contracted by Otsego County and a village police chief give accounts of whiteness on the tourism and law enforcement panel discussions. Both participate on their respective panels in their professional capacity, which presumably makes them worthy of having a voice in respective conversations; and they create their ethoi through the lenses of space and institutional power respectively. While a professional role is one aspect of an individual’s identity, it also offers a screen or persona behind which to hide—we all play various roles in the course of our lives—which can afford a distance or abstraction from the individual self and its body. Both the marketing director and village police chief maintain this abstract, professional distance during their remarks, so I will refer to them (throughout) by their

respective titles. I attend to the interplay between their verbal and physical performances to show how white bodies disconnected from the flesh, through abstraction and erasure of either our own or others' bodies, can only partially account for our whiteness and end up reinforcing the discourse of white-body supremacy. First, I examine how this professional distance shapes both participants' social stance on racism through paired, seemingly contradictory strategies—open and guilty space, uninterrogateable space and whiteness as power, absencing whiteness. Then I look at how both take a moral stance through strategies of shifting focus and claiming innocence. Finally, I look at how the moral stance also becomes a political stance betraying a lack of commitment to real change in white privilege, another whiteness strategy.

Examining Social Stance: The Language/Abstraction

Both the village police chief and marketing director use their professional positions to establish an ethos that takes a stance on social order on their respective panels. Neither mentions their name—this has been done at the opening of the panel—or any facet of their identity beyond their professional role. Both have been asked to participate in their capacity as professionals, which affords them an assumed and thereby validated ethos about the panel topic, tourism or law enforcement; they do not, however, necessarily have any established relationship with or ethos regarding the series' topic of racism, which allows them to remain distant and somewhat disconnected from the panels' primary purpose.

If accounting for our whiteness requires a capacity to wonder and access vantage points or narratives outside ourselves (Kaur, 2020), representing a profession, an abstract concept, rather than a person, an actual body, also limits participants' possibilities for responding to and accounting for whiteness. First, they have lost touch with their bodily identities, making it difficult to connect with other bodies' humanity; this makes it difficult to wonder about others.

Second, the focus on their professions means the stance they take is one on social *order* through lenses of space and institutional power. The concept of order here is a western, Eurocentric narrative. Third, in the U.S., the enunciative principles and associated fields (Foucault, 1989) surrounding marketing and policing are historically rooted in the abstraction of white-body supremacy, resulting in participants employing paired, contradictory whiteness strategies as they work to account for whiteness.

The village police chief begins his initial statement thanking the moderators for the invitation and grounding his authority in his institutional position as police chief, a role which represents and reinforces whiteness as power while simultaneously absencing whiteness. The chief has not introduced himself either by name—the moderator has just addressed him as by his shortened first name—nor by his title; he assumes this to be understood, the “naturalized dominance” of institutional (whiteness as) power (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995), that facilitates a distance from actual bodies and their experiences. The chief’s opening remark seems to suggest an intimacy, “it’s nice to hear all your stories and...get different...insights to what’s going on in our community.” Narrative form allows us to make meaning and significance out of social life (Fisher, 1984), and it is through stories we establish the Burkean identification that allows for consubstantiality, an “acting-together” in community (Hochmuth, 1952). In his role as one who imposes and maintains social order, a managing of people, through institutional power, however, the chief does not engage with the community in consubstantiality. While he acknowledges other voices and stories, which he would not have if not in attendance, he remains largely disconnected from the community; he chooses not to engage with the stories and insights, turning instead to statistics as his focus. This creates a different narrative from which he can act, but not before first acknowledging racism.

Even with his declaration “acknowledg[ing] the fact that racism still exists in our community and across this nation,” the village police chief erases himself. First, he focuses on the systemic, an intellectual abstraction often used to absent individuals’ complicity in racism. By immediately declaring “there is a problem in policing...we need to rectify those things,” the chief can maintain control, a necessity for both his job and the power of whiteness, as he appears to be open to fixing the problems. Any possibility of action, however, is erased moments later when the chief returns discussion to the local community, “whether in Otsego County [racism is]...perceived or real...we still need to...communicate with people.” Presenting racism as potentially just perception or fiction rather than concrete reality abstracts it as no longer actual. Here the chief abstracts others: Racism is only in their minds, not their bodies. He sees communication then as addressing only the mind, rather than including the body. By erasing his own and others’ bodies, he manages to evade needing to take action. Physically, however, the chief looks directly at the camera, providing a sense of authority, the power of whiteness, that presumably makes it difficult to question his suggestion.

Toward the end of his initial statement the village police chief notes the need to “pull back the law enforcement curtain,” which suggests transparency and visibility. This is not, however, a transparency of openness and presence with the community, its stories and insights, which requires some integrated embodiment; rather it is the transparency of a tool that serves to fix a problem. While tools interact with an environment for a purpose, they do not create relationship through shared stories with people. Instead, the chief works to shape the narratives the community has, informing it of the “ins and outs of police work,” which he maintains many people don’t understand. This allows the power of whiteness to assert its dominance through education, which protects and preserves social order. The chief’s stories help community

members identify with the police to preserve the discourse of policing. The affective implications of a storied understanding of what the police chief does communicate a rightness with the very institution he has admitted has problems that need attention. His focus on mind and intellectual understanding serve to maintain social order while distancing himself from the community, its stories, and its bodies.

Throughout his statement, the village police chief absents others through his interest in the first panelist's presentation of statistics as "an excellent starting point." He mentions statistics three times in his first statement, expressing a desire to dialogue with the first panelist about his presentation of statistics. In the chief's second statement, a response to a question, he returns to statistics another three times with similar emphasis. Numbers can be manipulated to tell the story or stories we want. The police chief's arguments that "you need to look into [statistics] a lot further," "I think you need to look into those," and "statistics are of value...but they do need to be...drilled down into" demonstrate he has a definite narrative about statistics, their use and value, which his authority as a police chief presumably defines and supports. The paradoxical interest in and suspicion of statistics provide the chief opportunity to abstract both police and citizen actions, which allows for some dismissal of the numbers and thus any perception they expose racial problems between the police and the community. Fixating on statistics also facilitates the abstraction of actual bodies, particularly but not limited to those of the global majority; distance either renders them harmless or objectifies them as a problem for the social order in the town's white space. This is the power of whiteness, authority that dismisses concern when it does not, cannot, or will not address it.

At the end of his initial statement, the village police chief repeats his opening moves. He begins his closing with "so without taking up too much time." Keeping things brief allows him to

minimize attention to his white power. He dips his head and takes his eyes off the screen, a form of early exit. He then looks directly into the camera and declares “we’re doing the right thing” and expresses his pride for “law enforcement in Otsego County,” which reinforces the sense that racism and whiteness are not issues in this space. His erasure of his own body and racism limits his rhetorical perspective, blinding him to the power of whiteness he embodies despite absenting his body from view.

Like the village police chief, the marketing director begins her social stance with a “thank you,” before naming her title, executive director, and describing her company. The company name Destination Marketing provides the larger context for her remarks; her stance on social order derives from a lens of place and space. Cooperstown relies on its cultural rather than natural features for tourism, and the marketing director must respond to and manage this cultural, human space. In her initial statement, the marketing director directly names white space but cannot directly name white-body supremacy (racism). She begins by identifying Cooperstown, “our destination...our predominantly white destination.” As a major tourism center, Cooperstown acts as the hub in a wheel, generating norms and narratives about how small-town American life should be. The thisiscooperstown.com website boasts, “America’s Most Perfect Village...called America’s hometown” which offers “a great look into Americana” (Cooperstown/Otsego County Tourism, 2023). The superlatives (most perfect, great look) establish an innate sense of superiority, and the marketing director’s repeated use of “our” to describe the space suggests a sense of ownership, reinforcing the space as uninterrogateably white or privileged (guilty). While she claims the space, the first-person plural “our” puts her in a group, allowing a certain amount of anonymity and distance. She identifies the space of whiteness, not her own bodily whiteness.

Given the order of places preserves the order of things (Cicero, 1860), space in Otsego County provides both the context and challenge for the marketing director's work as she has been hired "to promote Cooperstown...as...an extremely welcoming" or open place. The contradiction between the abstract desire for a welcoming, open and shareable space contrasted with the actuality of a predominantly white space creates "somewhat of a challenging situation...with regards to this topic in particular." The marketing director struggles with connecting the social order of white space with white-body supremacy despite feeling the challenge the latter presents in her work. This challenge underscores the privileged nature of the space and its primarily white residents; they are not going to change, which makes it difficult for the marketing director to name "this topic," the issue of racism, directly to an audience that likely has some Cooperstown residents present. Whiteness attempts to absent itself through the coded language of "challenging situation" and "this topic in particular," which only reinforces its power. It does not have to give an account, or, rather, the marketing director does not know how to give an account for her own whiteness in the context of white space, which surrounds her.

Towards the end of her participation on the panel, the marketing director returns to the concept of open space, "to continue...to project a welcoming message to people of all races and ethnicities and genders..." She slows her speech, pausing between each word immediately before this utterance, suggesting the need to think; her words here are calculated, of the mind and what sounds appropriate rather than of the body and what she feels. While welcoming implies open, shareable space, "projecting...a message" suggests image over substance, demonstrating the need to cover the guilty space with a show of hospitality, lacking any veracity or depth. "Projecting" here intimates an abstraction or intellectual exercise. While bodies engage in this sort of performance, they lack any true communication of welcoming through an absence of any

true bodily engagement with others. The projection is a *message* of welcome, different than an actual, open-armed and open-minded welcome of the actual bodies of newcomers or outsiders as M.R.'s statements on the education panel reveal. Ahmed (2020) writes about the “non-performativity of antiracism” when words do not do what they say but instead preserve the prevailing white-body supremacy social order. In the marketing director's instance, however, the words do exactly what they say; they project image rather than deliver substance, which equates to non-performativity as the action of “projecting” prohibits meaningful interaction with others, a form of distance, disconnection, and disembodiment.

Examining Social Stance: Abstracting the Actual Body

After framing the conversation of social order around race in the abstract terms of statistics and language respectively, both the marketing director and the police chief shift to the physical, or actual bodies. The marketing director concedes that to “show that we have diversity in Cooperstown” she must “stage a photo shoot...almost have to go out of my way.” To make Cooperstown seem open space requires manipulating the space and engaging in tokenism. She worries that “if I get said photos,” when outsiders arrive, they will question, “where are all the [diverse] people?” Both statements expose the space's guilty, uninterrogateable nature, which requires the marketing director manage bodies in the space to be able to promote Cooperstown as welcoming. She does this partly by employing “a diverse crowd of travel writers,” half of whom are “non-white.” Even in a discussion of actual bodies, it is now the marketing director rather than the police chief who relies on numbers—50 percent—to demonstrate an attempt at inclusion or diversity. Using travel writers to maximum effect requires the marketing director write up itineraries to show them “all there is to do in Otsego County.” Yet she gives them “just a little bit of a taste of it” to make “sure that they have a good time so that they share that with their

readers.” Pairing writers up with their interests puts her in a position of objectifying and thereby controlling people’s bodies to ensure they fit in the social order of the space and communicate this to their readers. She gives writers a managed taste of Cooperstown, the abstracted, aesthetic version rather than an actual, bodily cultural taste of the town. Providing only a taste also allows for managing others’ movements and experiences: Living in uninterrogateable space, Cooperstown residents do not need to adjust their behavior for others.

The marketing director’s own physical body also communicates the nature of this space. After “photo shoot,” she shrugs her right shoulder as if to concede the space is not under her control; there are larger forces at work. This absents her position, exonerating her from any responsibility for the guilty nature of the space. Several times her arms come up off her desk to emphasize this point. She also looks away multiple times, unable to face an audience that is *at heart* (a bodily manifestation) not as welcoming as the village wants *to think* (an intellectual exercise) it is. White people find it challenging to admit to ourselves we are not what we think we are. The marketing director’s body bumps up against this buried or unconscious knowledge. It is never quite clear whether she has reflected on this as she projects her discomfort onto others’ bodies, those who upon coming to Cooperstown after viewing staged photos may be inclined to ask, “Where are all the people?” After uttering this question, the marketing director laughs again, a physical sign of the discomfort that “we’re in somewhat of a situation,” an abstraction that will lead the marketing director to take a stance on the moral order of Cooperstown.

The closer the marketing director gets to discussing actual bodies, the more uncomfortable she becomes. During her response to a question about the number of travel writers who, “represent minority publications or audiences,” the marketing director explains

travel writers are a new strategy “we’re just kind of getting into.” While she can share that the ratio of writers is “about 50 percent representation of white versus non-white,” she clearly feels uncomfortable. She notes “we can always work on getting more in,” suggesting an understanding that perhaps the 50-50 ratio may not be enough.

Three times in 24 seconds the marketing director puts her right arm and hand across her body to grab, pull, and stroke her hair on the left side of her face. Between the first and second times, she puts her right hand in a fist below her chin to rest it there. In the 41 seconds of response, she also looks off screen, down or to the side, five times. Discomfort may stem from the concession that “it’s just a matter of making sure that they’re interested in the topics...the attractions that we have...pairing them up with what we have to offer,” and most importantly, “making sure that they have a good time so that they share that with their readers too.” This management of actual bodies in the space to manipulate a good time for them may prove difficult for a town that boasts being “America’s Most Perfect Village... America’s hometown...a great look into Americana” (Cooperstown/Otsego County Tourism, 2023), a subtext of guilty and uninterrogateable white space.

While the marketing director seems uncomfortable with her need to manipulate people in guilty white space and perhaps with her own discomfort, the police chief is most animated and affectively engaged when discussing hypothetically actual bodies. He confesses his fear of defunding the police, “that frightens me to no end,” a logical response to an action that would diminish his authoritative social power as a white male. His closed eyes and head shaking now communicate his discomfort, allowable in white space given the threat to his position. He defends his stance by working to absent whiteness, “we’re here trying to stop racism and get police and the community relationships better...what’s the goal [of defunding police] and how is

that going to help racism?” In questioning the validity of the social position and highlighting the community intention to address racism through relationship, the chief absents himself personally. He also challenges structural change, the power of whiteness at work, by suggesting it does not support the social order of the panel or the police as a group and thereby him as well.

Shortly thereafter, the police chief engages with a question on de-escalation and use of guns as a last resort, “if the only thing I have for physical force is my firearm when I’m pushed up against the wall what am I going to have to use; it’s going to be my firearm.” He defends the choice to use a gun physically with a shrug of his shoulders on “what am I going to have,” suggesting this is not about whiteness or race—they are presumably absent from this survival situation—but about having no other option. A minute later, the chief will define “deadly physical force” and the parameters for using it, “the only time you can use...you have to be defending your life or another’s; there’s no other time that using a firearm is permissible.” Aside from using his right hand to scratch his right ear on “the only time you can use,” his physical demeanor remains unremarkable, matching his relatively even and informative tone. Despite his willingness to defend the power of whiteness through the use of firearms, his slow, stilted delivery of the last few clauses suggests a slight discomfort with the topic, understandable given this description touches on actual bodies and potential consequences of police engaging with them.

Several minutes later, however, the police chief engages in animated nostalgia that affectively communicates a conative thrill with white male physical power. He shares that he and the county sheriff are “from the age of...wheel guns...revolvers where the amount of ammunition you had on you is now what’s just in your handgun.” At the beginning of this statement, the chief has his head down as he leans forward to shift in his seat, perhaps

metaphorically communicating a shift in time. He smiles throughout this segment as he relates the contrast between his early days when “you had 18 rounds on your whole person” and now “we have close to 50 rounds on us.” The chief looks down and away from the camera on “18 rounds” but looks directly at the camera with raised eyebrows and shoulders on “close to 50.” He contrasts the power of modern-day policing and whiteness with a reminder of the past, “all you were given was a...nightstick...and your firearm,” during which he shakes his head and again raises his shoulders, suggesting a lack of control over circumstances police often find themselves in. This serves to absent whiteness as it highlights a presumed need for self-defense. The marketing director’s discomfort at having to reconcile the difference between white intellectual desire and the physical reality in Cooperstown allows her to imagine outsiders’ potential response to her actions; the chief, however, focuses only on his (or a police officer’s) experience and emotions, thus also centering the power of whiteness. This dissonance between absenting whiteness while asserting its power allows him to focus on training, a tool for reinforcing the (white) social order, as an improvement in policing as “you never got any more training” after the police academy in his day. His head shake affectively suggests law enforcement has evolved into a more refined and perhaps more virtuous institution since his early police years, a presumed absenting of white presence and power.

Both the village police chief and the marketing director avoid mentioning their personal social positionality in relation to racism, a lack of reflection that allows them to erase their bodies by never labeling themselves beyond their jobs. This is the power of whiteness at work, imposing a social order even as it absents white bodies already validated as mattering by virtue of their presence on the panels. This frame suggests the rules by which all people must play (Cavanecia, 2021): Whiteness need not be mentioned as it is the standard for order. In this way,

the chief and marketing director remain to varying degrees unconscious of the impacts of whiteness, the water in which we all swim (McDermott, 2023).

The body is not just present in the words the marketing director and police chief speak, however, it is also present on the screen. Kennedy (1992) argues that rhetoric precedes speech and interpretation is prior to intention; it is energy. Thus, a speaker's body language, sometimes called techniques of presence, plays an instrumental role in guiding "persuasivity" (Robinson, 2016, p. 131). As a high-ranking police official, the chief has been trained in the survival tactic of controlling his bodily sensations by overriding them, thereby distancing himself from community and projecting the presence of (white) power. Of the four panelists examined, he is the one who is most able to maintain a relatively direct gaze into the camera. This is tricky as most of us tend to look at the gallery of people on screen, eyes wandering, although the camera is above a computer's screen (Gunn, 2021). The chief, however, holds his head fairly high, a sign of dominance and control. He wears a light blue collared shirt; it is unclear whether this is part of a uniform as we see only a tiny portion. He is positioned so that only his head and neck are visible in the frame, slightly less than we see of the other three panelists' bodies. Unlike the others whose background is an office or home, a plain white curtain serves as the chief's background. He lacks any context that defines him or his position; his authority speaks for itself in the blank or empty space. This makes him a literal talking head on the screen, appearing disconnected from his body, mostly physically absented from the screen.

The police chief's words mirror this minimization: He keeps his initial statement brief—the shortest of the four panelists at three minutes, 40 seconds—and uses others' information to absent himself, "I don't want to take up a lot of time... a lot of information has already been given out." While this absents both physical and verbal presence, it also serves to highlight the

power of his male whiteness: He does not need to give an account for himself or the institution; others already have. Moments later when he notes racism still exists “across this nation,” the chief briefly lowers his head and eyes, physically absenting his gaze from the audience. While a fraction of a second, this glance away is a break in the override armor and hints that his body, too, has difficulty holding the charge of racism, a logical consequence of law enforcement’s training to survive and override the body’s urges in order to maintain control. This survival technique manifests the power of whiteness even as it works to erase the chief’s body from engagement, however minimally, with the audience. When he argues “you need to look into [statistics] a lot further, his eyes close on “you need,” suggesting a conative impulse not to look too closely. This erases any acknowledgment of numbers exposing problems with race. The police chief’s physical appearance and body language on screen serve both to presence and absent him and others as he engages in strategies of whiteness as power and absenting whiteness in his attempts to account for whiteness.

Like the police chief, the marketing director physically absents herself from the conversation albeit in different ways. In her job, the marketing director works behind the scenes, and her position does not require the time in the spotlight the police chief’s does. Furthermore, we see not only the marketing director’s head and neck, but also her shoulders. She sits at a desk in an office, a background that suggests her professional role. While she presents as calm and reflective, her body betrays the discomfort she feels engaging in any account of whiteness or white space. Without the chief’s law enforcement training, the marketing director does not have the same bodily control or ability to override. She therefore spends much more time physically absenting herself from the audience through movement and gesture.

When discussing the “situation,” the marketing director alternates between looking away

from the camera, sometimes pausing up to three seconds, and smirking or laughing. She looks away from the camera both before and after, “we are in somewhat of a challenging situation I have to say with regards to this topic in particular...” After this, she takes three seconds before looking back at the screen. When she mentions “our destination” the first time, she has a slight smirk on her face with squinted eyes, and she exhales almost, but not quite to a laugh. She will pause and look away. She will give a slight laugh after clarifying Cooperstown is “our predominantly white destination...that’s the situ—” and pause another three seconds shortly thereafter. The back-and-forth movement of avoidance and smiling laughter suggests an unresolved arousal-state (fight or flight), which is likely not intelligible to the marketing director as she cannot take definitive action (Walker, 2008) but has difficulty staying with her own thoughts and communicating.

Toward the end of her initial statement, when the marketing director discusses projecting a welcoming message, she raises her right hand to tweak and itch her nose, hiding her face from full view, a necessary erasure given her discomfort. Menakem (McDermott, 2023) argues that diversity, equity, and inclusion work never overtly asks the underlying questions: Diversifying from what, including in what? As the marketing director lists, “races and ethnicities and genders,” she looks down and off screen to the right; she cannot face the audience as she cannot directly name the interest in diversifying from the white standard of humanness in this uninterrogateable space.

The marketing director’s unsettled bodily activation is the charge of white fragility, what Menakem calls an indistinct vibe that white people sense but have no agility or language for (Breakfast Club, 2021). Her conative avoidance of looking directly at the camera affectively communicates her inability to reconcile the narrative of Cooperstown as an open space while her

conative smirk and laughter could communicate either a smugness in guilty white space—a manifestation of the privileged, guilty nature of all space in the U.S.—or discomfort with this space or at least the difficulty of her job in the space.

The marketing director is not alone, however, as most, or at least many, white people do not have inner resources to deal with the charge of race in conversation; we have not had to as we can “live in a racist society in [the] racial comfort” (Tippett et al., 2020) of white-body supremacy. We have been able to live mostly in the abstract world of the mind because our bodies have been normalized as the standard, allowing us to leave them behind metaphorically: The affective-becoming-conative does *not* become cognitive. For us white people, then, body language may not, in fact, be a technique of presence or hold energy in a white audience’s psyche (Walker, 2008) in the same way it does for people of the global majority. They have had to be sensitive to the environmental vibes given off by white bodies to survive in the system of white-body supremacy (Breakfast Club, 2021).

An audience of white bodies is likely to see and feel the bodily disconnect in the marketing director’s avoidance and discomfort as signs of danger and a need to steer clear of the topic of racism, an absencing and disconnect which perpetuate the very systems the zoom series aimed to open up and examine. While the police chief’s direct gaze at the screen works affectively to reassure those of us in white bodies that his authority is valid, it is rooted in override, not integrated embodiment. His stark, bodiless presence (absenting), like the marketing director’s body language, serves to disconnect him from the conversation of white-body supremacy and any embodied accounting of whiteness, thereby moving it to the background.

Both the village police chief’s and the marketing director’s social stances, grounded in their professional roles, keep them relatively disembodied and struggling to account for their

personal whiteness or complicity in white-body supremacist systems. Difficulty in accounting for whiteness makes it difficult to address. The chief's and the marketing director's stances on social order serve to preserve it and pave the way for them to address moral and political order in relationship to racism. Their bodies provide subtext to the claims of innocence and lack of commitment to any change in white-body supremacy's social order.

Abstracting Moral Stances

Both the village police chief's and the marketing director's stance on moral order derives from their professional stance on social order; they desire to be viewed as good individuals or institutions trying to better the community. They aim to achieve this by alternating the whiteness strategies of shifting focus and claiming innocence, which serve to preserve the social order's status quo. Similar to their stances on social order, the police chief will focus on the abstraction of numbers while the marketing director will focus on abstraction of language. Both their bodies however, work in affective and conative ways to communicate a disembodiment or lack of integrated embodiment around the charge of race.

For the marketing director, goodness rests in desire and intention (see Bailey, 2015; DiAngelo, 2018), "we don't want to be...false advertising, but we want to be welcoming." The concern over misrepresenting Cooperstown suggests a transparency and innocence. After the marketing director declares the desire to be welcoming, however, she looks down and away from the camera. Welcoming generally happens with eye contact between the welcomer and welcomed—open hearts have open eyes, so the look away affectively betrays the marketing director's words' non-performativity. She shrugs her right shoulder when emphasizing "try" in "we continue to try to do," intimating the effort may not be quite as wholehearted or embodied as desired; it is more likely a fiction imagined in the mind. But the attempt implies intention,

generally the measure by which the white community assesses its virtue when it comes to antiracism or not being racist (DiAngelo, 2018); thus, the marketing director presents her work as innocent.

When the marketing director mentions inviting travel writers as one “effort on our end...to be inclusive,” she looks down, away from the screen three times in this statement, suggesting perhaps her body understands that her claim of innocence through effort is not enough to account for white-body supremacy. Shortly thereafter, she includes the possibility of offering some sort of “sensitivity or diversity training.” Her head is down and shifts side to side on “sensitivity,” affectively communicating how potentially difficult and challenging this subject is to undertake for a relatively homogenous population. Without interaction and practice with actual bodies, Cooperstown’s white uninterrogateable space likely lacks anyone with the ethos to conduct such training. The marketing director’s (and the police chief’s) absencing of self from any personal responsibility or stake in whiteness and the lack of ethos around addressing racism raises questions about her ability to understand and address issues of sensitivity and diversity. She does not seem equipped, as most white people are not, to confront the underlying questions—sensitive to what? and diverse from what?—that would allow for a shift in perspective to see whiteness a little more clearly. From the marketing director’s professional perspective, whiteness is merely a challenge for her job, but not necessarily a problem in and of itself.

Moments later the marketing director discusses a training that prepares business owners and managers “with language and...efforts of inclusion.” This claim of innocence focuses on the abstract mind through words and on intention through gestures rather than concrete actions. She employs a trickle-down approach: Business leaders will pass “that information” down to

frontline hospitality workers, whom she identifies as Cooperstown’s “ambassadors...an extension of our community.” As ambassadors, frontline workers have an immense amount of communicative power when they interact with the larger community and visitors. The trickle-down approach, however, results in a slow dissolution of information as it passes through multiple parties; it simultaneously requires the marketing director and the town manager to ensure such workers are “aware and...able to be a good reflection.” Similar to her stance on social order, moral innocence here is achieved through the abstraction of language, efforts, and images—all of the mind, a hallmark of whiteness in uninterrogateable space—rather than through concrete bodily actions and actual shifts in perspective. The marketing director’s body reinforces this lack of embodied sensitivity as her head and eyes are often down off the screen as she speaks, an affective-conative avoidance of accounting for the emptiness of her words, resulting in a complete absencing of their possible realization.

For the village police chief, moral goodness rests in the abstraction of numbers, which serves to absent his body while also constituting him as a moral authority. Multiple times he draws on the county sheriff’s comments as support for his statements. This call to another authority suggests a need for back-up; echoing another voice of power implies a (white) power in numbers approach that serves to abstract the chief and give him moral authority in the space. He then uses his experience in law enforcement elsewhere in the U.S. to lend credibility to his account of working “with everybody in Otsego County” and concluding by claiming innocence for the group: “they’re an excellent law enforcement group.” Relying on numbers here serves to provide power and obscure individuals or individual responsibility for white-body supremacy.

The chief then shifts directly into data analysis and statistics to further claim Cooperstown’s innocence from racism, “from what we’ve looked into...” Immediately before

this, he has invoked the sheriff who can “attest to this.” He pauses for two seconds between “looked into” and making the case Otsego County does not have the problems of other departments around the nation. He follows up with “we’ve looked at stuff we’ve gone over past reports past complaints.” The nondescript, abstract “stuff” may be a grasping for words as the chief does mention actual specific documents, reports and complaints. Given the chief’s stance that Otsego County law enforcement is morally innocent, the integrity of such analysis and resulting account, however, may be questioned.

Focusing on statistics is in some sense an odd choice given Otsego County has two colleges in Oneonta, which increase population by about 6,000 fall through spring, and a tourist population, which increases Cooperstown’s population from 1,800 yearly residents to “probably 20,000 that come into our community from diverse people all around the country.” These seasonal fluctuations have the potential to make the numbers less relevant or more tricky than the chief admits. He cuts himself off, “not saying we don’t have to talk about how these discussions.” His comment here attempts to suggest he is open to discussion on racism. This, however, follows the chief’s statement on whether racism is real or perceived in the county. Thus, contextually, the chief’s words simultaneously imply less actual willingness to dialogue than the words suggest. From the chief’s professional perspective and from a white-body supremacy perspective, he can offer the conversation because his use of statistics allows enough abstraction to suggest the county has excellent law enforcement—the subtext of which is it has no problems with racism—and thus does not need to change.

The police chief will later further this claim of innocence by arguing that if one drills down into the statistics, the slightly higher African-American arrest rate was a response to “crimes in progress.” The chief employs the moral defense that police “didn’t actively look for”

people but “got a 9-1-1 call” which presumably exonerates police who respond to 9-1-1 calls, a regular feature of their job. The framing of these statistics others African-Americans, putting the onus of moral responsibility on those arrested for “crimes in progress.” With limited information, the audience has no way of knowing what other patterns the data may show: how many 9-1-1 calls are typical, how many are actually of “crimes in progress,” how many end in arrest, or how many officers are responsible for arrests of people of the global majority during responses to 9-1-1 calls. This, the chief argues, is better than the “red flag” of a hypothetical “heavy-hitter cop” who self-initiates “all his arrests with maybe minorities.”

The language “African-American” and “minorities” reflects a white view: Whites do not generally self-identify—the police chief never does, nor does he insert “white” between “heavy-hitter” and “cop” although it is assumed—and if we do, we generally do not hyphenate (European-American). While people of the global majority, and Black people specifically, are a minority population in Otsego County, this is not the case in other places in New York state or around the globe. The diction, however, does serve to further abstract and minimize the Black population in the county, whether residents or tourists passing through. Using the clearly problematic hypothetical “heavy hitter (white) cop” situation creates a contrast with the chief’s simplistic presentation of data to distance the Cooperstown department from any potential wrong doing. This abstraction through the safety of numbers and “drill[ing] down into” statistics allows the chief to assert moral innocence further: “we don’t seem to have the problems that a lot of other departments around the country have had.” This claim allows him to avoid any deep conversation about or accounting for Cooperstown or Otsego County law enforcement: In his view, law enforcement upholds the moral order, and officers are only doing their jobs.

Shifting the focus to other problematic police departments extends the police chief’s

moral innocence claims. His mention of federal intervention in police departments lacking diversity and his being so removed from Houston while working there stand in stark contrast to his “implementing...a community-based policing” in Cooperstown. Despite his ability to keep his eyes on the screen, his head dips down just before this utterance. He also pauses a second between “based” and “policing,” affectively communicating a break between community and the police, the complete opposite of community-based policing, which requires integrated embodiment respond-ability rather than reactivity to the community. Thus, it is not surprising the chief then chooses to defend those police and departments not engaged in community-based practices because “we’re human.” The chief claims disconnected police officers like those in Houston, who may not live in the community in which they work, “aren’t not [invested in a community they don’t live in].” Their disconnection rests on “human nature”; they do not live side by side with the community members whose space they occupy and police.

This notion of human nature is the same reactivity of Otsego County officers who deal with the actual bodies behind 9-1-1 calls. In a white-body supremacist culture, this human nature is whiteness’s nature—the subtext here is the common defense for violence, “I feared...[for my safety, my property, my life]...”—which has permission to strike in reactive self-protection regardless of the threat level. Fear is a powerful motivator. Affective becomes conative and action but not cognitive as the violence in police interactions with the community are not necessarily commensurate with the threat level. The police chief’s use of the double negative “aren’t not” to communicate the positive and his several downcast glances suggest white human nature is less innocent than the chief wants us to believe. At some level, even he has some sense these claims of innocence do not account for whiteness or hold the moral merit with which he attempts to infuse them.

The police chief's focus on community-based policing aims to give credence to his moral claims of innocence. He admits a "need to get back to [community-based policing]," which presumably stopped because of COVID. His qualifier "kind of" in "we kind of were there for a while," does raise questions as to the depth of the department being "in touch...with the people in the community," so that they trust and can talk openly to police. The chief, however, quotes a previous panelist, asking, "will you have that uncomfortable conversation sometimes it needs...to be done." This appears to be a willingness to engage in work below the surface of abstraction and statistics, but the chief's eyes are down for much of this statement, suggesting his inability to engage fully or bodily in this process. Thus, all his statistics merely serve to abstract and distance the chief, bodily and morally, from any actual engagement in or responsibility for true community-based policing.

Similar to the village police chief's focus on abstract statistics to make moral claims of innocence, the marketing director focuses on history. She believes bringing Native American "history to the forefront" would help "the local perception." It is unclear whether she means the perception of those who live in Cooperstown or of those who come visit. Either way, she abstracts and erases Native Americans here, making them distant enough in history to be a safe object of inquiry. When the marketing director mentions "Native American," she looks away from the screen further suggesting a distance between her and any actual bodies. Perhaps because of the Fenimore Museum, which boasts the Thaw Collection of American Indian art with 901 objects in it, she relies on history rather than any acknowledgment of indigenous Americans in the Cooperstown area. For the marketing director, this history, not actual bodies in the present, is "one more step in acknowledging that there's work to do." She looks down from the screen, which suggests the guilty and uninterrogateable nature of the space. This leads her to

claim innocence by concluding with a defensive white fragility, “we’re not starting out from...scratch; this is something we’ve been working on and continue to work on.” She smiles throughout this segment as if to communicate a knowing with the audience in the goodness of such work; intention rather than action in morality is what counts (DiAngelo, 2018).

The marketing director thanks participants for the open dialogue as a tool for self-assessment and sharing with her team, suggesting further moral innocence. Physically, the marketing director looks down here, maintaining a distance from actual contact with the audience, suggesting self-assessment and accounting are a challenge. Given her defensive stance that we are and have been doing something, her avoidance of looking directly at the screen may indicate a less deep or self-reflective engagement than stated. If “shame is in the eyes” (Robinson, 2016, p. 140), the marketing director suffers doubly because she must not only defend herself in her own eyes, she is physically in others’ eyes, not only of those she may know, but on a zoom screen with strangers looking in on her performance. They are assessing her moral purity based on her stances. In this case, intent and image are more important than result or actual account. The marketing director’s and the police chief’s stance on social order through their distant, professional lenses facilitates their shifting focus to abstract and make moral claims of innocence.

Avoiding Political Action through Abstraction

The marketing director and the village police chief have difficulty in accounting for their individual or for collective whiteness. This leads them to defend stable social and moral orders, which they view as happening through welcoming intent and good law enforcement in Cooperstown. The notion that the Cooperstown community is innocent of white-body supremacy consequently leads the marketing director and the police chief to a stance on political order that

lacks commitment to real change in white privilege, another common whiteness strategy. No real political account need be made if social and moral orders are preserved.

From the beginning of her initial statement, the marketing director has difficulty accounting for whiteness. This begins with her inability to name racism as she refers to the “challenging situation...this topic...where we’re at right now...somewhat of a situation.” Looking away from the screen before or after each one of these enthymematic phrases suggests an inability to get to the embodied heart of the issue, racism, without which deep and lasting change is not possible. The marketing director plays to the assumption that most of her audience is white and understands her coded references to the situation, a lack of different bodies in the uninterrogateable white space. Because the marketing director looks from an abstracted professional lens she maintains a distance from the problem, which ultimately keeps her from the type of Burkean identification of “heart sensitive to the suffering of others” (Robinson, 2016, p. 107) that allows for personal, social, political change.

The marketing director’s stance on moral order values intention over action, which results in little commitment to real change because intention takes the place of any political action for change. The marketing director’s insistence that racism has been on her company’s radar without reflection on progress—“this is something we’ve been working on and continue to work on”—suggests “the work” rather than results is important. The need to do her job and the pressure to conform to community assumptions and norms—which she has clearly identified as white—conflict, making it difficult to forge a path forward merely with policy or technical changes.

Both the marketing director and the police chief use budgets to defend a lack of action in the current moment. While the pandemic’s impact on economics is indisputable, both rely on this

as a deferral strategy. In white society, our money reveals our values. Lack of money reveals, as the marketing director will eventually concede, a lack of community buy-in to human-centered, antiracist policy. For the marketing director, trainings are “something that maybe we could consider when budgets become more intact.” The conditionals “maybe” and “could” suggest a possible but not definite commitment; it may happen some day. Her discussion of public transportation further exposes the absence of any actual commitment to real change.

Cooperstown lacks public transportation necessary to make it more accessible to outsiders; this insulation from the outside world serves as a reminder it is a protected guilty and uninterrogateable space. In working to change this, the marketing director notes “we have run into quite a few snags.” Her description of a past attempt at action, “we were working on hopefully trying,” uncovers the community’s lack of commitment. During this clause, the marketing director tucks her hair behind her ear and glances down. The closer she gets to discussing actual bodies, the more her body shifts in discomfort. Her admittance, “it’s one of those things that either costs a lot of money and you’d have to have a ton of immediate buy-in,” implies a lack of sufficient acceptance and support from the community. In the abstract, welcoming and accessibility are positive ideals; they do not, however, carry over to actual actions or changes in opening Cooperstown’s insular nature.

Similarly, the police chief uses budgets as a way to shift focus first to mental health, then to training and equipment, none of which have any direct impact on improving conditions for people of the global majority in Otsego County. In responding to a question on measuring fairness and policing, the chief twice mentions budgets in the context of mobile crisis units and mental health: “trying to figure out ways to get help...I think a lot of it...is budgetary...just again as Joe talked about” and “an area that needs to be examined and is viable and workable

again...budgetary restraints I think is the biggest...thing there.” In the first mention, the chief invokes another panelist [Joe] as a means to support his already validated and authoritative position. He returns to abstraction, resting in safety in the power of numbers; he is not alone in recognizing budgets constrain him from investing in community. While he cites “budgetary restraints” in the second mention, as police chief, he has power over the choices made in the village’s budget; money invested shows what is valued. The chief chooses to allow budgets to constrain him from creative choices to address a clear community need, which is not necessarily tied to racism. Conflating mental health with racism serves to obscure the issue of white-body supremacy and to distance the police department from any political accountability for racism.

When asked about de-escalation training and use of guns, the police chief first uses COVID, “it’s hard with COVID I actually need more money.” Then he focuses on general budgets in discussing acquisition of less than lethal equipment for officers, “but you need money and funding for that to get your officers trained.” Moments later, he will again invoke the sheriff, who “too has budget constraints...you’re trying to stretch that dollar and make it go where you can best use it,” which according to the chief is training. Toward the end of his last remarks, he will again note that “a small town like Cooperstown doesn’t have a huge budget to get their guys trained and it would cost their time like the sheriff said.” Focusing on budgets allows the chief to divert attention away from racism, which demonstrates a lack of any commitment to addressing white-body supremacy. Even in his stance on political order, he continues to invoke other law enforcement professionals, in this case the sheriff, as he has done before, seeking the shelter of the group rather than personally accounting for racism or whiteness.

The village police chief uses the enthymematic phrase “you know” six times in the context of budget discussions to suggest the audience understands and can empathize with his

plight as police chief. Robinson (2016) argues that the enthymeme is “body-becoming-mind of the community of language-users” (p. 129); and the chief does his best to ensure his audience understands his position. This discussion is one of the few times his head often dips down and his eyes are downcast off the screen. Body language makes events present to onlookers in the gut or emotionally; the audience feels the event as if it were happening to them in that moment (Perelman, 2014; Robinson, 2016). Framing budgetary constraints in the context of COVID makes this discussion all the more visceral for the audience as no one escaped the experience. This adds to the chief’s defense of political inaction as it distances him from having to account for his whiteness or the white-body supremacy of law enforcement.

In the intellectual exercise of presenting on racism in Otsego County, what both the police chief and the marketing director miss is that the personal (individual) and the political (systemic) are interconnected; they cannot be separated as none of us lives in a vacuum. Neither participant has created a personal container to hold the affective and conative charges of racism, which results in an inability to face the brutality the white bodies of Europe never metabolized and in turn continue to inflict on bodies of the global majority. This creates a disconnect between minds and bodies. We white people are often not comfortable with ourselves and our actual bodies, so we absent them or override their messages to get things done. Yet the unconscious manifests in our bodies as actions and affect, which speak louder than words and intellect.

This lack of self-connection, seen as shifting focus and contradiction with both the village police chief and the marketing director, results in a lack of connection with other people. Both participants abstract and absent themselves and others, which makes it impossible to feel in their bodies and deal with the discomfort of others, a manifestation of survival override. Both participants teach us the trap of tackling racism with the mind, which results in the alienating and

alienation of verbalism and lacks any true word that could effect change (Freire, 2018). This limits white people's rhetorical perspectives as we cannot recognize the rhetorics of whiteness we push outside the margins. And we cannot unlearn systems of oppression rooted in us until we unearth them. We cannot enact a theory in the flesh without engaging a "working within" the flesh to understand the nuances of lived, racialized embodiment.

Chapter 3: Whose body matters? Embodiment and actual bodies

Integrated embodiment is a continuum. When it comes to racism, Ahmed (2004) argues, “[s]eeing whiteness is about living its effects” (p. 1), a personal and actual bodily experience. This is, of course, a challenge for those of us in white bodies, privileged and protected as we are from the effects of the systems that benefit us. If we happen somehow to live the effects of whiteness, even if vicariously, we have a chance to get in touch with the nuances buried in our bones to understand our complicity in white-body supremacy.

Karma Chávez (2018) argues for a distinction in how white society views different bodies: It tends to abstract white bodies, allowing for an absenting; white (male) bodies are presumed validated and therefore not worth examining. They remain distant and exempt from scrutiny. White society, however, scrutinizes bodies of people of the global majority; white society examines their bodies with close attention to difference, an invalidating and oppressive move. In chapter two, I examined two *Looking in the Mirror* participants who represent this abstraction and absenting; they are to varying degrees what I call “disembodied.” Consequently, they engage in abstraction and absenting strategies to minimize or evade either individual or collective responsibility in accounting for their white-bodied experience or white-body supremacy respectively.

We cannot, however, unlearn systems of oppression rooted in us until we unearth them. We cannot enact a theory in the flesh without engaging an entelechy “working within” the flesh, both ours and others’, to understand the stories that create the nuances of lived, racialized embodiment. In this chapter, then, I analyze M. R., mother of biracial children, and D. D., medical doctor and director of medical education at Bassett Healthcare in Cooperstown. Each gives accounts of whiteness on the education and healthcare panel discussions through the lenses

of space and institutional power respectively. Both have witnessed the pain whiteness inflicts on others. For M. R., the experience was thrust upon her when she returned “home” to the east coast (Cooperstown) with her mixed-race family. For D. D., his work with U.S. and international medical residents provided him exposure to some of his students living the effects of whiteness.

In this chapter, I attend to how these experiences manifest in the interplay between their verbal and physical performances to show how white bodies more connected to the flesh, through connection to their own and others’ bodies, can begin a more integrated embodied account for our whiteness while still being bound up in white-body supremacist systems. First, I examine how the two participants take a personal stance through clear self-identification. Then I look at how they take a moral stance through reporting on whites’ othering of people of the global majority in their circles. Finally, I look at the social stance they take through both whiteness and human-centered antiracist strategies.

Actual Bodies and Personal Stances

As discussed in chapter two, some participants in the public discussions refused to label themselves. Both the village police chief and the marketing director employed specific strategies to abstract their white bodies. By contrast, M. R. and D. D. both begin by establishing a personal stance on their respective panels. Both immediately use what might be called a human-centered antiracist strategy of critical reflection on their positionality. In their respective introductions, both self-identify as white and establish their relationship to others through the lens of whiteness. M. R. follows the presentation of her son S. J., so her first remark responds to him, “my beautiful child,” before she addresses the audience. This first utterance, said with a wide smile, demonstrates her love for S. J. and provides a context for the shift into her initial statement; she is committed to her family. Immediately after, she pauses to take a breath, lean back, and close

her eyes a moment, which creates an affective shift in her demeanor. Her face becomes a bit strained, suggesting she comes to this panel presentation with some pain and perhaps some apprehension. Her bodily engagement/behavior and the words following resonate; there is “working within” to integrate what she feels and what she speaks, immediately apparent to the audience.

While M. R. is one of only a few panelists in the series to participate in a role not defined by occupation, her choice to begin with her full name, despite having been introduced by name at the beginning of the panel and again as her shortened first name immediately before speaking, makes her somewhat vulnerable as she does not hide behind a professional title or role. This vulnerability offers an opportunity for connection outside of or perhaps in spite of her whiteness. M. R.’s self-introduction comes in three small chunks, separated by vocalized pauses (“um”) and briefly closed eyes for two of the three, “my name is [full name] I am...the mother of [first name] and [first and last name]...I identify and I am a white woman who is the mother of children who are not.” M. R. is the only panelist of the four who begins with her name, an intimately personal piece of information about herself; it is not until much later in the question-and-answer portion of the panel that she identifies her profession as it relates to the topic at that moment. She states her role first, mother of two children; this fits the initial context of appreciating her son S. J. when he has finished presenting and introduces an embodied relationship. She will use her identity as a parent in seeking to create identification with her audience throughout her participation on the panel.

Next, she identifies her positionality. This, too, could be seen as a move to create identification with audience as Otsego County has a population that is 93.8 percent white (U.S. Census Bureau). M. R. establishes her ethos as one that understands white parents’ perspectives.

She chooses to use both “identify” and “am” here, which distinguishes between thinking she is white (“identify”) and actually being (“am”) white in body. Thus, M. R. has integrated both the mind and body in her role as parent and citizen. M. R. claims connection to her children while also acknowledging difference: She is white; they are not. Her emphasis on “not” at the end of this self-introduction punctuates this difference. As the “mother of children,” however, she recognizes not only difference, but also similarity and connection, the creative possibilities for her children (Lorde, 2007). This declaration sets her apart from the other three panelists as the most direct admittance of positionality related to race. Her opening bodily movements demonstrate an understanding of the charge of race from a different vantage point.

D. D. takes a different personal stance, defending his presence on a panel that consists of four other healthcare workers, all people of the global majority. Like M. R., however, before beginning his initial statement, he thanks the two preceding panelists, which provides a context for his words. This is the only panel in the series for which all but one of the participants are people of the global majority; on the other panels, 20 to 50 percent of the participants are people of the global majority. This may be part of D. D.’s reason for his defense of why whiteness belongs on the panel. His self-defense, however, is anything but defensive. As D. D. begins his statement, like M. R., he too acknowledges both connection and difference, “the people who are listening may as you’re looking at this group of lovely people in front of you...may wonder what somebody who looks like me is doing on this panel.” Calling his fellow healthcare workers, a “group of lovely people,” establishes a connection even as he defines difference, “somebody who looks like me.” About three minutes into his initial statement, he will note, “and I’m delighted that I’m not...in the majority on this panel,” displaying both comfort in difference and joy at not being in the majority in this circumstance. Unlike M. R., D. D. does not directly state

that he is white; rather, he relies enthymematically on the contrast of his visual appearance as compared to his fellow panelists, which also puts D. D., like M. R., in a position of vulnerability. D. D. chooses to present his body, acknowledging it does not fit with the rest of the panelists' racial identities rather than abstract and absent it by invoking his role as a white male leader with significant institutional power.

Shortly thereafter, D. D. does acknowledge his professional role, but not as a means to project his power through whiteness: “[systemic racism] has a lot to do with people like me people who are in positions of significant influence in health care.” Healthcare is the fourth panel in the seven-part series, and D. D.’s claiming responsibility for systemic racism, connecting the individual and personal to the institutional and systemic, is a first. His role not only as a medical doctor, a profession typically accorded great authority in white society—COVID and Dr. Anthony Fauci’s regular presence in our lives in 2020 underscore this—but also as head of medical education (residency) at Bassett Healthcare puts him in a position of great power and authority. His whiteness in a primarily white area also gives him standing in the community, so his willingness to own the issue of systemic racism on a personal level demonstrates a more integrated embodied perspective absent of absencing.

Unlike the village police chief, as discussed in chapter two, who used his role as police chief both to project whiteness as power and absent his body, making whiteness invisible, D. D. uses his role to identify whiteness as power. By doing so, he brings attention to whiteness, making it visible for the audience much as M. R. did, albeit without actually naming his whiteness. As he states, “people like me,” a hint of a smile creeps into D. D.’s face, suggesting the deep sense of power whiteness affords white bodies. Both M. R. and D. D. manifest this contradiction of being present in an embodied way while simultaneously engaging in whiteness

to varying degrees throughout their statements; neither of them can escape their bodies or whiteness. Yet what follows demonstrates D. D.'s commitment to actual change in white privilege by naming it, both for himself and his own body as well as for the audience.

Less than a minute later, he frames the rest of his remarks with "so we need to understand that...there is such a thing as white privilege." He comes closer to direct personal identification when he describes "us with lighter skin." This is an educator at work, including his audience as a way to lead them incrementally toward facing their own whiteness. Two minutes later, D. D. provides another defense for his presence on the panel, by mentioning George Floyd reframing or bringing white privilege into focus for people, "so George Floyd did in many ways for a lot of people bring that into focus." D. D. has wide eyes and raised eyebrows as he speaks, perhaps suggesting the eye-opening consequences of Floyd's murder and perhaps also willing his audience to open its eyes to white-body supremacy.

D. D.'s choice to reference George Floyd, and not his murderer Derek Chauvin, as the one who brings white privilege into focus, demonstrates how white-body supremacy allows privileged white bodies to fade abstractly into the background while actual bodies of the global majority receive scrutinous attention (Chávez, 2018). This makes it difficult for those of us in white bodies to understand the deep-rootedness and workings of whiteness. It seems that not until white people encounter some personal experience with actual bodies of the global majority that forces us to recognize the pain our whiteness inflicts on them do we begin to recognize white-body supremacy, potentially resulting in more consciousness of our white habits. It may seem logical to assume that the more personal the experience, the more likely identification is to happen. In the case of Derek Chauvin, however, people witnessed him murdering George Floyd from behind a screen.

Robinson (2016) argues that somatic mimeticism, a rhetor mimicking auditors' body language sets up the energy of a flow of friendly identification. Chauvin, however, did not mimic his audience's (body) language; people asked him to stop his actions, which could have saved George Floyd's life, yet Chauvin did not. Many white people's upset reaction to the horror of Chauvin's actions also makes it clear that even unconscious (affective and conative) white-body supremacy identification only goes so far. It cannot be premised on an "empty and therefore terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't and whom one can hold back" (Roediger, 2001, p. 87) or "established on so genocidal a lie" (Baldwin, 1993, p. 178).

D. D. uses George Floyd as the foil to his own white experience during a traffic stop to call to account the need, both for himself and his audience, to reflect on difference and white privilege, "I'm not sure that I've thought about that enough over the course of my life how many parts of my life have been easier." This brings D. D. to name his whiteness directly although as part of a group "those of us who are white and who are in the majority...very much have to be on these panels and in these discussions." D. D.'s eyebrows rise on "white" and his head nods slightly at "majority," a conative acknowledgment of power of a white majority. Unlike M. R.'s individual identification, D. D.'s focus on a group here aims at connection with and inclusion of his audience. He has moved from "for a lot of people" to "I'm not sure I've thought enough..." to "those of us who are white..."

D. D.'s inclusivity here moves his personal stance defending his presence on the panel toward a moral stance, in "a society where we all live and where we all are...a part...we have to live in community and figure out how to do that the right way." D. D. emphasizes the first "all" and raises his eyebrows on "are a part," a working toward connection with his audience both physically as well as verbally. His appeal to a small-town community to live as actual

community may both challenge and resonate with his audience through his use of the first-person pronoun “we,” a shared and actual identity, coupled with “have to” and “figure out...the right way.” Unlike the village police chief, D. D. includes himself in the group, maintaining identification with his audience. His use of “right way” foreshadows the moral stance he will take on racism.

Personal Stances to Moral Stances

Framing the conversation with their personal stances allows M. R. and D. D. to take a moral stance through their connections and identification with others in contrast to the village police chief and the marketing director. For the chapter two participants, their focus on systems and roles led to abstraction and attempts to absent themselves from the social order in which they live. They viewed themselves as outside the social order whereas M. R. and D. D. recognize their positionality in the social order. They accept their actual bodies and the fact that how they live and move in their bodies has real consequences in the material world.

Unlike the village police chief and the marketing director, M. R. and D. D. take a moral stance on personal as well as systemic racism, one that reveals its immoral order. Both engage as witnesses, reporting othering experienced by those in their respective circles. Witnessing involves storytelling, which requires details about actual events either personally experienced or observed. This familiarity with the experience allows M. R. and D. D. to think and speak “as witnesses obligated to preserve collective memories of past injustice or tragedy while preventing the onset of similarly devastating injustices or tragedies in the future” (Vivian, 2017, p. 4). Their moral stance witnessing will lead both to take a social stance for change in their respective panels.

M. R. tells the story of her son S. J., an actual body intimately familiar to her. She bears

witness to both her own and S. J.'s experiences to preserve memories of past injustices with clear declarations, "my experience is that my...son was not listened to." As she speaks "my son," her eyes close briefly before she focuses on the screen and nods her head as she speaks. Her body is in concert with her words; M. R. uses her head to emphasize the veracity of the words she speaks. She then articulates the two types of othering employed against her son. When witnessing to how S. J.'s school invalidated his academic claims, "anything that he said about his academic record um uh was refuted," M. R. first has to pause and look up to gather her words and perhaps to steel her heart; the barely audible tremor in her voice betrays the pain she feels over S. J.'s experience: No parent wants their child dismissed. When she says, "refuted," her head shakes as she speaks. M. R. then witnesses the school's othering through prohibiting S. J. from participating, "no that's not gonna work, you can't do this, no you can't do this, no you can't do this." Her head continues to shake, punctuating "no" and "this"; refutation seems to have been internalized by both M. R. and her son. While her voice and eyes affectively communicate the pain she feels for her S. J.'s experience, in each of these reports, M. R.'s body conatively validates her words.

M. R.'s pain becomes emotion which can become judgment in the audience through the visual and somatic impressions her body language conveys. Audience members see M. R. on the screen and mimetically generate her suffering for themselves. Robinson (2016) references Aristotle on this process of somatic transfer, noting that we must have enough distance from the person to feel pity rather than dread from being too close. Pitiably objects or people, however, must not be too distant in space or time. This works on two levels with M. R. Her experiences as a mother of biracial children are different from others' in the audience, which allows for some distance between her and the audience. She is, however, close enough to the audience on the

zoom screen, and she is a white woman and a parent with which presumably many in her audience can identify in either one or both respects. For M. R. herself, the experience of S. J.'s othering may be more akin to what Aristotle calls dread, "for people no longer pity when something dreadful is near" (Robinson, 2016, p. 138). This may be what motivates her to speak up despite her clear hesitation before her self-introduction; the dread is worse than morally challenging the status quo in Cooperstown.

The experience of witnessing another's othering from whiteness impacts not only her family's, but also M. R.'s experiences and choices. M. R. confesses that while she had always advocated for her children, "I had to have a different role than I ever had in my children's education." Structures of white-body supremacy force her to intervene in her children's education in a new way, and it is not comfortable. She admits, "I was afraid for my kid at times and worried not making friends not being included...and that first year was really, really difficult for all of us." Like the other panelists, M. R. has her share of pauses to construct her words. In her case, however, her body acts in complete conative agreement with her words. In discussing her new role advocating, something she'd never experienced before, she shakes her head, in a sort of disbelief of a new and uncomfortable situation; her body through her head rejects the pain of this new experience. When she mentions "being on school grounds a lot" and "afraid for my kid," her wide eyes and raised eyebrows communicate the intensity of the experience. She nods her head while speaking of her fears as if to affirm her feelings.

Contrasted with the village police chief's fear at talk of defunding the police, which could compromise his own position and power, M. R.'s fear is for another as much as it is her own experience, "so this was a completely different experience for me as the mother of [children's names]...and it made the experience of living there a little bit more difficult you know we just

had to sort of guide our own path.” She again nods and shakes her head as she identifies the difference and difficulty of this experience. While one could attribute this to her relationship to S. J. as a parent, this does not negate M. R.’s ability to be in her body experiencing how race lands on her son’s body. Unlike the police chief, as witness M. R. took action in an attempt to mitigate her son’s experience. She lists the things she did: advocate for S. J., visit the school frequently, hold game and game board parties at home so S. J. could have people over. In each of these instances, M. R. is in contact with actual, individual bodies—the people in the school, the children who associate with her son—working for relationship and connection, a closeness rather than a distance. Her body language in concert with her words serves to create identification with parents in the audience, the group for which M. R. frames her participation both in her moral and social stances. Throughout her statements, she identifies her purpose in participating particularly for Cooperstown parents, “hopefully our input is...helpful and...can help to begin to change things.” More than just preserving memories of injustice, M. R.’s witnessing moral stance attempts to prevent similarly damaging future injustices (Vivian, 2017).

Like M. R., D. D.’s moral stance that people in Cooperstown have to figure out how to live in community “the right way” leads him to witness to the othering of people in his circle. This, he argues, provides a third reason for his presence on the panel, and D. D. now introduces his role in institutional power as his witnessing happens in this capacity, “I am the...director of the graduate medical education...residency programs at Bassett...most of our...internal medicine residents are international and...many of them are of color.” D. D. lowers his head as he speaks, but lifts his eyes so that he continues to have eye contact with the screen; it almost looks as if he has retracted his head in hiding. This may be an attempt to minimize his significant institutional authority or to prepare for the witness he is about to give. He pauses, looking off

screen, and sniffs before beginning his story of a former student's Facebook post and a friend's post below the graduate's photo. The friend's post begins "I don't know if I can stay here anymore," and relates how she was assaulted by an older man who called her a name and told her to go back home. D. D. identifies the friend as an American citizen.

Whiteness creeps in here enthymematically. D. D. clarifies that the friend "had a different skin color...than [the assaulter] did." This does two things. First, it clarifies any confusion over the identity of the female friend posting; whiteness assumes American and citizen mean being white even though this is not the case (Crenshaw, 1997; Jackson, 1999; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). The audience members need to hold in their heads two simultaneous truths: The friend is an American citizen and is not white. Second, D. D.'s story communicates without ever explicitly identifying that the male attacker is white. D. D. looks away from the screen as he finishes this clause, which suggests his body experiences discomfort. Thus, even in the context of witnessing to the injustice of white-body supremacy through reporting the female's othering by the male assailant, D. D. himself simultaneously engages in whiteness by identifying her skin color as different rather than identifying the attacker's skin color as white. As seen earlier, whiteness works to absent itself by calling attention to "other" as D. D. does here, demonstrating its deeply entrenched nature. D. D.'s physical discomfort may be from the pain of the posting friend's experience. It may also be from the incongruity of his own communication in relation to the friend's experience: His body senses this incongruity even if his mind does not.

Unlike M. R. who has intimately witnessed her son S. J.'s poor treatment, D.D. has not directly witnessed the older white man's assault on his graduate's female friend; he saw it reported on Facebook, and it is a female he does not even know. This does not, however, preclude him from seeing the suffering and feeling the representations of pain (Robinson, 2016)

through the posting's language; nor does it prohibit D.D. from what Bradford Vivian (2017) calls commonplace witnessing, which challenges our assumptions that only those who have experienced "unusual or extraordinary historical experiences" (p. 7) may be witnesses.

Rather, D.D. engages in a sort of prosthetic memory, allowing the friend's post to "speak" to [him] in a personal way as if [it was] actually memories of [his] lived events" (Landsberg, 2004, p. 19). He confesses the post impacted his feelings and experience, "for some reason...that made an enormous impression on me." He cannot articulate why this post has impacted him so powerfully, but his squinting eyes and furrowed brows on "for" and his emphasis on "enormous" illustrate his identification with his former student's assaulted friend. While his encounter of the friend's attack was vicarious via social media, a seemingly distant and abstract experience, the event involved a single, actual body connected to an actual body he knew. This proximity proved enough to create a somatic transfer, in which the posting friend's somatic orientation transferred to D. D. through the imagined sensory evidence elicited by the post's language (Robinson, 2016).

Like M. R. advocating for her son in a new way, D. D. chose to take action, "it made me send a message out to all of our residents...please, let's talk about this." He looks away from the screen as he finishes this clause. Witnessing is not always easy or comfortable. A minute later D. D. will connect the Facebook post with Minneapolis and Cooperstown, "it's happened here" and take a moral stance, "it's not right and it's...something that we have to address and we have to keep talking about." On both "right" and "keep" D. D.'s eyebrows raise as he slows his speech to ensure impact of his words. As witness, he, too, seeks to prevent similar damaging future injustices (Vivian, 2017). As he closes his comments, he argues "it's a conversation that has to be ongoing not just here." Like M. R.'s body, D. D.'s physical movements match his words; his

eyebrows raise as he emphasizes “ongoing” and shakes his head subtly on “not just here.” While he suspects the panel may be “preaching to the choir,” he also expresses hope, “but maybe not I hope not.” Here D. D.’s body conatively expresses his hope with raised eyebrows, wide and slightly bulging eyes, his head thrust forward. His energy and tone communicate an openness and desire for connection for more people to be “thinking about this differently than they ever have before.” Leaning forward provides a conative attempt at connection and identification.

Moral Stances Mean Social Action

For M. R. and D. D., their moral stance comes with moral commitment to act to address an immoral system either personally or professionally. Unlike the village police chief and the marketing director who abstract and view themselves as outside the social order, for M. R. and D. D., taking a moral stance of action requires their interaction in the social order; it is as personal as it is systemic. M. R. and D. D. achieve this through different lenses of space and institutional power respectively.

Like the marketing director, M. R. found herself interacting with a familiar space made unfamiliar by her embodiment as the mother of biracial children, which surprises her. She and her husband are both from the East coast, so she walked into Cooperstown High [School], “filled with optimism and I was so idealistic I’m back on the East coast people are like me it’ll be great no worries.” We do not know what the enthymematic phrase “like me” means for M. R., but it suggests a potential rhetorical silence around whiteness and the privileges it affords (Crenshaw, 1997). M. R. was likely not conscious or not as conscious of the uninterrogateable, guilty nature of the white space she grew up in as she has become in her embodied parental role.

Throughout this section, M. R.’s head shakes as she speaks, conatively distancing herself from the experience of return; it was not what she expected, and her head rejects that experience

of rejection. This expectation also demonstrates M. R.'s faith in open space and social parity. Whiteness, however, creates a seemingly open but actually guilty space. While M. R. by herself may have been accepted in the social order of Cooperstown, her family was not, causing them "the first whole year [to live] in isolation." The social order shapes the space which shapes the social order.

As a rural town in the northeast United States, Cooperstown has a history of American Indian removal and genocide. Its social order combined with its lack of public transportation and resulting inaccessibility has constituted an insular nature; difference does not seem to be tolerated here, at least in M. R.'s experience. Her recognition of this social order and space as something other than "home" comes from her family's experiences, which do somatically transfer to her. The intimacy of family, however, necessitates choices of allegiance and action, and M. R. chooses her family over white-body supremacy on a social level. Even as a white woman, M. R. must now learn to navigate an uninterrogateable social space, which demands of her the hard work of advocating for her children in a whole new way. Initially, M. R. states, "we really we tried very very hard...to acclimate... to the small rural community." After "really" she pauses and looks off screen above her before continuing, looking directly at the screen with raised eyebrows and vigorous head nodding to emphasize the effort and energy the family invested in working to assimilate into the white social order.

Beyond being "on school grounds a lot," M. R. and her husband "hosted a lot of...game and game board parties...at our house so [son] could have people over...we would buy pizza sometimes a hundred dollars' worth of pizza on Friday nights...to invite other kids in." As uninterrogateable space, Cooperstown's social order did not adjust to interact with outsiders, so M. R.'s family had to work actively to create space for their children by opening up their own

family social order. Unlike the marketing director providing a taste of the town and county for travel writers, who visit Cooperstown briefly as part of a job and then are gone, M. R.'s family aims to establish a culture of inclusion through regular connection. M. R.'s statement exposes the nature of a social order that claims open space when it is actually guilty space.

While M. R.'s moral stance prompts her to take social action to disrupt or rearrange the social order, on an affective level M. R. demonstrates what I call the powerful pull of whiteness. In discussing the efforts she and her husband F. K. have expended to give their children the best, she notes, "they went to very very good schools...they're both rule followers they both had stellar academic...records." Just before speaking this, M. R. pauses and closes her eyes a moment as if gathering the strength or words to convince her audience that she and her husband both love and are dedicated to their children. She nods her head as she speaks about good schools as if to affirm this fact; she does later mention S. J.'s time at private schools in Milwaukee and Arizona. She shakes her head and uses air quotes with her hands on the phrase "rule followers" as if to negate any misconceptions the audience may have had about S. J. from his presentation. She chuckles slightly after this before mentioning the children's "stellar records." M. R. makes clear she wants to connect with the audience and have it identify with her and her husband, understanding they, too, have worked hard to provide for their children.

It is this history and an assumed or expected familiarity with East coast space M. R. brings with her to Cooperstown High School, expecting it to be open to her son's performance; in some sense, S. J. has been raised to fit in a white world. Based on her witnessing, her actual experience of the town contrasted with her assumptions and expectations. The familiar world was no longer so familiar. While M. R. has named her own and her children's positionality, she maintains a rhetorical silence around the town's positionality. At the beginning and end of her

initial statement, she appeals to commonalities or a universal, “the parents that are out there we all want the same thing for our children...” and “I know that the parents out there are just like me they love their children.” In both instances M. R. shakes her head as she speaks, often using her head and eyebrows to punctuate her words. This universality could be read as an appeal to whiteness itself for acceptance, both of M. R. and her family. When discussing school, she notes, “by the time [her son] started to really prove himself academically,” which, given Cooperstown’s insular social order, implies a need to adapt to the white social order. This, however, was not enough as “he was still...reading books and taking classes that he had taken once or twice before,” which exposes the uninterrogateable nature of the social space. The school did not believe S. J.’s academic record or capabilities, something unexpectedly and thus shockingly unfamiliar to his mother.

This hostile social space may explain M. R.’s unique appeals to whiteness despite her moral stance of action. She confesses that despite the family’s hard work to assimilate into the community, “I know it was the hardest on my kid and it was always upsetting.” She has paused before this statement and pauses again after to collect herself as her voice has a barely discernable wavering in it. Both before and after she has looked down and away from the screen, demonstrating the difficulty she and her family had trying to do the right things and still struggling to integrate in the community. Recognizing the impact the previously familiar and now uninterrogateable white space has had on her son has made M. R., “kind of anxious and looking forward...to this presentation because I know that the parents out there are just like me.” The last three words here hold two layers of meaning: Cooperstown parents love their children the way M. R. loves hers, and the parents are also mostly white like M. R. Universality then is both a human condition and an expectation of white social order. M. R.’s anxiousness may stem

from the knowledge that despite their shared skin color, the parents in Cooperstown do not necessarily recognize the shared humanness of love for one's children or, perhaps, love for children as they are our future. In this uninterrogateable white space, only white lives and children matter, a concept M. R. senses may be difficult to disrupt given the family's Cooperstown experience.

In her final remarks, M. R. displays a gratitude that seems incongruous with the family's experience. She thanks the sponsors for being invited and notes, "our experience...in... Cooperstown was...unique." She stares down in her lap until "unique" when she looks back at the screen, head gently nodding. M. R. continues with, "and there's so many things about Cooperstown that I love" and then concludes with "and I'm really grateful and I appreciate... getting to know a small town like that." Her head nods contrast with her face which seems somewhat strained; this has been a painful presentation for her. While her remarks suggest the family is no longer in Cooperstown, she clearly wants to disrupt the social order that made her and her family feel like outcasts in an alien land where she expected to feel the familiarity of home.

Despite this experience of unfamiliarity in uninterrogateable white space, M. R.'s ending comments form a rhetorical silence around the town's whiteness. They seem to serve as appeasement for having disrupted the white social order with her story and support of her children. M. R. needs Cooperstown residents on her side, to identify with her to shift the social order, something she takes up intermittently during her remarks fairly directly. She chooses to close with mollification to win over her audience through gentleness after confronting the pain of her family's experience, hoping her and her son's input is "helpful and...can help to begin to change things." She has, perhaps, a nostalgia of the familiar space of her youth, the powerful pull

of whiteness, which even relatively integrated white bodies experience.

Contrasting M. R., D. D.'s institutional power leads him to address the social order directly as a system. Within the first seconds of D. D.'s initial statement, he identifies the structure of racism and the pieces that constitute it, "our society and our health care system and every piece of our society has contributed to [systemic racism], has created this, not just contributed but created it." He alludes to various aspects of society with raised eyebrows and wide eyes, his body affectively communicating to the audience its need to recognize, become conscious and cognitively aware of white-body supremacy. This contrasts with the village police chief's blunt statement that racism still exists, policing has problems, and they need to be rectified. The chief treats this statement as a "fact" and does not consider the reasons for the conditions he names, nor does he ever go beyond discussing systems. D. D., however, not only identifies structural racism here but accepts some level of personal responsibility for it. His self-correction and insistence that society has not contributed to but created the problem demonstrate an awareness of the system and likely his complicity in it. After a brief pause, he continues, "it has a lot to do with people like me." He raises his eyebrows and pulls his head back slightly on "people like me," and his eyes stay on the screen. Like M. R., D. D. connects the systemic to the personal although he does so more directly and explicitly.

D. D. also connects the personal back to the systemic throughout his statement, viewing his power and position through his positionality, "the process of me getting to this position probably has something to do with some of my...intrinsic capabilities but it has absolutely nothing to do with any more intrinsic capabilities than...anybody else who...may have been looking at the same opportunity who had a different color skin and he or she didn't get the same opportunities." Throughout this monologue, the trace of a smile brightens D. D.'s face from

“intrinsic capabilities” through “different color skin,” suggesting both a sense of satisfaction for his own value, an undercurrent of white worth that has attached itself to his institutional role, and a sense of discomfort in having to acknowledge the benefits he has reaped from the system. This affect dissipates on the last clause as D. D. moves from personal back to systemic, “so we need to understand that...there is such a thing as white privilege.” His eyebrows raise again on the second clause, emphasizing the magnitude of the issue.

D. D. will go on to relate a personal story of being pulled over for speeding to exemplify how the system we live in “allows us with lighter skin to have an easier path forward.” He acknowledges that during the traffic stop, he did not and has “never worried that I was going to be dead” and “never had to have the talk with my son about how to behave when a police officer stopped him.” His eyebrows raise at “never” and his eyes lower after his statement. Our bodies hold their own understandings of the systems in which we operate, and D. D. feels the weight of what he says. For him, racism has become a reality he understands through how his actual, personal white experience differs from global majority bodies’ actual experiences of the world. As he speaks, he keeps his eyes on the screen, moving them back and forth, presumably to take in and connect with the boxes of zoom audience members on the screen. His account of the traffic stop leads him to an accounting of his whiteness.

D. D.’s moral stance prompts self-reflection, “that is a privilege that... I’m not sure that I’ve thought about that enough over the course of my life.” His furrowed brow at the beginning of the statement and pauses as he considers his lack of reflection affectively communicate an integrity, a need to stop and consider the consequences of the system in which D. D. and the rest of us find ourselves. For him, his moral stance has led him not only to take action in the social order in beginning conversation with his medical students; it has also prompted internal

reflection, a willingness to sit with discomfort in his body, necessary for creating the container to hold the charge of racism. He does not absent himself from structural racism; rather, he considers his need to reflect on his privilege and its impact on the world.

D. D. fluctuates between this intensely personal reflection on his own white privilege and his institutional privilege as a white coat. As such, like the village police chief, when D. D. responds to a question on equity in healthcare, he claims his institutional medical role, resorting to science (the mind) for data. He has been involved in a group attempting to deal with healthcare disparities and argues it has “just started now to scratch the surface” for examining outcomes for different populations. Unlike the chief, however, D. D. thinks like a scientist, believing abstract data can help people understand and identify actual phenomena to address them, “one of the very fundamental things that you have to do if you’re going to deal with disparities is know what they are and we don’t even know what they are when we look at our different populations.” On a more abstract clinical level, D. D. identifies the gap in whose lives matter, noting that in this rural area, part of the disparity stems from economics, including those who do not have insurance coverage. D. D. contends that inequity in healthcare stretches beyond the bounds of race, which shifts the focus momentarily from race to class. A moment later he argues that race is “not the only disparate group...metric...but it’s the one we’re talking about here and it’s an important one.” This subtle shift to economics and back to race and the need to reaffirm race is an important metric both hint at white-body supremacy lurking around the edges of D. D.’s comments.

With his white skin and white coat, he has the authority to pronounce these ideas, which may not be as well-received if coming from a person of the global majority even if they also don a white coat. Unlike the village police chief, D. D. cannot try to explain away statistics because

they do not yet exist. While he makes a case for needing to use the mind to collect the data on how different groups of patients get treated, he paradoxically concedes that this data collection at the regional health center is in service of proving what he already knows in his body, “and what if we find out that we they don’t get treated very well...which is what we’re going to find out.” On the last clause, D. D. raises his eyebrows, and the hint of a smile returns to his face; his body knows the score here even without the clinical data on a dashboard and perhaps feels uncomfortable as he wrestles with bodily versus clinical knowledge and what whiteness will accept as valid or reliable evidence.

D. D. uses this bodily knowledge to push for social action on his moral stance, refusing to use data to explain away what he knows in his heart to be true: Inequities in healthcare exist and need to be addressed. He notes that we must do something about what we learn from data, “it makes us uncomfortable and we should probably do something about that.” For D. D., data and statistics create knowledge to support action rather than complacency. Like M. R., D. D. shifts between his embodied knowledge of white-body supremacy’s inherent inequities and the need as a clinician to seek data, the approved source of valid knowledge to enable action, “but if we don’t even know what it is we can’t...do anything about it...we can’t fix the problem until we know what it is...if we have enough data to look at...inequities then maybe...we’ll get a little more uncomfortable.” D. D. is willing to lean into the discomfort as he does appear committed to finding and enacting solutions to healthcare inequities; his hope, unlike the police chief, is that data will do more to expose what he already knows to tip the scale of discomfort into action perhaps the way George Floyd’s murder prompted unprecedented uproar around the globe.

Yet D. D., like most of us in the west, defaults to relying on the mind: Statistics and data are a source of information to achieve solutions even though he already knows what the data will

find. This Cartesian tussle between heart/body and mind is part of what makes racism so adaptable. That healthcare professionals, who work with actual bodies on a daily basis, typically resort to the mind, studies and data, to heal bodies is logical from a Cartesian lens that views the body as merely the machine that transports us through space, “the big dumb ride” the affective self calls the organic body when it withdraws into the mind (Robinson, 2016, p. 108). This view, however, discounts the affective and conative knowledge passed down intergenerationally and buried deeply in our bodies. And we continue to pass white-body supremacy on.

D. D.’s shift from the mind (abstraction of statistics) to the body (actual discomfort) does highlight the need for both systemic and individual action to address white-body supremacy. Toward the end of the discussion, he will identify the cause of discomfort, “we probably are pretty happy with ourselves.” This pleasure is in our minds, what we like to think we are, “good white people”; we discount our bodies and the language they speak. Moments later, D. D. argues, “it takes energy and effort to invite somebody into a community,” which challenges his audience to engage in the kind of discomfort that would have made M. R.’s family’s life much easier and more happy than it was the first year in Cooperstown. Change requires both reflection in the mind and action of the body.

This is not an easy appeal for D. D. to make: Despite keeping his eyes on the screen during this statement, immediately after he says, “community,” he looks off far left with his eyes downcast before looking back at the screen and proceeding. Like M. R., he has prefaced these two comments with an appeasement, “I don’t mean that towards myself or anybody else who’s listening to this in any kind of insulting way but...” At the beginning of this preface, it takes D. D. several tries to articulate his words as he first pauses and then stammers, “wuh—I—I” before forming the sentence. He pauses another two seconds after “insulting way but” before admitting

people of Cooperstown are complacent in the insular, racist social space. He also follows the challenge to the community with an attempted balm to soothe the implied indictment, “having said that I will say that when I overtly ask the residents that question...they say they feel welcome.” While he may not have DiAngelo’s language to identify and name white fragility, he is clearly conscious of its existence and the need to be gentle with white audience members to reach their hearts. Placating hearts, however, completely misses the discomfort needed to address the superiority complex buried in white bodies.

Despite their appeals to or placating of whiteness, both D. D. and M. R. engage with the social order by seeking active support—actual performativity (Ahmed, 2006) and arresting of future injustice (Vivian, 2017)—from the community, both panel and audience members. After M. R. has appeased the audience with her gratitude, she works to engage directly with it, first through relaying her experience and then through direct appeal. When discussing her work as a sexual assault trauma nurse and her son’s presentation on this for seniors going off to college, a place fraught with sexual violence, she returns to parents. This time, however, rather than emphasizing commonality, M. R. expresses, “what was disappointing for me as a parent is that we opened it to parents and...they didn’t come.”

As a parent who, presumably like every other parent, wants the best for her child, M. R. now begins her direct appeal, “I’m asking the other parents to...really get involved with some of these issues at a very very young age...such...an important topic like everything else...families should be involved and be able to have these difficult conversations.” Immediately before beginning this section, M. R. closes her eyes; this ask is a leap of faith. She couches it, however, with some distance from the topic of racism and her family’s experience with “some of these issues.” Presumably sexual violence may be a bit easier for white bodies to acknowledge as a

problem. The notion that sexual violence is important, “like everything else” in some sense minimizes white-body supremacy while also equating it with all other problems, much as “all parents want the same thing for their children” does.

Like the village police chief and D. D., M. R. comes to the topic of difficult conversations, which will allow her to move slowly back to her moral stance and the need for social action from the community in the white-body supremacist social order. Unlike the two men, M. R. returns to the personal rather than the institutional to make a second appeal for support. She begins by thanking the women who invited her into their lives to sharpen her challenge, “that is so important for the moms and the dads to welcome these new families...so it’s so important for you guys to reach out...to the new people and invite them in and welcome them in...and not just stare at them on the streets.” M. R. nods her head forward on “invite” and “welcome” to emphasize their importance to her audience. The slight lean forward with her nod also creates a physical closeness to the screen as a means of identification with her audience. D. D.’s comment that it takes effort and energy to welcome newcomers to the community echoes her point here.

M. R.’s appeal provides a concrete example of her experience of Cooperstown’s unfamiliar and uninterrogateable space. This moment helps viewers understand her anxiousness about participating in the panel; she has shared her family’s painful experience living in isolation and the sting of being stared at, which “was also really intimidating for me and my husband and our children...to think that we looked like some weirdos which we’re not...different maybe.” Naming the behavior and its impact on her and her family’s actual bodies may provide some release or freedom for M. R. although this is a gamble with an audience she knows has not been receptive to her family’s bodies.

M. R. smiles widely and slows her speech on “which we’re not,” a need to defend her family’s humanity and allowing a return to universality. This contrasts with her laugh and pause immediately before “different maybe,” which suggests perhaps some acceptance of her position straddling the two worlds of white-body supremacy and a world of “the Other.” She has come to accept that at least in the rural northeast, she and her family are not the norm. Now that M. R. has articulated the extent of her family’s experience and pain, she ends with a final embodied appeal, this time specifically as a mother to other mothers, “so I’m encouraging the moms to get out there and celebrate the new people coming in.” Appealing to this embodied relationality makes sense since she is one, and mothers are seen as primary care takers. To end, M. R. thanks her friend, also a mother, F. K. for welcoming her in—we have learned F. K. introduced “her child to my child because she knew that we were new”—providing an actual model of possibility for Cooperstown mothers to disrupt the uninterrogateable social order.

D. D.’s challenges to the social order are somewhat less direct, likely a result of his institutional role. He began within his institution after his encounter with the Facebook posting, initiating conversation with medical residents regarding their experiences in Cooperstown. He insists, however, that the conversation must be ongoing, beyond the panel, to address medical residents’ experiences despite their claims of feeling welcome—D. D. has admitted with raised eyebrows he is not sure he believes them—and the discomfort white bodies may experience in the welcoming.

When asked about training on the effects of racial and cultural diversity on healthcare outcomes, like M. R., D. D. invokes a universality to connect his students with Cooperstown residents, “our medical residents primarily come from other countries...turns out they’re going into medicine for the same reason that most of us do...to help and to...understand...the human

condition a little better.” Just before “turns out,” D. D. looks away from the screen with his head down and pauses for a second before continuing. With eyes back on the screen, his voice is calm and even with no hint of sarcasm or edge to it; he feels a connection with his student residents and wants his audience to recognize the universally human need to help and understand our condition. He argues the current training in place is probably not enough but is being worked on, which allows him to make an indirect appeal to his colleagues, “and I’m looking...at least five people here who I’m going to ask to help...with that.” While D. D.’s seeking support is more indirect and targets smaller audiences, some of whom are people of the global majority, his discussion highlights the importance of individual as well as systemic approaches and the need to engage both white bodies as well as bodies of the global majority to enact change.

While M. R. and D. D. approach the social order through different lenses, they both demonstrate the need for an integrated embodied approach to antiracism. White people need to develop the space in our bodies to hold the charge of racism, so we can engage in the difficult conversations first among ourselves as the work of holding ourselves accountable is tricky. Both D. D. and M. R. show that the pull of whiteness and white-body supremacy is incredibly strong; it has lodged in our bodies. To address this, we must return to the body, acknowledging the pieces that show up in us to metabolize them as Menakem says, “in an intimate way, body to body, not just some people going to a workshop on racism or DEI work” (McDermott, 2023). When white bodies engage in this work, it releases people of the global majority from being the primary laborers undertaking the impossible emotional, social, and political task of dismantling a system that is lodged in white bodies.

Conclusion: Returning to the Body

We've all learned things that limit us as human beings...Passed down through generations, even centuries, much of this destructive cultural learning is so ingrained in our lives that we are no longer conscious of it...It takes tremendous energy and awareness to recognize this destructive learning and to transform it into thoughts and behaviors that are of value and of service to life (Rosenberg, 2015, p. 195).

As seen in chapters two and three, white bodies have to some extent what appears to be two opposing orientations towards whiteness. Embodiment, however, unlike the binaries of racist/antiracist, is a continuum; it is a process that represents, at any given moment, individual levels of awareness of our bodies and their role in communication and human relations. As a process, embodiment is dynamic rather than static. Very few of us white bodies are either completely unaware of white-body supremacy on some level or liberated from its legacy; and our level of integrated embodiment (or disembodiment) can fluctuate based on setting and context. Examining the vernacular, both language and bodies, allows us insight into the paradoxes and complexities of systemic racism and our complicity in it.

As seen through *Looking in the Mirror* participants' actual bodies, those white bodies that are more disembodied or unintegrated live in the mind. This lack of connection to our own bodies results in looking at people rather than being with them (Rosenberg, 2015). We do this through the use of abstracting language, which leads to a distancing from our own and others' experiences. In this study, the more disembodied a person is, the less aware of or less willing they are to acknowledge the actual, material impacts of racism on bodies. This avoidance of meaningful accounting for whiteness ultimately reifies white-body supremacy through various whiteness strategies in social, moral, and political stances. When we attempt to account for whiteness through social stances, we may acknowledge racism in some way, sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly by describing but never straightforwardly naming open/guilty or

uninterrogateable white space (Jackson, 1999). We absent whiteness by refusing to label ourselves (Crenshaw, 1997; Gordon & Crenshaw, 2004; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995) and maintaining distance through (professional) roles, which sometimes manifests wielding whiteness as power (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). These strategies work to invisibilize the visible, white-body supremacy.

Unintegrated white bodies have difficulty holding the charge of racism and thus tend to shift the focus of discussion from racism to other issues (Crenshaw, 1997); this shift along with distanced social stances allows for moral stances that claim innocence of racism (Crenshaw, 1997). These strategies support an inability or unwillingness to see and acknowledge an always visible white-body supremacy. Claims of innocence led to political stances that lack any commitment to real change in white privilege (Gordon & Crenshaw, 2004). The reliance on the strategies of enthymeme in conversation (Crenshaw, 1997; Jackson, 2006) and rhetorical silence (Crenshaw, 1997) disallows any depth of discussion. While these strategies work to absent whiteness and wash away the material impact of white-body supremacy through our language, Alison Bailey (2015) contends our bodily comportment reveals a great deal about the dynamics of such abstract and “rational” conversation. White people cannot escape our bodies, and those who were less integrated demonstrated either a complete dissociation from the body as in the case of trained law enforcement or varying levels of tension and tightness that tries to hide but belies the restless anxiety about white-body supremacy or the refusal to see it. Regardless of our cognitive level of awareness, however, our bodies somatically pass this knowledge on affectively and conatively (Robinson, 2016).

All human bodies receive this affective knowledge. As seen through *Looking in the Mirror* participants’ actual bodies, the more integrated embodied white bodies are, the more

conscious they are of white-body supremacy; whiteness *is* visible to them. Because of a level of personal integration of mind and body, these white bodies tend to focus on being present with actual bodies and their experiences. Being present allows for recognition of others and honest attempts at meaningful accounting for whiteness. These white bodies employ a language of engagement or connection with others outside ourselves. This consubstantiation allows us strategically to take personal, reflective stances that account for our positionality, sometimes through our relationships with others and sometimes through our relationships with institutions or systems in which we are complicit. Because more integrated white bodies can name whiteness, we can take moral stances witnessing to the othering experienced by people of the global majority. Such witnessing challenges white-body supremacy, forming social (and political) stances that demand action, both of the individuals accounting for racism and those in the social space(s) around them.

Yet the pervasive intergenerational and systemic nature of white-body supremacy challenges even integrated embodied white people to fully account for our whiteness. Because our bodies have been normalized as the standard for humanity (Menakem, 2017), we, too, are sometimes still racially comfortable in a racist society (DiAngelo, 2018), or we have seemingly lost and sometimes miss that comfort. This pull of whiteness is strong: At times we still engage in whiteness strategies such as rhetorical silence (Crenshaw, 1997), whiteness as universal (Frankenburg, 1997; Jackson, 1999), or absencing whiteness (Crenshaw, 1997; Gordon & Crenshaw, 2004; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). We still employ enthymematic language (Crenshaw, 1997; Jackson, 2006) which as insiders, we implicitly understand. Bodies of more integrated white people illustrate the continuum of embodiment. At some level we are aware of and sometimes willing to engage in the discomfort necessary to address white-body supremacy

while we also struggle in the grip of its discourse and doxa, which can make accounting for our whiteness not impossible but difficult. Yet through working to connect to our own bodies, we can learn to connect to others' bodies, including those not like our own.

Limitations

This study of *Looking in the Mirror* examined four of thirteen white panelists willing to engage in discussing racism in five different societal sectors and of a total of eighteen white panelists in the seven-part series. As such, it provides a glimpse into a tiny sample of vernacular white voices and responses to white-body supremacy, rooted in a single place and time. The series took place in a predominantly white area of upstate New York, so it reflects a sliver of the rural outlook in the northeast and cannot account for other regions of the country or metropolitan areas.

In addition, all panelists participated via zoom because of the COVID-19 pandemic. While this allowed for repeated viewing of individuals' participation, it does pose limitations. First, all panelists chose their zoom location, which potentially gave them a sense of comfort and may have made it easier for panelists to engage in the conversation or to absent themselves in the safety of home or office. Such comfort might not be present in a more public, communal setting, which would change how people come to and engage in discussion. Second, zoom does make it more challenging to read body language as zoom participants tend to look at and talk to the gallery on our screen rather than look at the camera, which would approximate eye contact. Thus, I had to be careful in reading panelists' eye movements as what looks slightly downcast is not necessarily avoidance of eye contact but rather what likely feels to the speaker like eye contact with a lower row in the zoom gallery. Likewise, shifting eyes are also not necessarily a sign of avoidance but attempts at what feels to the speaker like eye contact with a range of

participants across the screen. Eye motion and head tilts or shifts would be easier to read in an in-person, public setting. In a more public setting, panelists' whole bodies would also be on display in a way not possible or present on the zoom screen, which could result in different or more nuanced readings of how racism manifests in the body.

My positionality as a white female also impacts my reading of bodies. As a white woman, I was conscious of each panelist's humanity and struggled to present sometimes harsh findings in honest, "unsoftened" ways without committing communicative violence. My read of men versus women is colored by my gender; and what I identify as the militarization of the police because of a male family member's work in law enforcement certainly creates a bias, particularly when it comes to reading the male police chief. And my own struggles with what sometimes feels like all-consuming whiteness have shaped how I have interacted with each video segment.

The timing of the series also played a role in the conversation. The video of George Floyd's murder in broad daylight captured the reality of white-body supremacy in a way that many white people could no longer ignore. While we cannot know how many people watched the video or what they focused on while watching, two actual bodies in such brutal contact carried a somatic affective charge powerful enough to provoke action and conversation on a wider scale than has been seen in the U.S. in a long time. It bolstered the Black Lives Matter movement. One might say that Black Lives Matter and antiracism were in fashion in white society as so many people in so many places, both in the U.S. and around the globe, began talking about racism. The real question, however, is what happens when the protests die down, the signs are put on lawns or away, and people go back to their daily lives. Does such conversation continue, and if so, how? What role does the body play in protest, and how does the

body manifest in the quotidian encounters of daily life after protests have ended? This study barely scratches the surface of those questions.

Future Studies

While we are embodied creatures, western reliance on Cartesian duality has resulted in a privileging of the mind over the body. Several scholars have written about Kenneth Burke's attempts to connect language and its affect to the body through the life sciences, particularly biology (see Hawhee, 2009; Marinelli, 2016; Walker, 2008). The critical performative turn in rhetoric, George Kennedy's work on rhetoric as energy, Susan Miller's work on energy as charisma, and Jeffrey Walker's work on rhetoric driven by emotion activating energy all suggest a need for more attention to the body and its role and importance in our communication.

As I was finishing this thesis, I reread *Nonviolent communication: A language for life* (2015) in which Marshall B. Rosenberg contends so much of our communication causes hurt or harm and is therefore violent. Further exploration of white-body supremacy's violence through the intersections of rhetoric and psychology (and perhaps also neurobiology) could uncover new pathways to engage in the "working within" necessary to dismantle violent communication patterns.

More and larger-scale examinations of white people's vernacular conversations attempting to account for white-body supremacy would help identify and visibilize physical patterns of whiteness in quotidian situations of life. The ability to recognize and name patterns of white-body supremacy in daily life ideally reduces not only white unconsciousness but also white fragility: As we learn to connect to the feelings in our bodies, we can release the guilt and shame that come from disconnection (Rosenberg, 2015). Lessening white fragility can decrease racism's ability to adapt as the unconscious habits of racial privilege (Sullivan, 2006) become

increasingly more conscious.

I relied heavily on Douglas Robinson's "Energy channeled through body language," chapter three of *The deep ecology of rhetoric in Mencius and Aristotle: A somatic guide* (2016). Robinson's comparison of Greek philosopher Aristotle and Chinese philosopher Mencius suggests that the body's role in communication likely has features that are universally human, beyond the bounds of white-body supremacy. Further study of the body's role in communication across cultures and countries could help us understand our humanity and interconnectedness more deeply, offering points of intersection to facilitate (a Burkean) identification. Additionally, Robinson (2016) examines the deep ecology of social value in his chapter four, "The Circulation of Social Value." For Robinson, social value, based on Aristotle's *doxa*, is an individual's reputation or "face," which originates in what others think and say about us. This concept could be connected to white fragility and the shame-based psychology of racism. Incorporating this chapter in future examinations of the vernacular of racism may shed more light on the rhetorical mechanisms of the shame/dehumanization cycle that fuel white-body supremacy and its adaptability.

Implications

Ibram X. Kendi's and Valerie Kaur's notions of being fully human recognize the need for identification with one another because of our interconnectedness. The more aware we are of the rhetoric or energy of our bodies and attend to it, the more likely we are to be aware of our interconnectedness. This awareness facilitates empathy and makes us conscious of whiteness and some of how it operates. This is not a process of using tools to fix systems; rather it is a process of mending, reconnecting minds and bodies to develop a living embodied antiracist culture.

Part of western dualistic thinking insists on fixing people in place, essentializing in ways

that reduce our humanity: The order of places preserves the order of things (Cicero, 1860), including people. To restore our humanity, we must return to ourselves. Our level of integrated embodiment, connection or disconnection to ourselves, our bodies, largely determines where we fall on the spectrum of pro-human work (Cairo, 2020), connected relationality, or being fully human (Kaur, 2020; Kendi, 2020). I propose here two ends of a continuum that, like Aristotle's *entelekheia* or working within (Robinson, 2016), are not fixed binaries but processes continually bringing into being; thus, they are not stable or fixed.

The more disembodied or disconnected we are from our bodies, the more likely we are to engage in abstraction: We focus on the mind and reduce people to abstractions. This reductive abstraction causes further disconnection from ourselves and from others, which results in internal shame and external dehumanization. This shame/dehumanization paradigm that fuels white-body supremacy (see McPhail & Frank, 2017), what DiAngelo (2018) calls white fragility, is a disconnect that activates us. The activated energy surfaces when we are pushed up against our edges (Cavanecia, 2021). If we choose to override the energy of the body and retreat into abstraction and the mind, we remain in the cycle of disconnect and shame that facilitates racism's adaptability and perpetuates inflicting trauma. It is critical to note that how disembodied we are changes from moment to moment; thus, white people may demonstrate some awareness of whiteness in one moment but be unable to account for it in the next.

According to the first law of thermodynamics energy is neither created nor destroyed, so our bodily activation from the charge of racism's disconnection never disappears. To address this disconnect, we must engage in the energy, the working within, what Menakem (2017) would call getting in our reps. Menakem's notion of reps can be explained through Aristotle's and Kennedy's views of rhetoric: Kennedy (1992) posits rhetoric *is* energy (and precedes speech).

Robinson (2016) argues Aristotle's *energia* or actuality is synonymous to *entelekheia* or complete reality. The completeness here "is constantly emerging from within, and specifically emerging out of work, out of a generative energetic working-through" (Robinson, 2016, p. 110). If this *entelekheia* in its completion is inner purpose or soul, which cannot be separated from the body, then the generative working through must involve the body. For Menakem (2017), this involves the vagus nerve or "soul nerve" (p. 138). Getting in our reps in the context of racism's cycle of shame and dehumanization requires metabolizing the energy of disconnect (Cavanecia, 2021), a willingness, if not to lean into, at least to sit with the discomfort in the body we white people experience when attempting to account for white-body supremacy that various *Looking in the Mirror* panelists discussed.

This willingness to engage with discomfort and confront our racism is critically important for those of us who are educators. bell hooks begins *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) arguing, "To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn" (p. 13). As Melanie M. Acosta and Cleveland Hayes (2022) argue, space matters: The classroom is not a neutral place; it is constructed by the teacher which impacts how children of the global majority experience school. Given the vast majority of kindergarten through grade twelve teachers are white females, we must return to Aradhana Mudambi's argument (2021) that the phrase "achievement gap" is a microaggression as it suggests something wrong with students; it is an abstraction of actual bodies and their lived experiences. Mudambi (2021) argues instead for recognizing that "opportunity gap" better describes the landscape of American education as it identifies the problem with the system and those who run it. As educators, we are a part of the system and have a choice to attend to our white bodies and the racism buried in our bones to enable us to embrace all students fully, thereby giving them the opportunity and freedom to learn

regardless of their positionality.

As we metabolize the disconnect among our bodies, minds, and hearts, we integrate our embodied selves. The more integrated our embodiment, our connection to our bodies and their messages, the more we can operate in the actual and personal realm rather than retreating into the mind and abstraction. As we recognize others as actual bodies like ours, we forge connection with ourselves (working within); and this form of Burkean identification leads to consubstantiation, being with others.* As Minnesota U.S. Representative Ilhan Omar (2019) said, “You can’t hate up close.” The more integrated our embodiment becomes, the more able white bodies are to stay in the discomfort necessary to work through the pain we feel over the pain we have inflicted through complicity in white-body supremacy and its systems. Menakem (2017) calls this “clean pain” that hurts but helps us account for the pieces that show up in our discomfort, metabolize them, and *live* a new value system. While racism is systemic, Menakem argues such healing work has “to be done in an intimate way, body to body” (McDermott, 2023). It is through our bodies we become fully human as we move through space and connect with other bodies.

We are not invested in your guilt, but waiting on your courage to step up and do something, anything to join the human fold so we can effectively dismantle these systems once and for all and create a different story, a new normal (Cairo, 2020).

* I use Aristotle, Burke, and other western scholars because I am situated in an American university that relies on the narrative that positions the origins of rhetoric with the Greeks. The concepts of identification and consubstantiality, however, exist outside the bounds of western or Euro-American paradigms, which must be acknowledged if we as a society are to dismantle Euro-American colonial and white-body supremacist hegemony. Two such examples include the South African concept of ubuntu, translated as “A person is a person through other people” (Stengel, 2018, p. 231) and the Sikh concept Ik Onkar, “the Oneness of humanity and the world” (Kaur, 2020, p. 8).

Bibliography

- Acosta, M.M., & Hayes, C. (2022). "Come and get your soul food": a duo-ethnographic account of black teachers modeling the praxis of the black intellectual tradition. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2022.2025494>.
- Ahmed, S. (2004). Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism. *Borderlands ejournal*, 3. <https://rbb85.wordpress.com/2014/08/24/declarations-of-whiteness/>
- Ahmed, S. (2006). The nonperformativity of antiracism. *Merideans: Journal of Women, Race and Culture* (19)supplement, 196-218. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/780441>
- Asen, R. (2006). A discourse theory of citizenship. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 90(2), 189-211.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0033563042000227436>
- Asen, R. (2015). *Democracy, Deliberation, and Education*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Bailey, A. (2015). "White talk" as a barrier to understanding the problem with whiteness. In G. Yancey (Ed.), *White self-criticality beyond anti-racism: How does it feel to be a white problem?* (pp. 37-56). Lexington Books.
- Baldwin, J. (1993). *The fire next time*. Vintage International.
- Baldwin, J. (1998). On being "white"... and other lies. In D. R. Roediger (Ed), *Black on white: Black writers on what it means to be white* (pp. 177-180). Schocken Books.
<https://archive.org/details/blackonwhiteblac0000unse>
- Berila, B. (2016). *Integrating mindfulness into anti-oppression pedagogy*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315721033>

- Booth, W. C. (1963). The Rhetorical Stance. *College Composition and Communication*, 14(3), 139-145. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/355048>
- Breakfast Club. (2021, August 26). Resmaa Menakem breaks down deep rooted trauma linked to racism, healing practices + more. *Breakfast Club Power 105.1 FM*. Premiere Networks. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=omyzEvVvjog>
- Cairo, A. (2020, June 2). Let me be clear. *Aminata Cairo: every story is valid*. <https://aminatacairo.com/let-me-be-clear/>
- Calafell, B. M. (2020). The critical performative turn in intercultural communication. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 49(5), 410-415. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2020.1740292>
- Cavanecia, A. (Executive Producer). (2021, December 1). Trauma in Leadership with Resmaa Menakem (No. 26) [Audio podcast episode]. In *belonging & leadership – Unlikely: Everyday Leadership Lessons*. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/trauma-in-leadership-with-resmaa-menakem/id1569749461?i=1000543580979>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. Thousand Oaks.
- Chávez, K. (2018). The body: An abstract and actual rhetorical concept. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 48(3), 242-250. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2018.1454182>
- Cicero. (1860). *Cicero on oratory and orators* (J. S. Watson, Trans.). Harper and Brothers, p. 187. <https://archive.org/details/ciceroonoratoryo00jswa>
- Coates, T. (2015). *Between the world and me*. Spiegel and Grau.
- Cooperstown/Otsego County Tourism. (2023). *America's Most Perfect Village*. Cooperstown Otsego County. <https://thisiscooperstown.com>.

- Crenshaw, C. (1997). Resisting whiteness' rhetorical silence. *Western Journal of Communication*, 61(3), 253-278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570319709374577>
- De La Garza, A. T. & Ono, K. A. (2016). Critical Race Theory. In K.B. Jensen, R. T. Craig, J. D. Pooley, & E.W. Rothenbuhler (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118766804.wbiect260>
- Delgado, R. & Stefancic, J. (2017). *Critical race theory: An introduction* (3rd ed.). New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479851393.001.0001>
- DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.
- Enck, S. M. (2016). The praxis of rhetorical attitudinizing: Productive criticism as civic engagement. *Review of Communication*, 16(1), 92–94.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2016.1183905>
- Fisher, W. R. (1984). Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument. *Communication Monographs*, 51(1), 1-22.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758409390180>
- Flores, L. A. (2016). Between abundance and marginalization: the imperative of racial rhetorical criticism. *Review of Communication*, 16(1), 4-24.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2016.1183871>
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archeology of knowledge and the discourse on language* (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). Pantheon. (Original work published 1969, 1971).
- Foucault, M. (1989). *The Archeology of knowledge* (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.). Routledge Classics. (Original work published 1969). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203604168>

Francis, M. (2017, March 3). How Albert Einstein used his fame to denounce American racism:

He was never one to just stick to the science. *Smithsonian Magazine*.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/how-celebrity-scientist-albert-einstein-used-fame-denounce-american-racism-180962356/>

Frankenburg, R. (1997). Introduction: Local Whiteness, Localizing Whiteness. In R.

Frankenburg (Ed.), *Displacing whiteness: Essays in social and cultural criticism* (pp. 1-33). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822382270>

Freire, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 50th Anniversary Edition*. (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans.). Bloomsbury Academic. (Original work published 1970).

Friends of the Village Library of Cooperstown. (n.d.) *Home*. [YouTube channel]. YouTube.

Retrieved May 23, 2022, from

<https://www.youtube.com/@friendsofthevillagelibrary1925/featured>

Friends of the Village Library of Cooperstown. (2020, October 18). *Looking in the mirror – Cooperstown reflects on racism: Education* [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sAPeMeNzS8&list=PL0JXyHtjFD5q4lhivvdw3N2CA70GRbeLL&index=49>

Friends of the Village Library of Cooperstown. (2020, October 3). *Looking in the mirror – Cooperstown reflects on racism: Tourism* [Video]. YouTube.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbaS_RY0dQc&list=UU55qfGwnH4Z0zVezDitur2Q&index=16

Friends of the Village Library of Cooperstown. (2020, October 30). *Looking in the mirror – Cooperstown reflects on racism: Healthcare* [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dLuy2Pu2aug>

- Friends of the Village Library of Cooperstown. (2021, February 11). *Looking in the mirror – Cooperstown reflects on racism: Law enforcement* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUSRoe9F9dc>
- Garrett, E. A. (2011). The rhetoric of antiblack racism: Lewis R. Gordon's radical phenomenology of embodiment. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 19(1), 6-16.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15456870.2011.537593>
- Gordon, L. R. (1995). *Fanon and the crisis of European man: An essay on philosophy and the human sciences*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003061533>
- Gordon, D. B., & Crenshaw, C. (2004). Racial Apologies. In P.A. Sullivan & S. R. Goldzwig (Eds.), *New Approaches to Rhetoric* (pp. 245–266). SAGE Publications, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233116>
- Griffin, J. H. (1996). *Black Like Me*. Signet.
- Gross, A. G. (2010). Rhetoric, Narrative, and the Lifeworld: The Construction of Collective Identity. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 43(2), 118-138.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/philrhet.43.2.0118>
- Gunn, J. (2020). *Speech Craft* (2nd ed.). Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Hauser, G. A. (2022). *Vernacular Voices* (2nd ed.). University of South Carolina Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv23hcf73>
- Hawhee, D. *Moving Bodies: Kenneth Burke at the Edges of Language*. University of South Carolina Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2cxx90q>
- Heckman, S. (1999). Identity crises: Identity, identity politics, and beyond. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 2(1), 3-26.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13698239908403266>

- Heifetz, R. A. (1994). *Leadership without Easy Answers*. Harvard University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674038479>
- Hochmuth, Marie. "Kenneth Burke and the 'New Rhetoric'." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1952, pp. 133-144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335635209381754>
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress*. Routledge.
- hooks, b. (1997). Representing whiteness in the black imagination. In R. Frankenburg (Ed.), *Displacing whiteness: Essays in social and cultural criticism* (pp. 1-33). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822382270>
- Hunter, S. (2021). Decolonizing white care: Relational reckoning with the violence of coloniality in welfare. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 15(4), 344-362.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17496535.2021.1990370>
- Hunter, S. & van der Westhuizen, C. (2022). Viral whiteness: Twenty-first century global colonialities. In S. Hunter & C. van der Westhuizen (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Critical Studies in Whiteness*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429355769-1>
- Jackson, M. (2006). The enthymematic hegemony of whiteness: The enthymeme as antiracist rhetorical strategy. *JAC: a journal of composition theory*, 26(3/4), 601–641.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20866754>
- Jackson, R. C. (2017). Decolonizing place and race: Racial resentments, local histories, and transrhetorical analysis. *Rhetoric Review*, 36(4), 292–301.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2017.1355191>
- Jackson, R. L. (1999). White space, white privilege: Mapping discursive inquiry into the self. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 85(1), 38–54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639909384240>
- Jones, R. G. (2010). Putting privilege into practice through “intersectional reflexivity:”

- Ruminations, interventions, and possibilities. *Reflections*, 16(1), 122-125.
<https://doi.org/10.1.1.944.1400>
- Kaur, V. (2020). *See no stranger: A memoir and manifesto of revolutionary love*. One World.
- Kendi, I. X. (2016). *Stamped from the beginning: The definitive history of racist ideas in America*. Bold Type Books.
- Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. One World.
- Kendrick, M. (2005). Invisibility, race, and the interface. *Rhetoric Review*, 24(4), 395–399.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/20176681>
- Kennedy, G. A. (1992). A Hoot in the Dark. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 25(1), 1-21.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40238276>
- Kinnamon, K. & Fabre, M. (Eds.). (1993). *Conversations with Richard Wright*. University Press of Mississippi.
- Knoblauch, A. A. & Moeller, M. E. (2022). Introduction: Bodies, embodiment, and embodied rhetoric. In A. A. Knoblauch & M. E. Moeller (Eds.), *Embodied Rhetorics in Theory and Practice* (pp. 3-19). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2nv8c0c.5>
- Lacy, M. G. & Ono, K. A. (2011). *Critical rhetorics of race*. New York University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814762226.001.0001>
- Landsberg, A. (2004). *Prosthetic memory: The transformation of American remembrance in the age of mass culture*. Columbia University Press.
- LeMesurier, J. L. (2014). Somatic metaphors: Embodied Recognition of rhetorical opportunities. *Rhetoric Review*, 33(4), 362-380. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2014.946868>
- Lipsitz, G. (2018). *The possessive investment in whiteness: How white people profit from identity politics* (20th anniversary ed.). Temple University Press.

- Lorde, A. (2007). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches* (pp. 110-113). Crossing Press.
- Marinelli, K. (2016). Revisiting Edwin Black: Exhortation as a prelude to emotional-material rhetoric. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 46(5), 465-485.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02773945.2016.1151927>
- Matais, C.E. & Boucher, C. (2021). From critical whiteness studies to a critical study of whiteness: restoring criticality in a critical whiteness studies. *Whiteness and Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2021.1993751>
- McDaniel, J. P. & Gronbeck, B. E. (2007). Through the looking glass and back: Democratic theory, rhetoric, and Barbiegate. In K. Tracy, J. P. McDaniel, & B. E. Gronbeck (Eds.), *the prettier doll: Rhetoric, discourse, and ordinary democracy*. The University of Alabama Press.
- McDermott, M. R. (Executive Producer). (2023, March 2). Somatic Abolitionism: Resmaa Menakem & Gabor Maté (No. 24) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Sounds of SAND*. Science and Nonduality. <https://www.scienceandnonduality.com/audio/24-somatic-abolitionism>
- McIntosh, P. (2020). *On privilege, fraudulence, and teaching as learning: Selected essays 1981-2019*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351133791>
- McKerrow, R. (1989). Critical rhetoric: Theory and praxis. *Communication Monographs* 56, 91-111. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637758909390253>
- McKinnon, S., Asen, R., Chávez, K., & Howard, R. G. (2016). Introduction: Articulating text and field in the nodes of rhetorical scholarship. In S. McKinnon, R. Asen, K. Chávez, & R. G. Howard (Eds.), *text + FIELD: innovations in rhetorical method* (pp. 1-21). The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- McPhail, M. L. & Frank, D. A. (2017). Racing the Trump card: Rhetorics of whiteness and the

- politics of adaptive resistance after Obama. *Rhetoric Review*, 36(4), 282-292.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2017.1355191>
- Menakem, R. (2017). *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*. Central Recovery Press.
- Menakem, R. (2022). *The quaking of America: An embodied guide to navigating our nation's upheaval and racial reckoning*. Central Recovery Press.
- Mills, C. W. (1997). *The Racial Contract*. Cornell University Press. <https://www-jstor-org.libezproxy2.syr.edu/stable/10.7591/j.ctv1xtwq8p>
- Moon, D., & Flores, L. A. (2000). Antiracism and the abolition of whiteness: Rhetorical strategies of domination among “race traitors.” *Communication Studies*, 51(2), 97–115.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10510970009388512>
- Moraga, C. & Anzaldúa, G. (Eds.). (1981). *This bridge called my back: Writings by radical women of color*. Persephone Press.
- Mr. Abdi. (2019, March 24). *Ilhan Omar delivers remarks at the Council of American-Islamic Relations* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSTNnKNFS0o&t=4s>
- Mudambi, A. (2021, March 29). 3 reasons we have an opportunity gap, not an achievement gap. *Social Justice and Education: Especially as it relates to DLE*.
<https://socialjusticeandeducation.org/2021/03/29/3-reasons-we-have-an-opportunity-gap-not-an-achievement-gap/>
- Nakayama, T. K., & Krizek, R. L. (1995). Whiteness: A strategic rhetoric. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 81(3), 291–309. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335639509384117>
- Ono, K. A. (2011). Critical: A finer edge. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 8(1), 93-96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14791420.2011.543332>

- Orbe, M. P., & Allen, B. J. (2008). 'Race matters' in the *Journal of Applied Communication Research. The Howard Journal of Communications*, 19(3), 201-220.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170802218115>
- Perelman, C. (2014). *The Realm of Rhetoric*. University of Notre Dame Press.
<https://archive.org/details/realmofrhetoric00pere>
- Potapchuk, M., Leiderman, S., Bivens, D. & Major, B. (2005). *Flipping the script: White privilege and community building*. MP Associates, Inc. and Center for Assessment and Policy Development.
- Robinson, D. (2016). *The deep ecology of rhetoric in Mencius and Aristotle: A somatic guide*. SUNY Press. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11712-017-9594-2>
- Roediger, D. R. (1994). *Towards the abolition of whiteness: Essays on race, politics, and working class history*. Verso. <https://archive.org/details/towardsabolition0000roed>
- Roediger, D. R. (2001). Critical studies of whiteness, USA: Origins and arguments. *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory*, 98, 72–98. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41802174>
- Rosenberg, M. B. (2015). *Nonviolent communication: A language of life*. PuddleDancer Press.
- Sandel, T., Buttny, R., & Varghese, M. (2019). Online interaction across three contexts: An analysis of culture and technological affordances. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 48(1), 52-71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2018.1552616>
- Shapiro, S. B. (1999). *Pedagogy and the politics of the body: A critical praxis*. Routledge.
<https://doi-org.libezproxy2.syr.edu/10.4324/9780203016749>
- Sounds True. (2020, January 22). *Resmaa Menakem: Somatic abolitionism*. [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dAAWgpokvo>
- Stengel, R. (2018). *Mandela's way: Lessons for an uncertain age*. Broadway Books.

- Sullivan, S. (2006). *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*. Indiana University Press.
- Taylor, E. (2006). A critical race analysis of the achievement gap in the United States: Politics, reality, and hope. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 5(1), 71–87.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760500499025>
- Tippett, K., Menakem, R., & DiAngelo, R. (2020, July 9). Robin Diangelo and Resmaa Menakem - Towards a framework for repair [unedited]. *On Being*.
<https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-diangelo-and-resmaa-menakem-towards-a-framework-for-repair/>
- Tracy, K. (2007). Introduction: A moment of ordinary democracy. In K. Tracy, J. P. McDaniel, & B. E. Gronbeck (Eds.), *the prettier doll: Rhetoric, discourse, and ordinary democracy* (pp. 3-21). The University of Alabama Press.
- United States Census Bureau. (2022). *Quick Facts: Otsego County, New York*.
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/otsegocountynewyork/PST045221>
- Vivian, B. (2017). *Commonplace Witnessing: Rhetorical Invention, Historical Remembrance, and Public Culture*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190611088.003.0001>
- Walker, J. (2008). *Pathos and katharsis* in “Aristotelian” rhetoric: Some implications. In A. G. Gross & A. E. Walzer (Eds.), *Rereading Aristotle’s Rhetoric* (pp. 74-92). Southern Illinois University Press.
- Wanzer-Serrano, D. (2018). Decolonial rhetoric and a future yet-to-become: A loving response. *Advances in the History of Rhetoric*, 21(3), 326-330.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00335630.2019.1669068>

- Warren, J. T. (2001). Performing whiteness differently: Rethinking the Abolitionist project. *Educational Theory*, 51(4), 451. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2001.00451.x>
- Werner, M. M. (2017). Deploying delivery as critical method: Neo-burlesque's embodied rhetoric. *Rhetoric Review*, 36(1), 44-59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07350198.2017.1246010>
- Wilkerson, I. (2020). *Caste: The origins of our discontents*. Random House.
- Yancey, G. (2015). Introduction: Un-sutured. In G. Yancey (Ed.), *White self-criticality beyond anti-racism: How does it feel to be a white problem?* (pp. xi-xxvii). Lexington Books.

Vita

Kerry L. Mess grew up in Milwaukee, WI and received her Bachelor of Science in English Education grades 6-12 from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (1994). She served in the U.S. Peace Corps (1994-1998) training English teachers and returned to Milwaukee to teach high school English (1999-2020) and achieve National Board Certification (2007). She relocated to rural upstate New York with her husband (2020) and volunteered with the Catskill Regional Teacher Center, supporting the director, National Board candidates, and a small community of educators. Kerry earned her Master of Arts in Communication and Rhetorical Studies in May 2023 from Syracuse University. After graduation, she plans to rejoin her husband in Laurens, New York and teach College Writing at Hartwick College in Oneonta in fall while she discerns how to best put her talents to use in service of humanity.