Abstract

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

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

Key words: antiracism; antiracist parenting; multiracial families; white femininity; white women; whiteness.