

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS, IDENTITY, AND
DISSONANCE AMONG WHITE WOMEN IN
STUDENT AFFAIRS GRADUATE PROGRAMS

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Special Education

The purpose of this study was to investigate racial identity among White women enrolled in student affairs and higher education (hereafter, SA/HE) master's degree programs. Guided by a social justice epistemology encompassing constructivism, feminist inquiry, and Critical Whiteness, this grounded theory study included the following research questions: (1) how does racial identity develop over time among White women; (2) how do White women construct racial identities; (3) in what ways do educational and professional experiences, including those that occur in SA/HE master's degree programs, influence White women's racial identities; and (4) in what ways do multiple layers of social context, including power and privilege, influence White women's racial identities? Data sources included two interviews with a sample of 11 White women in SA/HE master's degree programs, and data analysis procedures were consistent with grounded theory for social justice.

The outcome of this study was a grounded theory of racial consciousness, identity, and dissonance among White women in SA/HE graduate programs. The emergent theory consisted of two core processes: *changing one's perspective* and the *emergence of racial dissonance*. The first core process, *changing one's perspective*, foregrounded a series of developmental shifts through which participants became conscious of whiteness and developed racial identities. These shifts or “lenses” corresponded to a series of visual metaphors, including *not seeing race*, *peripheral visions*, and “*opening my eyes.*”

The second core process, the *emergence of racial dissonance*, disrupted the developmental process of *changing one's perspective*. When new insights threatened preexisting worldviews, participants were forced to confront racial dissonance, or discomfort and ambiguity about race, identity, and privilege. In response, participants developed strategies for *resisting*, *engaging*, and *transforming* racial dissonance. Navigating racial dissonance was a performative process that gave participants the capacity to resume the developmental process of *changing one's perspective* and to adopt a new lens with two regions, “*a conscious lens of whiteness*” and “*a vision for my life.*” This grounded theory of racial consciousness, identity, and dissonance among White women has implications for SA/HE graduate preparation programs, social identity and student development theory, and future research.

RACIAL CONSCIOUSNESS, IDENTITY, AND DISSONANCE AMONG WHITE
WOMEN IN STUDENT AFFAIRS GRADUATE PROGRAMS

By

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Dedication

And what is it to work with love?

It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth.

It is to build a house with affection, even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house.

It is to sow seeds with tenderness and reap the harvest with joy, even as if your beloved were to eat the fruit.

It is to charge all things you fashion with a breath of your own spirit,

And to know that all the blessed dead are standing about you and watching.

—Excerpt from “On Work”
Kahlil Gibran, 1923/1973
The Prophet, p. 27

For my father, Patrick Riordan (1945-2001)

and my mother-in-love, Jan Robbins (1946-2008)

for showing me how to work with love

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Prologue

... So what happens when we do not notice, or are taught not to notice, or pretend not to notice? What can happen is that we lull ourselves into a dream state induced by this soporific silence. A silence that shields and veils until finally, something, someone, shatters the dream.

My silence was shattered in stages. (Mazzei, 2007, p. 1126)

Origins

I come from a long line of well-meaning White women.

First, there's my bubby (grandmother), the child of Jewish immigrants with grade school educations, who got a full scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania and was the first woman to be allowed to take lab chemistry with the male students (women were prohibited from being in the lab for "health and safety" reasons – and, of course, they would distract the men from their work). Then there's my mom, who was part of the Vietnam War era student protest movement, is an active member of the Southern Poverty Law Center, and took me to my first event honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when I was seven. My stepmom taught high school English and organized teachers' unions in low-income, mostly Black school systems in New Orleans and Florida.

But there were other well-meaning White women, too. In Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where I spent my first seventeen years of life, I was influenced by many White women as middle school and high school teachers, family friends, and members of the Jewish community. In my college years, two professors, both White women, became important mentors.

In one way or another, I learned something about the value of education, feminism, or social justice from each of these White women, and I also learned from a few White men along the way (especially my father, stepfather, and grandfather). Like all of these White individuals, I also learned – and continue to learn – from many People of Color and multiracial individuals as friends, mentors, teachers, and supervisors, and more distantly as scholars and activists whom I have never met. I am grateful that as an adult, I have come to understand some things about “the inclining significance of race” (Willie, 1978, p. 10), and I credit this understanding to the People of Color and multiracial people in my life who have been generous with their time and insights. I also credit this understanding to the White people in my life, primarily White women, who (again, thanks to the generosity of People of Color) have come to see themselves as racial beings who have a responsibility to work against racism in their everyday lives. I seek to follow their example through my work as an educator in college student affairs, and this dissertation study of racial identity among White women is a central part of my journey. The purpose of this prologue is to introduce myself to the reader in the form of an educational autobiography. Given the autobiographical nature of qualitative research (Glesne, 2006; Jones, 2002; Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006), this prologue also serves as a reflective statement about my positionality as a researcher (Jones et al., 2006).

(Re)writing My Educational Biography

I have written my professional and educational autobiography more times than I care to count, but I am enthusiastic about writing it once again in the interest of reflecting on the “compelling interest” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 25) that led me to the topic of this study. In my eight years in the student affairs profession, I have learned that even though

I am a White woman, my experience is really not the norm. When most of my colleagues (of any racial or gender identity) reflect on their entry into the profession, they fondly recall their days as a resident advisor or orientation leader and the mentoring they received in that role from a student affairs professional who kindly said, “yes!” when asked, “you mean I could do this forever? Like as a *career*?” That pathway to the profession is probably the most common one, but it was not mine. The story of my path to the profession does, however, begin in college.

In fall of 2000, I was a senior at Swarthmore College enrolled in an honors seminar on social and cultural issues in education. It was a class that made my heart sing. I had created my own major in education, sociology, and anthropology, with a concentration in women’s studies. Every Thursday afternoon, I practically skipped along picturesque, tree-lined College Avenue as I made my way to class from “the Barn,” a well-known dilapidated building that housed the communal living arrangement I had cooked up with seven close friends. I was a feminist, I was a successful student, and I loved nothing more than reading, writing, and thinking about education and social justice. I knew I was making a difference—I just knew it. But I kept forgetting that I was White.

Our first seminar paper assignment was to write an educational autobiography, an assignment I had completed several times before (and have done many times since). Ten years later, my memory of this paper was that it had something to do with my college decision process. I remembered writing about finding out, as a seventeen-year-old high school senior, that my mother’s father had “made good investments” and thus my family could pay for four years of tuition at one of the most expensive private colleges in the country. I remembered writing about the tensions that erupted between my mother’s

family and my father’s family when my father’s family learned about the “good investments.” I remembered writing about my realization as a high school senior that I had been raised with two different sets of expectations about college and how to pay for it. In short I remembered, or thought I remembered, that ten years ago as a college senior, I had had something to say about privilege.

Thanks to the spotlight feature on my (white) MacBook, a quick search for this ten-year-old entry in my educational archives proved successful in mere seconds (see Figure 1). *I’m writing about White identity among educators*, I thought. *Surely I had something to say about that back in college*. I did write about educational privilege in that paper. I wrote about class privilege. I also wrote about the challenges of being Jewish, a feminist, a daughter. But as Figure One illustrates, when it came to *White privilege*, to who I was as a racial being, I had nothing to offer but silence.

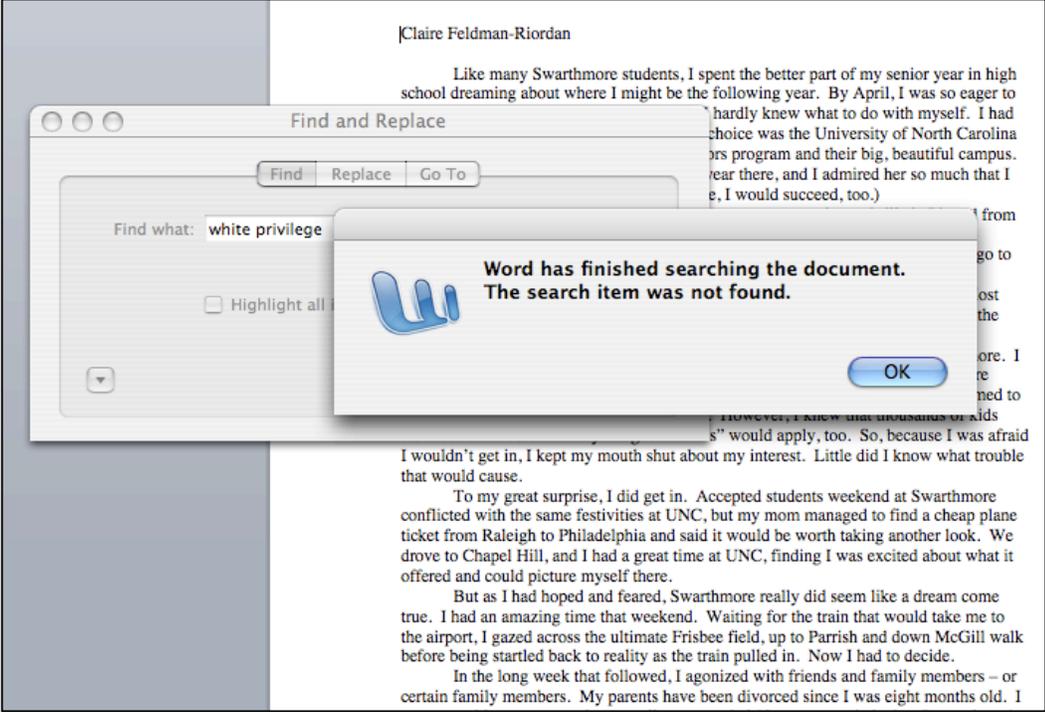


Figure 1. Searching for White privilege.

Although a series of educational and professional experiences after college would bring me a bit closer to finding my voice, first there is another side of my undergraduate experience that warrants more reflection. To echo many student affairs professionals before me, as a college student I would never have predicted that I would land in student affairs because I had no idea what it was. At Swarthmore, I obviously went through life interacting with the deans of students and of resident life, the campus activities coordinator, and the career center appreciating the support of these educators, but not knowing or ever really thinking about their professional identities. Besides, in addition to the diligent student who was deeply engaged in my self-designed major, I was a student activist who had learned to distrust “the administration” when it came to matters of social justice. When I was a sophomore, Matthew Shephard was killed by homophobic peers in Wyoming. Not long after that, my best friend – another gay male college student – came home to his residence hall to find “fag” written on the bathroom mirror. Meanwhile, there was a series of hate speech incidents in the multicultural and queer student center, and I had my first experience with student unrest on campus. These “isolated incidents” were of course not isolated at all; they symbolized the chilly climate experienced by many Students of Color and queer students on a daily basis. With other student activists, including queer students, Students of Color, White students, and students with many intersecting identities – I found myself shocked and disappointed when the dean of students did not seem to think the semester should grind to an immediate halt so that we could all commit ourselves full time to transforming the institution toward social justice. I have a much better understanding now of the complexities even the most progressive student affairs administrators face when responding to student activism around social

justice. Still, it was a heartbreaking time for someone who had thought of Swarthmore as paradise, and still tempers my otherwise very positive view of my college experience.

Social (Justice?) Work

Several years later, history seemed to repeat itself when I was in graduate school the first time earning a master's degree not in student affairs or higher education, but in social work. I developed a strong connection to the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics (NASW, 2008) and the concept of cultural competence when working with diverse client populations. Unfortunately, I also experienced great dissonance when, once again, an egregious incident – this time, the use of racist language by a White faculty member toward a Student of Color – was the last straw for those of us concerned with the school's climate for Students of Color, queer students, and other marginalized groups. I became one of the most vocal and active student leaders in change efforts around this time, most notably as the co-chair (with a tenured faculty member) of an *ad hoc* diversity assessment committee convened by the dean. That experience equipped me with a strong skill set, robbed me of some of my naïveté (but not my idealism), and opened my eyes to the challenges and possibilities of anti-racist practice in higher education administration.

Meanwhile, I was busily attending to what I might want to do professionally after I graduated. After a first-year clinical practicum supervised by the school social worker in a public middle school, I had come to appreciate the devastating nature of day-to-day work in that environment and knew that social work in the traditional K-12 setting was not for me. However, I still yearned for the opportunity to work with youth outside the classroom, but in an educational setting, in a manner congruent with my passion for

social justice, especially around issues of gender, sexual orientation, and race (probably in that order, at the time). I was thrilled to land a second-year practicum at a campus-based women's center, where I would learn the ropes of the "macro" side of social work with a focus on programming and volunteer development.

Being a graduate intern at the Women's Center was the most gratifying professional experience I had had to date. Finally, I felt like I belonged. My supervisor, the center's program coordinator, was an anti-racist, feminist White woman who was phenomenal at her job and became a mentor and dear friend. Having earned an MSW herself, she too had fallen in love with the student affairs setting and was now pursuing her doctorate in higher education. Under her supervision, I coordinated the center's volunteer program and developed a volunteer training manual and procedures. I also had primary responsibility for a student-led production of *The Vagina Monologues*, a signature program and major fundraiser for a local non-profit that provided domestic violence and sexual assault crisis response, support services, and advocacy. I worked closely with student leaders, advising them through interpersonal conflicts and other concerns. I served on an institution-wide conference planning committee. I thrived personally and professionally as my interests in social work, education, women's studies, and sociology and anthropology all came together, as if by magic.

Basically, I had fallen in love. By the time I graduated with my MSW, I had already begun working at the same institution coordinating a high-risk drinking prevention initiative in the Dean of Students Office. Two years after that, my mentor at the Women's Center left to direct another center, and I applied for and was hired to take over in her role. By the time I left that institution to pursue my doctorate, I had worked

in student affairs for four years. I was a proud member of NASPA and the southeastern and national communities of campus-based women's center professionals. I had gained experience in crisis response, student organization advising, large- and small-scale programming, RA training, orientation, admissions, and the supervision of student staff. I had truly adopted the identity of student affairs professional.

Interrogating the Silence About and Among White Women in Student Affairs

Despite my love for my work in student affairs, I was haunted by much of the dissonance that had characterized my days as a student activist. Still guided by the ethical principles of social work practice (NASW, 2008), I frequently wondered why so many of my colleagues seemed naïve about social justice issues. I also questioned why some of them so clearly prioritized institutional loyalty over a commitment to issues I saw as far more important, like substance abuse and sexual assault prevention. Alongside these chronic concerns, there were a number of specific events that, for short periods of time, made the dissonance almost unbearable. The most egregious was a sexual assault-related incident involving an athletic team. Framed by race, class, and gender implications, this incident quickly gained national media attention, some of which was focused on the Women's Center where I worked. The way the situation unfolded on campus and in the community caused me much grief and outrage. Even more so, I was heartbroken to find that despite some strong allies (including most of my colleagues of color), I had many (almost exclusively White) colleagues who did not share my perspective. This experience more than any other led me to understand just how loud the silence was about racism and White privilege in this new profession I loved so much.

Several experiences and individuals helped me resolve some of the dissonance I felt during those years, but the most influential of these was the White Privilege Reading Group I participated in while a graduate intern at the Women's Center. Encouraged by my mentor, I joined this group eager to learn more about White privilege and intrigued by the notion that only White people were allowed to attend. Although hesitant at first, I quickly became a vocal and passionate participant and realized just how much I had to learn about the role of White privilege in my everyday life. I realized that focusing all my attention on the oppression of People of Color was important, but would do little to dismantle the structures of power and privilege in which racism was so deeply embedded.

The reading group only lasted for a few months, but it sparked a meaningful professional and personal relationship with the facilitator, an anti-racist, feminist White woman who worked in the Institutional Equity office and, like me, saw herself as an educator and activist first and higher education professional second. Over the next few years, I became a member of her office's advisory board, and I supported her efforts to advance the conversation about White privilege among my student affairs colleagues. She expertly facilitated a number of professional development sessions focusing on White privilege in higher education, some of which I helped her plan behind the scenes. At these sessions, I witnessed an extraordinary amount of resistance among my White female colleagues. Every time the discussion of race and White privilege made them uncomfortable, they would redirect the conversation toward sexism, despite explicit ground rules asking participants to stay focused on race. Each time I saw this kind of resistance, I grimaced. These women made me furious. Like the hate speech "incidents" my friends and peers had experienced in college, the resistance of my White female

colleagues in these sessions was a symbol of their much more pervasive resistance to acknowledging White privilege and seeing themselves as its beneficiaries. It was as if they didn't even think they were White! I wanted to explode; I wanted to run away from them as fast and as far as I possibly could. I wanted nothing to do with them or their resistance; they embarrassed me. The ugly truth, of course, was that in these women, I saw myself.

Meanwhile, I became very good friends with the White anti-racist reading group facilitator. We essentially had a standing early morning coffee date during those years, meeting regularly to catch up on work, life and the intersection between the two. Although her level of dissonance was probably greater than mine, the major thread of our conversations was our shared experience as idealistic misfits. When I despaired of ever feeling like I could make a real difference in an environment that seemed antithetical to my values, her mentorship was invaluable. Our conversations brought me comfort, but more importantly, she challenged me to lean into *discomfort*, always suggesting that whatever I was resisting the most was probably where I could make the greatest difference. Over time, I came to realize that the answer was literally staring me in the face every time I looked in the mirror. My primary sphere of influence was with people who looked like me – White women. They/we were everywhere, so much so that they/we had become invisible. The White woman, the helper, the teacher, the invisible yet ubiquitous “face” of student affairs: she/I was my project, my “compelling interest” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 25).

Conclusion and Commencement

As I conclude this reflection, I am reminded once again of the invisibility of

White privilege in the college version of my professional and educational autobiography. I now know that the ultimate manifestation of White privilege is the privilege not to notice one's own whiteness (Wise, 2005). Just two years ago, I wrote my educational autobiography once again, this time for a doctoral seminar on college student development theory. Reflecting on my White identity and White privilege were core components of *that* edition of my autobiography. Now, I am reflecting on whiteness once again as I write my dissertation. I have completed a graduate certificate in women's studies as part of the coursework for my doctorate in College Student Personnel Administration. I have worked in a campus-based women's center at a predominantly White university. I have presented and published nationally on the importance of dismantling White privilege in the feminist movement and higher education. I have even cautioned White colleagues and students alike against listing their anti-racist "credentials" in precisely this manner. And yet, I am writing my credentials right now. I like to remember myself as having never made any mistakes, having always seen whiteness, but I am making mistakes even at this moment. The ultimate manifestation of *my* White privilege is the privilege not to notice *my* own whiteness—and to forget that I have learned to notice it, however clumsily, over time.

When I wrote my professional and educational autobiography as a college senior, I had nearly completed the sequence of courses required of women's studies concentrators. I almost didn't take the final course. I had "moved on" to thinking about issues I perceived to be more complex than gender—including race. Yet, as evident in my educational autobiography, college edition, I had much more to learn about race—for example, the fact that I *had* one. Ten years later, as a White anti-racist feminist educator,

I know enough to credit my women's studies and education courses with providing the epistemological and pedagogical foundations that made it possible for me to begin to see whiteness, however dimly I saw it at first. How *do* White women begin to see whiteness as they become student affairs professionals? In what ways can a deeper understanding of White identity influence White women to become better student affairs educators? This is the newest chapter of my autobiography.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the past 40 years, the racial and ethnic composition of the college-going population has shifted significantly, with increasing proportions of African American, Latina/o, Asian and Asian American, Native American, and multiracial students, among other historically underrepresented populations (Forty years of changes in the student body, 2007; A profile of this year's freshmen, 2011). Anticipating and responding to these trends, student affairs practitioners and scholars have long argued that “students benefit when student affairs staffs are composed of people from many backgrounds because they can observe different role models and glimpse the workforce they will one day join” (Turrentine & Conley, 2001, p. 84). To build a more diverse community, one strategy among student affairs professionals has been to recruit People of Color and members of other historically underrepresented communities to the profession through enrollment in student affairs and higher education master’s degree programs (hereafter, SA/HE programs or graduate preparation programs; Taub & McEwen, 2006). However, People of Color remain significantly underrepresented; indeed, the face of the profession remains overwhelmingly White and female (Olson, 2010; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Taub & McEwen, 2006; Tull, 2006; Turrentine & Conley, 2001; Wilkinson & Rund, 2000).

Another professional strategy for serving an increasingly diverse student population has been to identify and foster the development of essential knowledge and skills for working effectively across difference. Two critical findings from student affairs scholarship are instructive when considering how best to build this capacity among White

female professionals. First, White student affairs educators who have high levels of racial consciousness are more likely to develop competence in working effectively with a multicultural student population (Mueller & Pope, 2001). Second, attaining high levels of White racial consciousness requires an understanding of one's White racial identity (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000). Unfortunately, very little is known about racial identity development or construction among White student affairs professionals, including students in SA/HE graduate preparation programs. Further, existing models of White identity do not adequately attend to other dimensions of identity, including gender, despite the fact that "socially constructed identities are experienced simultaneously, not hierarchically" (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007, p. 2). This gap in the literature base may hinder efforts to foster racial consciousness, and thus the capacity to work effectively across difference, among contemporary student affairs educators, of whom the majority are White and female.

In response, the purpose of this study was to generate a grounded theory of racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs. In this chapter, I introduce the contemporary context for student affairs practice, highlighting the growing racial and ethnic diversity of college students, the disproportionately White and female "face" of the student affairs profession, and the need for multiculturally competent professionals. Next, I describe multicultural competence as both a critical competency and a core value of the student affairs profession. I then discuss multicultural competence in the context of SA/HE graduate preparation programs, problematizing the inconsistent curricular focus on multiculturalism and diversity. Then, I describe the purpose of the study and its research questions, define key terms, present

an overview of the proposed methodological approach, and articulate the significance of the study. Finally, I summarize and conclude the chapter.

Contemporary Context for Student Affairs Practice

Given the growing diversity of the college student population, student affairs educators have sought to build a more diverse community of professionals and to strengthen educators' capacity to serve students of all backgrounds and identities. Efforts to diversify the profession have been moderately successful but can only move so quickly given the staggering racial and ethnic inequities in higher education. Thus, one of the most significant strategies for creating more inclusive collegiate environments has been to improve the capacity of educators with dominant identities to serve students with marginalized identities. More broadly, these efforts focus on building the capacity of *all* educators to work effectively across difference. The notion of creating inclusive environments through building educators' capacity to work across difference has been popular in student affairs, as reflected in numerous documents outlining professional standards and competencies appropriate for effective student affairs practice in a global multicultural context (e.g., ACPA - College Student Educators International & NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, 2010; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2009). Most often, these approaches are identified as efforts to build multicultural competence (Pope & Mueller, 2005).

Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs

Scholars Pope, Mueller, and Reynolds have contributed to robust literature on the development of multicultural competence among student affairs professionals

(Mueller & Pope, 2001; Pope & Mueller, 2000, 2005, 2011; Pope & Reynolds, 1997; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). Identifying awareness, knowledge, and skill dimensions, the authors argued that “multicultural competence needs to be integrated into...core competencies for student affairs professionals” but also constitutes “a unique category” of professional competencies (Mueller & Pope, 2001, p. 134).

This dual focus on integration and specificity is evident in *Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs Practitioners*, a joint publication of ACPA and NASPA (2010). One of the ten competency areas is “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.” At the “basic” level, this competency area indicates that a professional should be able to “integrate cultural knowledge with specific and relevant diverse issues on campus” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010, p. 10), among other abilities. However, multicultural competence is also integrated into competency areas beyond “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion” (ACPA & NASPA, 2010). For example, globalism, or “the recognition of the interconnected nature of nations and regions of the world while understanding and respecting the uniqueness of each cultural context” (ACPA & NASPA, p. 5), is one of three “‘threads’ that are woven into most of the competency areas” (ACPA & NASPA, p. 5). One of the abilities consistent with basic competency in the area of “Personal Foundations” is in part to “...develop personal cultural skills by participating in activities that challenge one’s beliefs” (ACPA & NASPA, p. 12). Thus, consistent with scholarly literature on multicultural competence in student affairs (e.g., Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004), multicultural competence is woven into all of the competency areas identified in the ACPA and NASPA joint statements, and is also a stand-alone competency area.

Foregrounded in the *Professional Competencies* (ACPA & NASPA, 2010) and other influential documents, multicultural competence is considered not only a critical competency, but also a core value and ethical imperative of the student affairs profession (Arminio, 2011). As Arminio (2011) articulated, one of the defining characteristics of a profession is “the socialization of new members” (p. 470). In student affairs, this process occurs informally through work experience and formally through graduate programs in student affairs and higher education.

Student Affairs Graduate Preparation Programs

Although college administrators in one form or another have been part of higher education in the United States since its inception in the 1600s, the student affairs profession is a relatively modern invention (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). From 1850 to 1900, higher education gained both traction and public appeal through new and more inclusive institutional types, as well as innovative conceptualizations of knowledge (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Thelin, 2004). Responding to the “expanding roles of the faculty and the growing demands on the time of university presidents” (Dungy & Gordon, 2011, p. 63), colleges and universities appointed student personnel administrators to attend to student matters now overseen primarily by student conduct, residential life and housing services, student activities, college unions, and deans of students (Dungy & Gordon, 2011).

With a short but vibrant history, the contemporary student affairs profession is now far more complex in scope, philosophy, and purpose. As student affairs has grown, so have opportunities for graduate preparation in the profession. The first graduate preparation program in student affairs, housed at Columbia University’s Teachers

College, awarded the first Master of Arts degree in 1914 and the first doctorate to Esther Lloyd-Jones in 1929 (Nuss, 2003). Today, the Professional Preparation Commission of ACPA maintains a Directory of Graduate Programs Preparing Student Affairs Professionals (Commission on Professional Preparation, n.d.). Institutions are listed in the directory because they “have at least one graduate program that prepares student affairs professionals” (Commission on Professional Preparation, n.d., para. 1). One hundred thirty-four institutions listed in the directory offer a master’s degree that prepares student affairs professionals. Given multiple perspectives on the competencies necessary for new professionals (ACPA & NASPA, 2010; Arminio, 2011; Kuk, Cobb, & Forrest, 2007), programs vary in curriculum and departmental location, with some emphasizing counseling, others focusing on administration, and still others offering a blended approach (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that even with the visibility of multicultural competence as a core professional value, there is great variation in the extent to which diversity and multiculturalism are infused in SA/HE program curricula (Cuyjet et al., 2009; Flowers, 2003; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Inconsistent Emphasis on Diversity and Multiculturalism

The varying prominence of diversity and multiculturalism in SA/HE graduate preparation programs (Gayles & Kelly, 2007) is cause for concern given the demonstrated need for student affairs professionals to serve an increasingly diverse student population. In a study of graduate students and new practitioners, Gayles and Kelly (2007) found that even in programs offering a required course on multiculturalism and diversity, many students and new professionals did not consider this course to be

“enough” to do “any of the issues any justice” (p. 199) or prepare them for cross-cultural work in the field. This finding is particularly troubling when considering the White majority of student affairs professionals, for whom the development of White racial consciousness is a significant predictor of multicultural competence (Mueller & Pope, 2001). Although White students can make some inroads in a single course (e.g., Lemons, 2007), such inroads are by no means sufficient for the ongoing task of developing meaningful racial consciousness or integrating an action-oriented multicultural perspective into their future work as student affairs professionals (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000). Thus, a critical issue facing SA/HE practitioners and scholars is the following: How can graduate preparation programs cultivate racial consciousness among new professionals so that they are ideally equipped to embrace the continuing pursuit of multicultural competence?

Shifting the Gaze to Whiteness

One answer to this challenge is to “interrupt the cultural gaze” (Fine, 1997, p. 64) of the discourse about diversity and multiculturalism as it pertains to the demographics of the student affairs profession. Practitioners and scholars have been right to insist on the need to recruit and retain more People of Color and members of other historically underrepresented groups in the profession (Olson, 2010; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Sagaria & Johnsrud, 1991; Talbot, 1996; Taub & McEwen, 2006; Tull, 2006; Turrentine & Conley, 2001; Wilkinson & Rund, 2000). However, there has been far less emphasis on the structures of power and privilege (Brookfield, 2005; Johnson, 2006), especially White privilege, undergirding the historical underrepresentation of People of Color. Indeed, the lack of attention to whiteness in SA/HE “may unwittingly contribute to the

universalization of Whiteness, and consequently, the marginalization of non-White racial identities” (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000, p. 81). SA/HE programs could improve and renew commitments to fostering racial consciousness among White students, particularly White women, given their overrepresentation in the field. Importantly, for White student affairs professionals, developing racial consciousness requires coming to terms with one’s White identity (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000), a topic not new to graduate preparation programs.

White Identity and Student Development Theory

Certainly, the topic of White identity is not unheard of in graduate preparation programs. In SA/HE programs and courses emphasizing multiculturalism and diversity, students are likely to encounter, if only briefly, theories of White identity development and discussions about White privilege (e.g., Hardiman, 2001; Helms, 1995; McIntosh, 1988/2004; Tatum, 2003). In addition, some student development theory scholars have specifically attended to the study of whiteness with an explicit intention to disrupt White supremacy in higher education (Closson & Henry, 2008; Hall & Closson, 2005; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Mercer & Cunningham, 2003; Miville, Darlington, Whitlock, & Mulligan, 2005; Olson, 2010; Reason & Evans, 2007; Reason, Millar, & Scales, 2005; Spanierman, Oh, Poteat, Hund, McClair, Beer, & Clarke, 2008; Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003). These scholars and others have sought to shift the gaze (Fine, 1997) from individuals of color to the structural realities of whiteness, and “to remove the white glaucoma that has ruined scholarly vision” (Fine, 1997, p. 57) regarding matters of multiculturalism, inclusion, and social justice.

Through this line of inquiry, student development theory scholars have joined scholars in other disciplines in contributing to the study of White racial identity. Over

time this work has illuminated the role of power and privilege, the formation of a positive conception of whiteness, and a commitment to anti-racist practice in everyday life (Frankenberg, 1993; Helms, 1984, 1990, 1995, 2008; McIntosh, 1988/2004). Although SA/HE master's degree students may not encounter all of these newer pieces, the newest edition of *Student Development in College* (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010), a primary text in many SA/HE programs, has a commendable focus (Abes, 2011) on privilege in the chapter introducing social identity development.

Barriers to White Identity Exploration among White, Female SA/HE Students

Despite the promise of recent SA/HE scholarship on whiteness, the uneven focus on multiculturalism and diversity in SA/HE programs remains a concern (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). Even when White students do encounter more traditional theories of White identity, the lasting impact of this exposure is questionable given limited time spent on the topic in class and inadequate opportunities to apply the topic in their work settings (Gayles & Kelly, 2007), along with the resistance White students typically display in response to reading about White privilege (Gillespie, Ashbaugh, & DeFiore, 2002; Watt, 2007) and limited opportunities for reflection on their own White racial identities (Reason, Scales, & Millar, 2005). Among contemporary White women students, there are unique barriers to engagement with White identity theories, which are viewed by some as out-of-date and too silent about gender, a salient identity for these women. As Accapadi (2007) astutely observed, White women have a “one up/one down identity” (p. 210) and thus “can be both helpless without the helplessness being a reflection of all White people and powerful by occupying a position of power as any White person” (p.

210). This phenomenon is scarcely reflected in the White identity theories to which SA/HE students are exposed.

As an additional challenge to facilitating an understanding of White identity among SA/HE students, the primary focus of their studies is likely to be on the undergraduate students with whom they will work or with whom they are already working. Thus, unless aligned with their internship, assistantship, or other professional experiences, engaging with White identity theories in the classroom is not enough (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). This problem is poignantly summarized in the words of Gorski (2000): “I found that it was not the experience of studying whiteness, but the process of examining my whiteness, that became vital to my development as an educator” (para. 1). How can student affairs practitioners and faculty members engage White students, especially White women, in examining their whiteness?

Importantly, White students’ disinclination to examine whiteness in their own lives is not only a product of curricular exposure or experiential learning opportunities. Their hesitation also reflects Jones and McEwen’s (2000) finding that, in the context of multiple social identities, privileged identities are not salient, suggesting “that systems of privilege and inequality [are] least visible and understood by those who are most privileged by these systems” (p. 410). White students’ reluctance to explore their whiteness also constitutes defensiveness and resistance, a hallmark of privileged identity exploration (Gillespie et al., 2002; Watt, 2007) especially among those who are not developmentally ready to encounter the concept of White privilege (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000). Anti-racist scholars and activists have long suggested that such resistance simply reflects White people’s latent awareness that foregrounding White privilege would force

them to acknowledge their complicity in racist power structures, which is difficult to accept (Watt, 2007). However, other scholars have argued that this resistance warrants a more complex reading and that White people do not always see themselves or their experiences in White racial identity models (Lensmire, 2010).

Such incongruence may be heightened for White individuals with a “one up/one down identity” (Accapadi, 2007, p. 210), who do not see their oppressed identity or identities (e.g., class, ability, sexual orientation, gender) reflected in White identity models, since these models speak only to the privileged identity of whiteness. Student development scholarship on multiple identities (Abes et al., 2007; Jones, 1997; Jones & McEwen, 2000) has demonstrated that students experience multiple dimensions of social identity simultaneously, not in isolation. Succinctly, “White women don’t have the same social, political, or economic power as white men” but “[n]onetheless, they have gained some of the benefits of racism” (Kivel, 2002, p. 75). Thus, for a theory of racial identity to resonate with White women, it would need to reflect the dual realities of racial privilege and gender oppression. This dual reality is particularly salient in student affairs, where women and feminist values have had critical roles in shaping the profession but are inadequately recognized as such (Hart & Metcalfe, 2010; Hoffman, 2011).

White Women in Graduate Preparation Programs: Racial Identity, Racial Consciousness, and Multicultural Competence

I have described the context for contemporary student affairs practice, the need for multiculturally competent student affairs professionals (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009), and the inconsistent emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism in SA/HE programs (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). I have also identified the critical role of racial

consciousness in fostering multicultural competence among White professionals (Mueller & Pope, 2001), and the over-representation of White women in student affairs (Taub & McEwen, 2006). In light of these issues, promoting the development of racial consciousness among White women in student affairs is an essential objective for the profession. Fostering racial consciousness among White SA/HE graduate students requires ample opportunities for racial identity exploration (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000), yet such exploration hinges in large part on exposure to theories of racial identity that resonate with White students. For White women, extant theories may not resonate due to a combination of resistance (Gillespie et al., 2002; Watt, 2007) and the invisibility of gender in most theories of White identity. Thus, facilitating the lifelong pursuit of multicultural competence (a critical professional value) among White women (a significant if not majority population within the student affairs profession) requires the generation of new theories of racial identity that resonate with White women in the profession.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to investigate racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs. Specific research questions included:

1. How does racial identity develop over time among White women?
2. How do White women construct racial identities?
3. In what ways do educational and professional experiences, including those that occur in SA/HE master's degree programs, influence White women's racial identities?

4. In what ways do multiple layers of social context, including power and privilege, influence White women's racial identities?

Definition of Terms

To generate a theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master's degree programs, several key terms must be defined. These terms include *identity development*, *identity construction*, *racial identity*, *racial consciousness*, and *racial dissonance*. For the purposes of this study, the definitions of these terms are the following:

- *Identity development* refers to the formation over time of “a sense of self that usually feels more grounded and stable” to the individual than she or he has felt in the past (Torres et al., 2003, pp. 2-3). Much of identity development is thought to occur in late adolescence (Erikson, 1959/1994), the traditional age range of college students. Because most college students report significant changes to their sense of self during their time in college, most scholars who study college student experiences have conceptualized identity as a developmental process (Torres et al., 2003; Willie, 2003).
- *Identity construction* refers to the notion that, rather than “essential and fixed” (Yon, 2000, p. 13), “identity is a process of making identifications, a process that is continuous and incomplete” (p. 13). Yon's (2000) ethnographic study of youth in Canada illustrated the ways in which individuals actively identify with the “lifestyle possibilities” that they are able to envision (p. 13). This conceptualization of identity highlights “a constructed and open-ended process” (p. 13) rather than a singular, stable sense of self.

- Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson (1994) defined *racial consciousness* as “one’s awareness of being White and what that implies in relation to those who do not share White group membership” (pp. 133-134). Racial consciousness is reflected primarily in attitudes but may also appear through behavior and affect (Rowe et al., 1994). Importantly, racial consciousness is salient for some individuals as “part of their sense of identity” (p. 134), whereas for others, racial consciousness is less salient.
- Finally, *racial dissonance* refers, in the context of White racial identity development, to “a catastrophic event or a series of personal encounters that the person can no longer ignore” (Helms, 2008, p. 32). Many student development theories involve the resolution of dissonance as a central developmental task (Jones & Abes, 2011). In the case of White racial identity development, dissonance emerges when an individual’s schema for making meaning of racial interactions no longer makes sense or violates a moral principle (Helms, 2008). I will discuss White racial identity development and the notion of racial schemas in more detail in Chapter 2, but the definition of racial dissonance is introduced now because of its critical relationship to White identity.

Methodology

Grounded theory methodology guided this study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master’s degree programs. Characterized by researchers’ ongoing interaction with the data, detailed procedures for data analysis and coding, and “the iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analysis” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1), grounded theory methodology is ideal for

investigating phenomena for which there is little empirical support. Brown, Stevens, Troiano, and Schneider (2002) suggested that grounded theory “can be an effective tool in conceptualizing complex phenomena, providing language to describe it, detailing how it occurs, and ultimately, student affairs educators’ contributions to this process” (p. 182). As such, grounded theory methodology was particularly well suited to this study.

The constructivist epistemological approach to grounded theory “places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). The use of constructivist grounded theory methodology to investigate social justice-related research questions is known as *grounded theory for social justice* (Charmaz, 2005). Charmaz (2005) described *social justice research* as a broad area of inquiry that “can sensitize [grounded theory researchers] to look at both large collectivities and individual experiences in new ways” (p. 513), both of which are salient in existing scholarship on White identity (e.g., Fine, 1994; Frankenberg, 1993; Helms, 1995; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Owen, 2007). However, scholars must define social justice in the context of their particular projects (North, 2008). Thus, Chapter 3 provides an explication of grounded theory for social justice as an epistemological and methodological umbrella encompassing constructivism (Charmaz, 2003, 2005, 2006) along with feminist inquiry (Bloom, 1998; Harding, 1991; Lather, 2007; Olesen, 2007; Scott, 1999; Stanley & Wise, 1990; Wuest, 1995) and Critical Whiteness studies (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fine, Powell, Weiss, & Wong, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce the relevance of and need for this study, which generated a grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master's degree programs. By identifying connections between White identity, White racial consciousness, and multicultural competence, I sought to demonstrate that the student affairs profession will benefit from greater knowledge about racial identity among White women, who are over-represented in the field.

Importantly, structures of power, White privilege, and whiteness are inextricably tied to higher education and to the racial identity development of SA/HE students and professionals. I highlight these structures in the following chapter to foreground a crucial point about the topic of this study and my investment in it: that “the issue is not Whiteness per se but dominance” (Gillespie et al., 2002, p. 249). By generating a theory of racial identity in which contemporary White women in SA/HE saw themselves represented, I sought to engage them in a collective dialogue about “how our society might dismantle its historical practices of social injustice” (Gillespie et al., p. 249). Toward this end, in the next chapter I examine multiple areas of scholarly literature that have informed my thinking about racial identity among White women, with attention to the educational and professional context of student affairs and higher education as well as power, White privilege, and whiteness.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Researchers have long disputed the role of the literature review in qualitative studies, particularly in grounded theory research (e.g., Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Kearney, 2007). Initially, Glaser and Strauss (1967) and their followers argued that researchers should not complete a review of relevant literature until the analysis was complete. Charmaz (2006) reminded readers that classic grounded theorists did “not want you to see your data through the lens of earlier ideas, often known as ‘received theory’” (p. 165). However, many contemporary grounded theorists view the literature review differently, arguing that theories and constructs from extant literature serve as “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 2007; Kearney, 2007) that provide initial ideas and orient researchers toward particular questions. Informed by the notion of sensitizing concepts, Charmaz (2006) suggested that the review of relevant literature “provides [a researcher with] a place to engage the ideas and research in the areas that [her or his] grounded theory addresses” (p. 168). The literature review also provides a means for readers to evaluate the researcher’s understanding of prior research and thus to situate the new study in this larger context.

Accordingly, in this literature review I seek to engage the ideas and research most relevant to this study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master’s degree programs. Although primarily situated in the college student development literature, this chapter is cross-disciplinary in nature for two reasons. First, as a scholar and educator, I have been influenced by scholarly work not only in higher education and student affairs, but also gender, sexuality, and women’s studies; curriculum and instruction; ethnic

studies; psychology; sociology; and anthropology. As such, it is important that I acknowledge these influences on the development of the proposed study. Second, contemporary student development scholars have begun to advocate for the use of multiple theoretical perspectives (Abes, 2009; Baxter Magolda, 2009; Jones & Abes, 2011). Approaching theory development with multiple perspectives “highlights the complexity and messiness of student development” (Abes, 2009, p. 150) and “helps to address nagging questions in student development theory” (Abes, 2009, p. 17). Further, using multiple perspectives “challenges power inequities and speaks to students’ understandings of themselves” (Abes, 2009, p. 155). Given the central focus of this study on White women’s understandings of themselves as racial beings, the use of multiple theoretical perspectives is appropriate for, if not essential to, this study. More specifically, I locate this study in a “theoretical borderlands” (Abes, 2009, p. 143) at the intersection of the academic traditions described above.

In addition to multiple theoretical perspectives, this chapter is guided by Renn’s (2003) developmental ecology lens as a conceptual framework. Applying Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1993) ecology model to findings from a previous study of mixed race college students, Renn (2003) argued that “[c]onceptualizing the development of individual students within a complex, dynamic, interactive web of environments, some of which do not even contain them, provides a rich contextual field for the study of cognitive, moral, and identity development” (p. 386). Through the concept of “nested contexts” (Renn, 2003, p. 386) ranging from the microsystem to the chronosystem, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1993) developmental ecology model provided a framework for Renn to examine the identity development of mixed race students in a way that accounted

for some of this environmental complexity. While Renn's work (2003) applied Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) ecology model to the development of mixed race college students, in this study I apply it to the study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE programs. Situating the study of White identity in an ecological context reflects an emphasis on not only the "nested contexts" (Renn, 2003, p. 386) in which racial identity *formation* among White women takes place, but also the nested theoretical and disciplinary contexts in which the *study* of White identity among college women has emerged.

Thus, guided by a developmental ecology lens (Renn, 2003) and situated in a "theoretical borderland" (Abes, 2009, p. 143), this chapter reviews literature relevant to racial identity among White women in SA/HE master's degree programs. First, I introduce power, White privilege, and whiteness as all-encompassing structural contexts. Then, I review available research on educational and professional influences on White identity among SA/HE students and professionals. The next major section includes foundational approaches to student identity development; women, gender, and student identity development; and racial identity development. Having introduced racial identity development, I then concentrate on White identity development, tracing this family of theories from early conceptualizations to more contemporary models. In the final major section of the review, I examine research that focuses explicitly on the racial identities of White women, with considerable attention to Frankenberg's (1993) *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. The nested layers of social context in the literature review are analogous to the macro-, meso-, and microsystems (Renn, 2003) in which White women in SA/HE are situated. I conclude this chapter by emphasizing the

need for research examining racial identity among White women in student affairs and higher education, especially among graduate students entering the field.

Power

Many social scientists first become familiar with the construct of power through the seminal work of social theorist Foucault (Brookfield, 2005; Foucault, 1978/1990). Prior to Foucault's (1978/1990) work, prevailing social discourses framed power as a discrete and tangible entity that was external to institutions and relationships (Foucault, 1978/1990). As a result, power was usually conceptualized in dualistic terms: either one had it, or one did not (Brookfield, 2005). Foucault (1978/1990) introduced a far more complex way of thinking about power. In the "Method" chapter of *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction (Volume 1)*, Foucault (1978/1990) introduced a working theory of power that challenged contemporary thinking in many ways, three of which are particularly informative. First, according to Foucault (1978/1990), power is not a discrete, external entity, and it is not fixed in time or space; nor is it exercised from above. Rather, it "comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 93) and is produced through and an inextricable part of relationships and institutions. Second, the lived experience of power (or the "internal conditions" Foucault described) is characterized by the very same "divisions, inequalities, and disequilibriums" (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 94) from which power emerges in the first place. Thus, power both *produces* relationships and institutions, and is produced *by* them (Foucault, 1978/1990).

As a third challenge to contemporary thinking, in Foucault's (1978/1990) analysis, one of the key features of power is that it masks itself. Indeed, Foucault argued that "power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its

success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 86). According to Brookfield (2005), this tendency of power to conceal its origins is often described as hegemony. Further, according to Foucault (1978/1990), this tendency emerged as an artifact of Western monarchies from the Middle Ages forward. Through monarchy, power and the law were mutually constitutive forces; “law had to be the very form of power, and ... power always had to be exercised in the form of law” (Foucault, 1978/1990, p. 88). However, an understanding of power that scrutinizes only the law is problematic because it overlooks the everyday practices – which include practices that may *appear* to be liberatory – through which power is exercised and maintained (Brookfield, 2005; Foucault, 1978/1990). As Brookfield (2005) articulated, “apparently liberatory practices can actually work subtly to perpetuate existing power relations” (p. 146).

To illuminate this phenomenon, Brookfield (2005) translated Foucault’s (1978/1990) work on power to the realm of higher education. Remarking on his early experiences as an adult educator, Brookfield (2005) recalled that the ideal of democratic, civil discourse conflicted with the reality of power relations in the classroom: “Just because my classrooms looked democratic did *not* mean learners felt themselves to be in a power-free zone” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 118). By applying Foucault’s analysis of power (1978/1990), Brookfield (2005) pointed to practices such as hand raising, eye contact, seating, and acceptable forms of speech as examples of “the way disciplinary power is exercised or the way participants feel subject to a certain form of surveillance while superficially inhabiting a liberatory space” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 121). A Foucauldian, power-focused analysis thus revealed inextricable connections between individual

experiences and larger structural realities (Brookfield, 2005). Notably, the connection between individual experience and multiple layers of social context is a distinct feature of the research questions for this study.

Although there are many implications of a Foucauldian (1978/1990) power analysis for student affairs and higher education, Brookfield (2005) may have identified the most important one:

It is easy for adult educators to focus on sovereign power—the arrogant teacher, the unresponsive administrator, ... and so on. We often think of sovereign power as the enemy, and there is some comfort in feeling we have identified our enemy and can work to subvert or confront it. *It is much harder for adult educators to focus on their collusion in and exercise of disciplinary power and surveillance.*

...Foucault's work...helps adult educators guard against the arrogant certainty that they are free of any authoritarian or manipulative dimensions to their practice. (Brookfield, 2005, p. 121, emphasis mine)

Identifying one's "collusion in and exercise of disciplinary power and surveillance" allows one to begin to unmask inequitable structures that reinforce disciplinary power. Chief among these structures is privilege, which includes White privilege.

White Privilege

Drawing on the influential work of McIntosh (1988/2004), Johnson (2006) defined privilege as something that "exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they've done or failed to do" (p. 21). These "things of value" are not tangible goods; rather, they exist in two intangible and highly systematized forms. The first form

of privilege consists of “*unearned entitlement[s]*” (McIntosh, 1988/2004, p. 107), or rights most people would agree should be extended to all those who live in a democratic society. An unearned entitlement becomes an “*unearned advantage*” when “only a few people have it” (McIntosh, 1988/2004, p. 107).

The second form of privilege is “*conferred dominance*” (Johnson, 2006, p. 23; McIntosh, 1988/2004, p. 107) in which one group obtains and maintains power over another. Contrary to the connotations often attached to the word “privilege” (e.g., “luck”), conferred dominance suggests the systematic empowerment of one group at the expense of another group’s *disempowerment*. Whereas unearned advantages may refer to “positive advantages which we can work to spread” (McIntosh, 1988/2004, p. 107), conferred dominance describes a system of power through which unearned advantages become available to some but not others. Together, these two forms of privilege, unearned advantage and conferred dominance, function in a manner consistent with Foucault’s (1978/1990) analysis of power. Both forms endure by concealing their origins.

If racism systematically confers disadvantages onto People of Color, then White privilege is a corollary system that puts White people at an advantage (McIntosh, 1988/2004). A result of conferred dominance, White privilege results in myriad unearned advantages for people with White skin. McIntosh (1988/2004) famously referred to White privilege as “like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” (p. 104). McIntosh (1988/2004) also “unpacked” her own knapsack by publishing a list of 26 ways in which she benefits from White privilege in her daily life. Widely republished (Johnson, 2006),

McIntosh's analysis of White privilege, metaphor of the invisible knapsack, and list of its contents have become cornerstones of anti-racist education (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Watt, 2007).

As a Foucauldian (1978/1990) analysis would suggest, White privilege endures because it conceals its origins in precisely the manner to which the metaphor of an invisible knapsack alludes. The nature of White privilege is such that those who benefit from it do not notice its existence unless they are explicitly taught to do so. Thus, teaching White individuals to recognize White privilege requires them to see the invisible. When White individuals recognize White privilege and seek to dismantle it, they are actively working against racism (McIntosh, 1988/2004). However, a thorough analysis of White privilege requires an understanding of whiteness.

Whiteness

The literature on whiteness and White privilege is now extensive, having gained particularly strong currency in the 1990s and a revival of sorts in the late 2000s (e.g., Dyer, 1997/2002; Fine, Weis, Powell, & Wong, 1997; Frankenberg, 1993; Kivel, 2002; Lipsitz, 1997/2002; Rothenberg, 2002; Thandeka, 1999; Thompson, 2001; Wise, 2005). Within the whiteness literature, there is a sub-category focusing on the theoretical lens known as Critical White Studies or Critical Whiteness (e.g., Delgado & Stefancic, 1997, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Owen, 2007; Roediger, 1994). As a result, myriad definitions and discussions of whiteness exist. Although I am familiar with each of the texts cited in this paragraph, a thorough review of each one would be beyond the scope of this study. Instead, in this section I highlight two authors,

Frankenberg (1993) and Owen (2007), whose functional definitions of whiteness resonate with the proposed dissertation study.

In *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*,

Frankenberg (1993) defined whiteness in the following way:

First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a “standpoint,” a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, “whiteness” refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed. (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1)

For Frankenberg (1993), whiteness thus has three interconnected dimensions: a structural dimension, an experiential dimension, and a cultural dimension.

A second informative definition of whiteness comes from Owen (2007), a Critical Whiteness scholar. Promoting a critical theory of whiteness, Owen’s (2007) analysis is in some ways equivalent to McIntosh’s (1988/2004) account of the contents of her invisible knapsack of White privilege. The difference is that Owen’s (2007) analysis is at the social structural level and concerns the identification of seven “functional properties” (p. 205) of whiteness. First, Owen (2007) suggested that whiteness involves a “particular racialized perspective or standpoint” (p. 205), and second, that it constitutes a “racialized social location of structural advantage” (p. 206). Third, whiteness is defined as what is normalized, mainstream, or hegemonic. As a result, the fourth property of whiteness is that it “is largely invisible to whites and yet highly visible to non-whites” (p. 206). Fifth, although not limited to skin color, whiteness is “embodied,” meaning that it shapes the “actions, social practices and dispositions” of those who are “racialized as white” (p. 206). However, a sixth functional property of whiteness is that it is dynamic, fluid, and

contingent on particular sociohistorical contexts. Finally, whiteness is inextricably tied to violence (Owen, 2007). Owen (2007) articulated the connection between whiteness and violence in striking terms: “Not only does whiteness have its origins in the physical and psychic violence of the enslavement, genocide and exploitation of peoples of color around the world, but also it maintains the system of white supremacy in part by means of actual and potential violence” (p. 206).

By presenting these seven functional properties, Owen (2007) introduced a comprehensive definition of whiteness that includes nested structural and contextual dimensions. However, for Owen (2007) “a complete critical theory of whiteness will need to explain how each of these properties contributes to the reproduction of the system of white supremacy” (pp. 206-207). To work toward such a theory, Owen (2007) then outlined three “modalities” (p. 207) of whiteness, addressing one of them—whiteness as a property that structures modern social systems—in depth. For Owen (2007), structuring social systems means that whiteness is something that conditions “social practices,” “cultural representations” and “the formation of identity” (p. 207). Overall, Owen’s (2007) preliminary outline of a critical theory of whiteness is quite complex and suggests that individual identities and experiences cannot be separated from multiple layers of social and structural context.

Reason and Evans (2007) identified two “realities of Whiteness” (p. 73) inhabited by White students in higher education. First, there is the color-blind reality. This reality hinges on a belief that “‘good’ White people” (p. 73) should ignore race, and they are rewarded for doing so. The color-blind reality also relies on “the hegemony of individuality” (p. 73) to suggest that any inequalities can be explained by personal rather

than structural reasons. The second reality of whiteness is a “racially cognizant sense of Whiteness [that] involves a continuous process of rearticulating the meaning of race” (p. 71). Inhabiting this reality requires an understanding and acceptance of “guilt, power, and privilege yet avoids the paralysis and victim perspectives that some Whites assume” (p. 71). As such, the race-cognizant reality of whiteness acts as a site for translating the contexts of power, White privilege, and whiteness into a constructive engagement with one’s sense of self as a White racial being (Reason & Evans, 2007).

In sum, the purpose of this section has been to describe power, White privilege, and whiteness as nested layers of social context influencing White identity. As emphasized in Owen’s (2007) analysis and Reason and Evans’ (2007) discussion, whiteness is a property that structures modern social systems, including higher education. Indeed, colleges and universities constitute an important layer of context through which power, privilege, and whiteness shape racial identity. Thus, the following section reviews educational and professional influences on White identity among SA/HE students and professionals.

Educational and Professional Influences on White Identity

There are numerous potential educational and professional influences on racial identity among White women in SA/HE programs. Given the focus of this study, I primarily consider educational and professional influences most relevant to student affairs. Importantly, many of these studies were of White identity or White racial consciousness without attention to gender. Nevertheless, they are included to inform a broad understanding of educational and professional influences on racial identity and related constructs among student affairs professionals and those studying to become new

professionals. As in all sections of this chapter, my goal is not to exhaust the literature in one or more areas, but rather to present a series of sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 2007; Kearney, 2007) that influenced my thinking as I designed and conducted this study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs.

Undergraduate Students

Before turning to the student affairs profession, several recent studies of undergraduate students are worthy contributions to an understanding of educational influences on White identity. Carr and Caskie (2010) conducted a path analysis of social-problem solving (SPS) and White racial identity. Defining SPS as “how individuals perceive and cope with intrapersonal and interpersonal components in everyday living” (Carr & Caskie, 2010, p. 622), Carr and Caskie found several of the hypothesized positive relationships between SPS and White racial identity to be statistically significant. To interpret this finding, the authors posited that the skills involved in SPS required maturity in “the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral processes that govern the interpretation of racial information in an individual’s interpersonal environment” (Carr & Caskie, 2010, p. 632). While not strictly an educational influence, SPS is a complex cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal task that evokes self-authorship, a highly desired outcome of higher education (Baxter Magolda, 2004). Thus, the finding that some components of SPS have significant and positive relationships with racial identity development among White students is notable.

Hunter and Nettles (1999) investigated White identity among undergraduates in quite a different way by studying their own experiences as sociologists teaching a

women's studies course focusing on Women of Color. Hunter and Nettles (1999) taught this material, mostly the work of Women of Color scholars, to a diverse group of 74 female students and one male student. The authors found that White women in the course used the discourses of power evasion and colorblindness, as identified by Frankenberg (1993), to resist some of the most important lessons in the text. In particular, White female students were eager for materials that focused more on the positive achievements of Women of Color rather than oppression and injustice. Interpreting this finding, Hunter and Nettles (1999) remarked, "we were struck with the idea that students lack any real familiarity with the concept of power" (p. 394) and that as a result, the discourse of colorblindness (Frankenberg, 1993) was the only language available to them.

In a third study of undergraduates, Case (2003) conducted qualitative research investigating the activities of a White women's anti-racist discussion group. Three themes emerged from this study: the social self, which included White racial identity, guilt, and personal connections to racism; social influences on participants' anti-racism; and societal change, which included activism, silence and interruption of racism, and difficulties in taking action (Case, 2003). Although findings were meaningful and well presented, this study was not specific about the methodological approach used. In addition, Case (2003) examined a group of self-identified anti-racist White women, rather than a broader "spectrum" (Collins, 1995, p. 729) as was the case in, for example, Frankenberg's (1993) work.

Finally, Linder (2011) conducted a transformative narrative inquiry of college women who identified as anti-racist White feminists. Several influences were significant

in students' anti-racist identity development processes, including family members, activism and involvement, women's and ethnic studies coursework, and relationships with People of Color (Linder, 2011). Influences on anti-racist activism included fears of seeming racist, "internal dialogue and hyper awareness" (Linder, 2011, p. iii), activism in daily life, and the importance of community. This study offers recommendations for social justice-oriented pedagogy, practice, and scholarship in student affairs, higher education, and women's studies. With an explicit focus on anti-racist White feminists, Linder's (2011) inquiry reveals much about the narratives White women construct about coming to identify as both feminists and anti-racists. However, the topic of racial identity among women in higher education who may not (yet – or ever) identify as feminists or anti-racists is left for future scholars to explore.

The purpose of this section was to review research about educational influences on White identity among undergraduate students. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of educational influences, given the dearth of research about graduate students in general (Gardner & Barnes, 2007) and student affairs graduate students in particular (Mueller & Pope, 2001; Pope & Reynolds, 1997). However, some research does focus on racial identity among SA/HE graduate students and professionals, which is the topic of the following section.

Student Affairs and Higher Education Professionals and Graduate Students

There is modest but growing scholarly attention to educational and professional influences on racial identity among SA/HE graduate students and professionals. Three strands of inquiry are particularly relevant to this study: multicultural competence, whiteness and White identity, and White women as SA/HE professionals.

Multicultural competence. As discussed in Chapter 1, multicultural competence has emerged as a critical competency for student affairs professionals (Council for the Advancement of Standards, 2009; ACPA & NASPA, 2010). In a recent discussion of diversity research in student affairs, Pope, Mueller, and Reynolds (2009) described multicultural competence as “the training, skills, knowledge, and experience needed by practitioners to understand themselves as racial/cultural beings and to work effectively to create diverse, sensitive, and affirming campuses” (p. 647). The notion of multicultural competence suggests that to be effective in creating inclusive campus environments, professionals must build self-awareness and understanding as racial and cultural beings. Importantly, multicultural competence among White practitioners has been linked to racial consciousness (Mueller & Pope, 2001), which in turn is facilitated by exploration of one’s White racial identity (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000). Thus, research on multicultural competence is vitally important to consider as part of the educational and professional context surrounding racial identity among White women in SA/HE programs. Although few scholars have examined multicultural competence among White student affairs students and professionals, the existing scholarship is informative.

Mueller and Pope (2003) found that White students with higher levels of multicultural education opportunities, who have implemented multicultural programs and policies, and who discuss multicultural issues w/their supervisors are more likely to explore racial issues, have positive racial attitudes, be certain of their views on racial issues, and “have an awareness and a desire to combat racism” (Mueller & Pope, 2003, p. 162). This finding bolstered the previous research of Mueller and Pope (2001) indicating

that multicultural experiences were significant and positive predictors of racial consciousness and multicultural competence among White student affairs professionals.

King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) conducted a national study of multicultural competence among college student personnel (CSP) graduate students, student affairs professionals, and diversity educators. They found increasingly higher mean scores in multicultural competence across these three groups, and they also found higher mean scores among People of Color than among White students and professionals. However, ANOVAs did not yield any statistically significant differences in mean scores, pointing to the difficulty of measuring multicultural competence and of comparing groups with different characteristics (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003).

Only one quantitative study was identified with an explicit focus on multicultural competence among White student affairs professionals. Among White student affairs professionals, experience with multicultural education and the development of White racial consciousness were both identified as significant and positive predictors of multicultural competence (Mueller & Pope, 2001). As already noted, for White student affairs practitioners, coming to terms with one's White racial identity and socialization has been found an indispensable part of developing racial consciousness (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000).

Whiteness and White identity. Although most literature on whiteness and White identity in student affairs is research-based, the highly influential work of Ortiz and Rhoads (2000) is theoretical and pedagogical in nature. To contribute to multicultural education in student affairs and beyond, these authors presented a theoretical approach to the deconstruction of whiteness. Critical of arguments by some

Critical Whiteness scholars who seek to abolish whiteness, Ortiz and Rhoads (2000) countered that “its elimination is not the only solution: Displacing Whiteness as the universal standard by which all other races are gauged is also a step toward racial and cultural equity” (p. 83). Toward this end, Ortiz and Rhoads presented a five-step framework of multicultural education: (1) Understanding Culture, (2) Learning about Other Cultures, (3) Recognizing and Deconstructing White Culture, (4) Recognizing the Legitimacy of Other Cultures, and (5) Developing a Multicultural Outlook. They envisioned this framework not as a linear model, but rather as one “in which each of the five steps contributes to an overall educational goal of enhancing multicultural education” (p. 86). Overall, through this framework Ortiz and Rhoads (2000) sought to provide a pedagogical toolkit to assist educators in the project of decentering and deconstructing whiteness. However, despite a focus on White identity in the literature review, the proposed multicultural education framework did not explicitly focus on White identity.

In addition to Ortiz and Rhoads’ (2000) theoretical framework, four studies were identified that have investigated whiteness and White identity among student affairs professionals using qualitative methodologies, thus yielding findings that described the lived experience of whiteness in the profession. Arminio (1994, 2001) conducted a phenomenological exploration of being White with six White student affairs professionals, including some doctoral students, as participants or “co-travelers” (Arminio, 1994, p. 75). Arminio found that whiteness was lived through themes of “connection, disconnection, reconnection, and no connection” (Arminio, 1994, Abstract, para. 2). Movingly expressed through themes of connection or “bindings,” Arminio

(1994) found that doctoral study in student affairs “fill[ed] a void of lost connections and no connections” that previously had characterized the lived experience of White Being among co-travelers.

Arminio (1994) also found that through graduate study in student affairs, White participants or co-travelers in her phenomenological study reconnected with White Being through “interactions with role models, classmates on similar journeys, People of Color, literature and research on White Being, and the living in a diverse environment” (p. 188). Another significant finding from Arminio’s (1994) study concerned the nature of race-related guilt, the topic of a second analysis (Arminio, 2001). In that analysis, the sources of guilt included White privilege, individual race-related transgressions, and the transgressions or actions of ancestors. However, in some cases guilt also prompted participants’ or co-travelers’ awareness of racial identity and thus served as a catalyst for development (Arminio, 2001).

In a related study, Carter, Honeyford, McKaskle, Guthrie, Mahoney, and Carter (2007) presented a collective reflexive account of their experiences in a doctoral seminar on whiteness. Using Watt’s (2007) Privilege Identity Model (PIE), the authors, who included African American and White doctoral students, an African American professor, and an African, examined their own use of defense mechanisms such as denial, rationalization, and minimization. Through difficult dialogues, seminar participants challenged and supported each other to work through these defense mechanisms, thus beginning to recognize the role of whiteness and privilege in shaping their experiences. The authors also found that such dialogues rarely occurred in other educational or

professional settings “where the topic [of whiteness] is not central” (Carter et al., 2007, p. 158).

Adding to the work of Arminio (1994, 2001) and Carter et al. (2007), Schmitz (2010) conducted an exploratory dissertation case study of whiteness within the student affairs division at a predominantly White Jesuit university. Schmitz (2010) found that whiteness was embedded in the curriculum, beliefs about the “ideal” student, and efforts to “contain” difference through discourses such as representativeness.

Two recent dissertation studies examined whiteness, White identity, or anti-racism among student affairs graduate students. Olson (2010) conducted a narrative case study of meaning making about whiteness, White privilege, and multiculturalism among White male graduate students in student affairs graduate preparation programs. Olson (2010) found that participants experienced whiteness as “nothingness” (p. 111) or were oblivious to the existence of whiteness as a race. Another finding was that although participants were aware of White privilege, they reported that they rarely took action to challenge it (Olson, 2010). Finally, Olson (2010) found that among the White male student affairs graduate students in his study, the most meaningful personal growth around these issues took place in courses specifically devoted to diversity and multiculturalism. Ultimately, Olson (2010) argued that more research is needed on White racial identity development and on the racialized experiences of White student affairs practitioners.

In another study, Cullen (2008) conducted a participatory action research (PAR) project to encourage participating student affairs practitioners to develop “an anti-racist professional identity” (p. 1). Succinctly, Cullen’s (2008) major finding was that “all-

white anti-racism encounter groups, especially when they are embedded within an engaged, decolonizing methodology such as PAR, can facilitate white privilege awareness among graduate students in a student affairs preparation program” (Abstract, para. 2). This finding, and the fact that a recent doctoral student chose to engage in a PAR study of White privilege, both hold great promise. Unfortunately, like many studies, this research and practice intervention had an explicit focus on dismantling White privilege among those who volunteered their free time to pursue a commitment to anti-racism. Thus, the experiences and identities of White individuals without such a commitment were not included in the study.

White women as student affairs professionals. Little research exists examining the racial identities of White women as student affairs professionals. One notable exception is the work of Accapadi (2007), whose case study of a difficult dialogue among a group of student affairs professionals revealed how White women’s responses to racism, even when well intentioned, can painfully reinforce the marginalization of Women of Color. Accapadi (2007) urged White women in student affairs practice to seek ways to engage in difficult dialogues without taking up undue air space from Women of Color. However, Accapadi (2007) only cursorily examined dynamics of power and privilege in this situation and also did not focus on the complexities of identity. Further, this examination of White women’s role in reifying White privilege did not account for the role of male privilege. Finally, Accapadi’s (2007) analysis focused on professionals, not students.

Summary

The purpose of this section has been to review literature relevant to the educational and professional influences on racial identity among White women in student affairs. Although many useful findings have emerged in this area, unanswered questions remain. Namely, very little if any research has explored the intersection of whiteness, racial identity development, identity construction, White women, and graduate students in student affairs. This omission is problematic for several reasons. First, attention to whiteness and White privilege without attending to identity risks overlooking the embodiment dimension that is central to whiteness (Owen, 2007). Second, investigating racial identity development without regard for the socially constructed nature of racial identity results in a narrow view that excludes either the individual or the structural dimensions of racial identity (Willie, 2003). In addition, more research is needed on the experiences of student affairs graduate students around whiteness given the potential of these graduate programs to “ope[n] the possibility for new connections” (Arminio, 1994, p. 188) related to adopting an anti-racist White identity. Finally, more research is needed on White identity as it intersects with other dimensions of identity, such as gender, among student affairs professionals (Accapadi, 2007; Olson, 2010).

Having considered several layers of context surrounding racial identity development among White women, in the following sections I examine foundational theories of student identity development; women, gender, and identity development; and racial identity development. Together, these families of theory have generated an incomplete but informative body of knowledge about racial identity among White women, the phenomenon of interest in this study.

Student Identity Development

In 1978, Knefelkamp, Widick, and Parker published “Applying New Developmental Findings” as an edited volume of *New Directions for Student Services*. The editors cleverly titled the introductory editors’ notes “Why Bother With Theory?” Their response: “[t]heories have become sources of awareness to us, ways of organizing our thinking about students, suggestions of areas for exploration, and keys to insights about possible courses of action” (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, p. xiv). This edited volume, including the widely cited introduction, set in motion a tradition of thoughtful consideration among scholar-practitioners about why student affairs professionals should continue to “bother” with theory.

The range of responses to “Why Bother With Theory?” (Knefelkamp, Widick, & Parker, 1978) evokes the dynamic nature of student development theory. Like the students it describes, student development theory has changed over time in response to an ever-changing environment. Thus, understanding even a small area within student development theory requires an appreciation for historical foundations as well as change over time. Accordingly, the purpose of this section of the literature review is to provide a brief context for the emergence of identity development theory, racial identity development theory, and ultimately, White racial identity development theory. Although student development is an interdisciplinary field (Dungy & Gordon, 2011; Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009), the theories and models reviewed in this section have primarily psychological origins, reflecting the evolution of student development theory (Torres et al., 2009). Additional disciplinary locations, such as sociology, women’s studies, and ethnic studies, are reflected elsewhere in this chapter and proposal.

Foundational Approaches to Identity Development

The study of identity among student development scholars emerged from the seminal work of psychologist Erikson (Erikson, 1959/1994; Widick, Parker, & Knefelkamp, 1978). Erikson's work is rooted in psychosocial development, or the notion that "movement through life" (Widick et al., 1978, p. 1) occurs in multiple layers of social, cultural, and historical context. Although trained in the psychoanalytic tradition, Erikson broke from this view, arguing that the ego is a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon (Widick et al., 1978). For Erikson, the ego is expressed most clearly through identity, or "the organized set of images, the sense of self, which express who and what we *really* are" (Widick et al., 1978, p. 2). One of the most well-known characteristics of the Eriksonian perspective on identity is the epigenetic principle or notion of a "ground plan" (Erikson, 1959, p. 52, in Widick et al., 1978, p. 2). According to this principle, like a developing embryo, identity unfolds over time, reflecting physical development, social context, and "internal ordering" of life experiences (Widick et al., 1978, p. 2). In addition to the epigenetic principle, Erikson is well known for his eight stages of development across the lifespan (Erikson, 1959/1994; Widick et al., 1978). Of most significance to student development theory is the fifth stage, during which identity formation or resolution occurs (Erikson, 1959/1994; Widick et al., 1978). Eriksonian identity resolution involves "the making of vocational and ideological commitments" and formation of relationships (Widick et al., 1978, p. 6).

In student development theory, Chickering was the first to expand upon these commitments and the concomitant journey toward identity resolution in his influential work, *Education and Identity* (Chickering, 1969). The hallmark of Chickering's (1969)

theory was the notion of seven vectors of identity development. In the second edition of *Education and Identity*, Chickering and colleague Reisser (1993) provided an overview of the seven vectors. Rather than being stage-like, “[m]ovement along any one can occur at different rates and can interact with movement along the others” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 34). The vectors include: (1) *Developing Competence* (a three-tined pitchfork of intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence), (2) *Managing Emotions*, (3) *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence*, (4) *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships*, (5) *Establishing Identity*, (6) *Developing Purpose*, and 7) *Developing Integrity* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Notably, the authors expanded on *Establishing Identity* in the 1993 edition, responding to a number of critiques of the initial theory (e.g., McEwen, Roper, Bryant, & Langa, 1990) as well as emerging research on the importance of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality as influences on identity development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

However, notwithstanding the continuing relevance of Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) work, even the second edition of *Education and Identity* is limited in the degree to which it accounts for gender, racial, ethnic, and cultural differences, as well as the developmental tasks of managing sexism, racism, and xenophobia (Kodama, McEwen, Liang, & Lee, 2002; Torres et al., 2009). For several decades, scholars and researchers have responded by developing theoretical and empirical models reflecting the development of racial and ethnic identities, as well as women’s identity and moral development (Torres et al., 2009). Given that the focus of this study is on racial identity development among White women, the following sections of this chapter review

scholarship on women's and gender identity development, as well as White racial identity development.

Women, Gender, and Student Identity Development

Student development theory has increasingly been influenced by scholarship centering the lives and experiences of women (Sengupta & Upton, 2011). In 1987, Josselson published her now famous text, *Finding Herself: Pathways to Identity Development in Women*, revised in 1996 (Josselson, 1996). Offering poignant reflections on the nature of identity, Josselson (1996) argued that changing economic and political conditions had heavily influenced women's social roles, which in turn had shaped how psychology viewed women. However, women's identity remained largely unexplored. Remedying this omission, Josselson (1996) built on the work of Erikson (1959/1994) and Marcia (1966) and conducted a longitudinal study of women's identity that resulted in a well-known conceptual model of women's identity formation. *Guardians* in Josselson's (1996) study made identity commitments without exploration; these women "knew where they were going without having considered alternatives" (p. 197). *Pathmakers* explored multiple options and then made commitments; "I've tried out some things, and this is what makes most sense for me" (Josselson, 1996, p. 196). *Searchers* were still engaged in exploration, seeking to make commitments but not having done so just yet. Finally, *Drifters* were neither exploring nor committed, either feeling lost or seeming to follow the impulses of the moment. These four pathways represented starting points for the life course, rather than lifelong categories. Josselson (1996) studied what happened along those four pathways throughout the life span, asking: "How can we name and appreciate both the commonalities and the differences among women as they construct their

identities and, in doing so, weave their lives?" (p. 199). This question continues to guide the study of women's identity.

Other pioneers in the study of women's identity should be noted. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) investigated cognitive development among women and identified five distinct "ways of knowing" characterized by increasing complexity in one's understanding of knowledge. Belenky et al.'s (1986) most widely cited finding was the notion of "connected" and "separate" knowers, who approached knowledge from distinctly different positions. Although both men and women may take either approach to "procedural knowledge" (the fourth of the five ways of knowing), women are more likely than men to identify as connected knowers. This finding has been used to account for women's exclusion from traditional educational settings, including STEM classrooms (Kinzie, 2007; Steele, Levin, Blecksmith, & Shahverdian, 2005; Zuga, 1999), which typically teach to and reward only separate ways of knowing. Similarly, Baxter Magolda's (1992) model of epistemological reflection foregrounded women's experiences, identifying epistemological positions ranging from absolute to contextual knowing. Gilligan (1993) was also a pioneer in the study of moral and ethical development among women, finding that women were more likely than men to view moral decision making processes as contextually dependent (rather than absolute) and to rely on an ethic of care (rather than justice). Additional scholarship has contributed to a more complex understanding of lesbian (e.g., Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes & Kasch, 2007); African American (e.g., Harper, Carini, Bridges, & Hayek, 2004; Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Kelly, 2004; Watt, 2006), Latina (e.g., Gonzales, Jovel, & Stoner, 2004; Torres, 2003; Torres & Baxter Magolda, 2004; Torres & Hernandez, 2007), Asian and

Asian American (e.g., Green & Kim, 2005; Lee & Beckett, 2005), and White women (Frankenberg, 1993). These studies highlight the importance of women's multiple social identities in making meaning of their experiences as students, staff, and faculty in higher education settings.

Despite the increasing attention to women and gender, feminism has received very little attention in student development literature. Given that scholarship focused on women and gender is an undeniably feminist enterprise, this omission is rather curious, but perhaps not surprising in light of research suggesting that feminism is rarely cited as an explicit component of higher education and student affairs scholarship (Hart, 2006; Townsend, 1993). Downing and Roush's (1985) model of Feminist Identity Development (FID) for women is the earliest, most well-known, and most influential model of feminist identity development. Influenced by work in women's studies and the fields of identity development generally and women's development specifically, the FID model contributed meaningfully to the study of women's identity, offering an explicit recognition of feminism as a powerful contextual influence on women's lives. In 1990, partly in response to critiques of the FID model, and drawing from the minority identity development literature, Helms (1990, in Ossana, Helms, & Leonard, 1992) developed a model of Womanist Identity Development (WID). Helms and her colleagues envisioned a four-stage model characterized by decreasing levels of conformity to societal norms about gender, increasing flexibility in views of women's roles, and growth in reliance on other women and their shared experiences as a source of information about alternative ways to express womanhood. According to Ossana et al. (1992), the WID model differed from the FID model regarding views of what constitutes "healthy" identity development,

how a woman comes to value herself as a woman, and how or whether she incorporates some form of feminist ideology into her identity development. Thus the WID model offered a less politically and ideologically restrictive schema for examining women's shifting awareness of gender, womanhood. This schema was and remains particularly important for African American women and other Women of Color, who have historically been excluded from many feminist movements and thus do not find feminism to resonate with their ideologies and experiences (Ossana et al., 1992). Indeed, in a study of the FID and the WID models, Boisnier (2003) found that Black women resonated with the WID model more than the FID model. This study indicated that race and ethnicity must be taken into account in examinations of feminist and womanist identity development, a finding recently bolstered by Sengupta and Upton (2011).

While some scholars have contributed to the understanding of *women* as subjects in the study of student development, others have identified *gender* both as a context for identity development and as a salient category organizing students' experiences. Bem (1981) introduced gender schema theory, suggesting that children form impressions about sex and gender roles through a cognitive mechanism known as a gender schema. Davis (2002), Edwards and Jones (2009), and Harris (2010) have investigated gender identity development among college men, thus destabilizing the assumption, dominant in much of student development theory, that gender role conflict and sexism influence only the lives of women. Jones (1997) explored identity development among diverse college women, finding that gender was "braided" with other dimensions of identity. This finding contributed to an innovative conceptual model (Jones & McEwen, 2000), which posited that multiple dimensions of social identity intersect in more complex ways than had been

previously represented in student development literature. Importantly, this model paved the way for an intersectional approach to women and gender (Collins, 2009/2000; Jones, 2009; Weber, 1998), thus more accurately describing the experiences of Women of Color and queer women as well as the complex intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and other social identities in all students' lives. Intersectional scholarship has also helped to shift the gaze (Fine, 1994) from the individual experiences of students in marginalized groups to the social structural conditions that produce and reproduce domination and marginalization.

Given the focus of this study on racial identity among White women, this section has reviewed developmental theories focused on the experiences of women. The following section examines the emergence of racial identity development theory. Subsequent sections review White racial identity development theories, followed by an exploration of literature concentrating on the intersections of womanhood and whiteness.

Racial Identity Development

Although its origins are primarily in counseling psychology and psychotherapy, since its inception racial identity development theory has been a significant influence on student development theory (Mueller & Pope, 2003). According to renowned psychologist Helms, racial identity is defined as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s *perception* that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1990, p. 3). In response to the Civil Rights movement, psychologists and psychotherapists initially developed models of Black racial identity development in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Helms, 1990; Jackson, 2001). Much of this work was congruent with a Nigrescence racial identity (NRID) perspective, or the

idea of becoming Black (Helms, 1990). The most influential of the NRID models was developed by Cross (1971, 1978, in Helms, 1990), although Jackson's Black Identity Development (BID) model was also significant. Another model of racial identity development statuses was developed by Helms herself (Helms & Cook, 1999). More recent models of racial identity development reflect the experiences of multiracial individuals (Wijeyesinghe, 2001). Additionally, numerous models address the complex ethnic and racial identities of Latina/o (e.g., Ferdman & Gallegos, 2001), Asian American (e.g., Kim, 2001), and Native American (e.g., Horse, 2001) students, as well as ethnic identity more generally (e.g., Phinney, 1990).

Importantly, in each of these models, social context plays a significant role in development (Torres et al., 2009). Specifically, oppression and racism result in differences in social status among privileged and marginalized populations (Helms & Cook, 1999; Torres & Hernandez, 2007; Torres et al., 2009). However, to get at the nuances of oppression and its influence on racial experiences, non-psychological perspectives on racial identity are increasingly common in contemporary explorations of racial identity (Torres, 2011; Torres et al., 2009). In particular, Critical Race Theory more explicitly acknowledges the role of power, privilege, and racism in shaping the lives and experiences of People of Color (Torres, 2011; Torres et al., 2009).

In addition to People of Color and multiracial individuals, White people also develop racial identities. Whereas racial identity development among People of Color occurs within social contexts of racism and oppression, White racial identities develop in the social contexts of power and privilege (Evans et al., 2010; Hardiman, 2001; Helms &

Cook, 1999; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Torres et al., 2009). The following section reviews White racial identity development with these social contexts in mind.

White Racial Identity Development and Related Constructs

Although not a new topic, research on White racial identity among college students, and on race as experienced by White students, has received renewed attention in the past two decades (e.g., Closson & Henry, 2008; Fine, 1997; Hall & Closson, 2005; Hardiman, 2001; McIntosh, 1988/2004; Mercer & Cunningham, 2003; Miville et al., 2005; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reason & Evans, 2007; Spanierman et al., 2008; Torres et al., 2003). Some scholars have attributed this trend to increasing racial diversity among the college student population (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003), while others have cited a shift in focus among diversity researchers from the experiences of historically marginalized groups to the structures of power and privilege that underlie racial inequity (Fine, 1997; Hardiman, 2001; Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009; Todd & Abrams, 2011). In any case, the resurgence of scholarly attention to White racial identity reflects both similarities to and departures from earlier conceptualizations. The following section reviews the work of Helms (1984, 1990, 1995) and Hardiman (1979, in Helms, 1990; Hardiman, 2001), whose early models of White racial identity have been most commonly applied to the study of college student development (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003). Then, I review additional psychological models of White identity and White racial consciousness. Finally, I review models of White racial ally development and the Privileged Identity Exploration model by Watt (2007). Each of the models reviewed has informed my thinking about White identity and thus serves as a sensitizing concept

(Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 2007; Kearney, 2007) for the proposed study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE programs.

Early Conceptualizations of White Racial Identity Development

In her influential edited volume, *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Helms (1990) reviewed early models of White racial identity development as conceptualized by counseling psychologists. According to Helms (1990), these early models reflected a core assumption that “the evolution of a positive White racial identity consists of two processes, the abandonment of racism and the development of a non-racist White identity” (p. 49). Early models also tended to propose “a linear process of attitudinal development” (Helms, 1990, p. 53) in which White individuals acknowledge racism and become conscious of being White.

Early conceptualizations of White racial identity development among counseling psychologists included both stage models and typological models. Although stage and typological models share a common assumption that “developmental movement is characterized by sequential movement along a trajectory” (Jones & Abes, 2011, p. 155), they differ in how they characterize various locations along that trajectory as well as the conditions necessary for movement between locations. Many early conceptualizations of White racial identity development were typological models that focused on defining racism and “assume[d] that racists [could] be classified according to various categories” (Helms, 1990, p. 50). In contradistinction, other early models of White racial identity were stage models in which, like all stage models, “[e]ach stage represents a predominant developmental issue or a certain quality or complexity of thinking,” and each stage has “corresponding developmental tasks” (McEwen, 2003, p. 166).

Critiques of early theories. Helms (1990) offered several critiques of early models of White identity, especially the typological models. First, Helms critiqued typological models for not specifying how an individual might move between types. Additionally, some early theorists “loosely described an orderly process by which a White person can move from a racist identity to positive White consciousness” (Helms, 1990, p. 53), but these theorists did not account for this process in a systematic way. Helms’ (1990) other major critique of these early models was that although they operated on the assumption that racism was harmful to People of Color, they failed to account for the harm racism could do to White people, “the beneficiaries or perpetrators of racism” (p. 50). Although some theorists considered the relationship between White racial identity and psychological health, the models they proposed were typological and thus did not specify how individuals could move between types and thus make gains in psychological health (Helms, 1990). Building on these early models and aware of their limitations, Helms (1984) and Hardiman (1979, in Helms, 1990) both developed stage models of White racial identity development based on the assumption that psychological health for White individuals required developing a positive White identity and abandoning racism (Helms, 1990).

Hardiman’s Model of White Identity Development (WID)

Hardiman first proposed a five-stage model of White identity development in 1979 with revisions in the 1990s (Hardiman, 1979, in Helms, 1990; Hardiman, 2001). Influenced by Civil Rights and Black Power movements, as well as Black identity and social identities studies and “a new consciousness about race and gender” (Hardiman, 2001, p. 110) in multiple academic disciplines, Hardiman (2001) sought to “shift the

focus” (p. 109) of racial identity to White people. Hardiman (2001) was motivated by a belief “that in a society with racism at its core, racism affected Whites as the dominant and privileged racial group as certainly as it affected People of Color” (p. 109). Importantly, Hardiman (2001) developed the WID stages as “more of a prescription for what...Whites needed to do than a description of experiences that Whites shared” (p. 113).

Evolution and stages of the model. Hardiman’s original WID model (1979, in Helms, 1990) included four stages: *Acceptance*, *Resistance*, *Redefinition*, and *Internalization* (Hardiman in Helms). In *Acceptance*, individuals had “[a]n active or passive acceptance of White superiority” (Helms, 1990, p. 51), whereas in the *Resistance* stage, individuals first became aware of their racial identities. The key developmental task of the *Redefinition* stage was to create a new, non-racist definition of whiteness, while individuals in the *Internalization* stage internalized a non-racist White identity (Hardiman, 1979, in Helms, 1990). Hardiman’s revised model (2001) incorporated another stage, *No Social Consciousness of Race or Naïveté* (p. 111). This stage was envisioned as a precursor to the original four and was “marked by a lack of awareness...of the social meaning of race” (Hardiman, 2001, p. 111).

Critique of the model. Several critiques of Hardiman’s WID model (Hardiman in Helms, 1990; Hardiman, 2001) are important to note. First, although the WID model is frequently cited (Torres et al., 2003), it was never empirically validated (Hardiman, 2001; Helms, 1990). Thus, as Hardiman (2001) noted, it remains prescriptive (i.e., what Whites should do) rather than descriptive (i.e., what Whites actually do). However, the WID model has been influential among practitioners engaged in racial and social justice

education and training. Further, given Hardiman's (2001) desire "to contribute to the construction of a new way to be White that was not dependent on the subjugation or denigration of People of Color" (p. 110), the WID has been used among theorists seeking to promote the development of pro-feminist gender identity among men. Finally, the Hardiman model has been influential in the work of White identity development theorists (Hardiman, 2001).

Helms' Model of White Racial Identity Development

Helms' model of White racial identity formation has gone through numerous iterations (e.g., 1984, 1990, 1995) reflecting significant shifts in the study of identity (Jones & Abes, 2011; Torres et al., 2009). The initial model (Helms, 1984) consisted of five stages labeled *Contact*, *Disintegration*, *Re-Integration*, *Pseudo-Independence*, and *Autonomy* (Helms, 1990). A sixth stage, *Immersion/Emersion*, was added between *Pseudo-Independence* and *Autonomy* in response to the work of Hardiman, who argued that "seek[ing] out accurate information about their historical, political, and cultural contributions to the world" (Hardiman, 1979, in Helms, 1990, p. 55) and the self-exploration accompanying this search were important to the positive White identity formation process.

Another significant change in the model occurred in 1995 in response to critiques of Helms' use of the word "stage" to describe the sequential components of her racial identity development model, meaning the overarching model encompassing both Whites and People of Color (Helms, 1995). Describing the basis of these critiques, Helms (1995) pointed to the distinction critics had drawn between mutually exclusive, or "strong" stages, and permeable, or "soft" stages, arguing "[m]y model...is commonly

assumed to be a strong-stage model... , although I intended my stages to be permeable” (p. 181). Acknowledging critics’ concerns, Helms replaced the term “stage” with “status” in the model. This change in terminology, a strong example of the evolution of identity development theory, reflected a shift from the Eriksonian view of development toward James Marcia’s notion of ego statuses (Torres et al., 2009). Statuses of racial identity development, like stages, “are assumed to permit increasingly more complex management of racial material” (Helms, 1995, p. 184). Another important characteristic of ego statuses is that once internalized, they are thereafter available to the individual, so that at any given time “a person can use as many schemata as the ego has generated” (Helms, 1995, p. 184). The dominant scheme an individual uses is a product of developmental maturity, with later statuses reflecting more maturity and developmental complexity.

Although Helms has published additional work on White identity development since 1995 (e.g., Carter, Helms, & Juby, 2004; Helms, 2008; Helms & Cook, 1999), the core components of the model itself have not changed. Thus, it is this status-based version of Helms’ model of White racial identity development that is reviewed in the following section.

Statuses of the model. In the *Contact* status, individuals display obliviousness, avoidance, or denial in the face of information about race (Helms, 1995). Their behavior upholds the racial status quo. The *Disintegration* status involves disorientation, confusion, and anxiety as individuals encounter “unresolvable racial moral dilemmas” (p. 185). Individuals expressing the *Disintegration* status may suppress racial information to avoid such dilemmas. In the *Reintegration* status, individuals engage in “selective

perception and negative out-group distortion” (p. 185) to justify the idealization of the White racial group and the defamation of non-White racial groups. The *Pseudoindependence* status involves an “intellectualized commitment” to one’s own group and “deceptive tolerance” of other groups (p. 185). The *Immersion/Emersion* status involves the individual’s attempt to reeducate her/himself. Individuals in this status are hypervigilant; they seek to understand their own personal meaning of racism. Finally, in the *Autonomy* status, individuals display flexibility and complexity. They embody a positive and informed definition of whiteness. They avoid situations “that require participation in racial oppression” (p. 185), seeking to “relinquish the privileges of racism” (p. 185). This status is associated with the greatest degree of psychological health.

Critique of the model. Empirically validated and widely applied, the Helms model (1984, 1990, 1995) remains the most well-known model of White racial identity development. However, the Helms model, including the revised model that uses the language of “statuses,” has received its share of critique. It has been described as hierarchical and vague (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003). The Helms model has also been critiqued for failing to take issues of power and privilege into account (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003). In addition, although valid and reliable constructs based on the model have been created and widely used, Mercer and Cunningham pointed out that Helms did not specify how White racial identity development should be measured. Thus, the model has not been tested as a *developmental* model and is thus better described as a theoretical model (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003).

Despite these critiques, the Helms model (1984, 1990, 1995) remains influential

in student development literature as a model of White racial identity development. The challenge for student development theorists and others studying White racial identity is to build on Helms' work while responding to the critiques. Because these critiques have emerged in the context of more complex conceptualizations of race, identity, and whiteness, responding to them requires careful thinking about these complexities. The work of several contemporary scholars reflects such thinking. The following sections review the White Racial Consciousness model (Rowe et al., 1994), models of social justice and racial justice ally development, and the Privileged Identity Exploration model (Watt, 2007).

The White Racial Consciousness Model

The White Racial Consciousness (WRC) model was first proposed by counseling psychologists Rowe, Bennett, and Atkinson (1994). Responding to critiques of developmental models such as Helms', the WRC model was a typology that distinguished between *Achieved* and *Unachieved* consciousness (Rowe et al., 1994). *Unachieved* WRC types included Avoidant, Dependent, Dissonant, while *Achieved* types consisted of Dominative, Conflictive, Reactive, and Integrative (Rowe et al., 1994). Mueller and Pope (2003) noted that the structure for the WRC model was based on Phinney's (1990) theory of ethnic identity, which originated from Marcia's (1966) ego identity theory. Pointedly, this lineage differs from that of the Helms model (1984, 1990), which had its roots in Erikson's (1959/1994) developmental approach to identity before Helms proposed a new model based on ego statuses (Helms, 1995). The WRC (Rowe et al., 1994) was extended in the work of LaFleur, Rowe, and Leach (2002), who discarded the achieved and unachieved statuses. Rather than reflecting the *content* of

racial attitudes, these statuses reflected the nature of one's *commitment* to those attitudes.

The Development of Racial Justice Allies

In addition to racial consciousness, another construct relevant to racial identity is the development of an identity as a racial justice ally, which is one form of a social justice ally. Broido (2000) defined social justice allies as “members of dominant social groups (e.g., men, Whites, heterosexuals) who are working to end the system of oppression that gives them greater privilege and power based on their social-group membership” (p. 3). The concept of ally development has been explored considerably in student affairs research. Broido (2000) conducted a phenomenological study of White, heterosexual college students who became social justice allies while in college. To become “willing and able to act as allies” (Broido, 2000, p. 7), students had to gain new information about social justice issues; make meaning of what they had learned through such methods as discussion, perspective-taking, and self-reflection; and grow in self-confidence in their knowledge of social justice issues. For students to move beyond willingness and ability into the realm of action, another individual had to recruit the student to an opportunity for action, or the student had to find herself serendipitously in a situation conducive to action as an ally.

In a later article about this study, Broido and coauthor Reason (2005) identified two additional patterns in the process of becoming a social justice ally. Prior to acquiring information, making meaning, and developing self-confidence, the students in Broido's (2000) study had entered college with attitudes that were open and accepting of difference, or “a basic egalitarian belief in the espoused values of American culture” (Broido & Reason, 2005, p. 21) around fairness, equal opportunity, and the value of each

person. Another important pattern was the need to develop the needed skills for being an ally, such as organizing demonstrations, writing letters, and working with media. Broido and Reason (2005) also highlighted the importance of the role of chance and recruitment in providing individuals ready to act as allies with opportunities to take action.

Translating these findings to the development of racial justice allies, Reason, Scales, and Millar (2005) identified three broad phases of this developmental process. First, racial justice allies must understand privilege and racism on both an affective and an intellectual level (Reason, Scales, & Millar, 2005). Second, allies must come to understand whiteness differently by embracing “both the positive and negative attributes associated with it” (Reason, Scales, & Millar, 2005, p. 61) and developing “moral courage” (p. 62) to challenge the actions of other White individuals. Finally, being a racial justice ally requires action. Drawing on previously published findings from their study of racial justice ally development (Reason, Millar, & Scales, 2005), Reason, Scales, and Millar (2005) identified a number of strategies for student affairs educators to move White students closer to action, such as exposing students to White anti-racist role models (in person or through literature), helping students to personalize the damage of racism to White people, and encouraging students to engage in racial border crossing that requires leaving one’s comfort zone.

The Privileged Identity Exploration Model

Based on qualitative research with helping professionals who took a course in multiculturalism, Watt (2007) introduced a model of Privileged Identity Exploration (PIE). Returning to the psychoanalytic concept of the ego central to the work of Erikson (1959/1994), Watt (2007) identified eight defense mechanisms employed by those with

privileged identities when experiencing cognitive dissonance as a result of classroom dialogues about race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Watt's (2007) model includes three layers. At the top, the model incorporates "Dissonance Provoking Stimuli" on a continuum from "New Awareness about Self or Other" to "Social Justice Action based on New Awareness" (Watt, 2007, p. 126). At the second and third levels, the model includes phases of development as constituted by the eight defense mechanisms (Watt, 2007). The phases of development include "Recognizing Privileged Identity," "Contemplating Privileged Identity" and "Addressing Privileged Identity" phase (Watt, 2007, p. 126).

Although the image of the model is a helpful visual, Watt's (2007) descriptions of the developmental phases, which map onto the defense mechanisms, are even more intriguing. Further illuminated by Watt's (2007) findings, the phases of PIE resonate with other theoretical discussions of privilege (e.g., Johnson, 2006). The PIE model is an outstanding contribution to the literature; not only was it developed empirically, but it also constitutes a successful attempt "to dissect the process for raising critical consciousness" (Watt, 2007, p. 123) among helping professionals, including student affairs practitioners. Most relevant to this study, Watt's (2007) model evokes curiosity about the specific dimensions of privileged identity and related defensiveness among overrepresented identity groups, such as White women, within SA/HE.

Summary and Critique of White Racial Identity Development Models and Related Constructs

Extant scholarship on White racial identity development offers a tremendous starting place for this dissertation study of racial identity development and construction

among White women in SA/HE programs. However, several critiques of this literature are important to note. First, much of the research on White racial identity development has focused on the development and validation of instruments designed to measure statuses or stages of identity development. Although an important contribution, these studies are inconsistent with much of the contemporary thinking about identity development; namely, that identity is not solely developmental in nature (Willie, 2003; Yon, 2000) and that individuals experience multiple dimensions of social identity simultaneously (Abes et al., 2007; Jones, 2009; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Additionally, in the case of the Helms White Racial Identity Development scale, this instrument was developed to reflect a model based on research from the 1970s and 1980s (Helms, 1990). Extraordinary social and cultural transformations have taken place in the intervening decades, yet much of the research on White identity still reflects this early research. In addition, studies of White racial identity development overwhelmingly rely on quantitative methods, despite calls for more qualitative work on White identity (Carr & Caskie, 2010; Todd & Abrams, 2011).

In addition, the Helms model (1984, 1990, 1995) is limited because of the particular disciplinary and historical conceptualization of race in which it was developed. First, the Helms model is psychological in nature. Ortiz and Rhoads (2000) offered an important critique of the Helms model and all psychological models of White identity: “they only address a portion of what it means to be White: a sole focus on racial attitudes toward oneself and others does not constitute a holistic view of White identity” (Ortiz & Rhoads, p. 82). I would add that psychological models focusing on a positive White identity as a hallmark of psychological health have the unintended consequence of

allowing scholars and researchers to overlook White identity among those who are not interested or not engaged in abandoning racism, thus reinforcing White privilege and supremacy. As a psychological model, the Helms model is not exempt from these critiques. Further, like most early models of social identities, the Helms model does not address intersections between race and other dimensions of identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Finally, Willie (2003) argued that “race cannot be defined only as a characteristic of identity that limits and circumscribes life chances, or only as a stigma for nonwhites, or, in the case of whites, only as an ‘invisible knapsack’ that opens doors and provides privilege” (p. 6). Instead, race is a much more complex phenomenon—as is whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993; Owen, 2007). One of the principal complexities is that although a comprehensive analysis of whiteness necessitates the foregrounding of White privilege (Owen, 2007), research on identity development also demonstrates that individuals do not experience social identities, such as race and gender, in isolation from another (Abes et al., 2007; Jones, 2009; Jones & McEwen, 2000). The intersection (Jones, 2009) of race and gender among White women is the topic of the following section.

Conceptualizing the Social Construction of Whiteness among White Women

In the preceding sections of this literature review, my intention has been to portray the concentric layers of social context influencing racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE master’s degree programs. Power, privilege, and whiteness are layers of context that are influential because they are difficult to detect (Brookfield, 2005; Foucault, 1978/1990; Frankenberg, 1993; Johnson, 2006; Owen, 2007). Those who benefit most from power, privilege, and whiteness have the most difficulty detecting

them. This phenomenon permeates colleges and universities (hooks, 1994) and thus the educational and professional experiences of everyone affiliated with higher education. Together, these contextual layers influence student identity development and construction, including racial identity among White women. In an effort to complete this contextual portrait and integrate the areas of literature reviewed thus far, this section introduces the social construction of whiteness among women, a topic that has received very little attention in student affairs and higher education scholarship.

Women and Whiteness: A Missing Perspective

One of the earliest sites for raising awareness about whiteness was in the feminist movements of the 1970s (Lugones, 1990; Sandoval, 1990/1982). In a retrospective account of that era, Lippin (2007) recalled lessons learned from her own journey to White racial consciousness. One important lesson came from the work of Lugones (1990) who identified several incompetencies in White women around issues of racial identity. The first of these is “infantile judgment” (Lugones, 1990, p. 53), or “a dulling of the ability to read critically, and with maturity of judgment, those texts and situations in which race and ethnicity are salient” (p. 53). As noted by Sandoval (1990/1982), this dulling of critical thinking abilities about race among White women often occurred when White women in feminist movements interpreted critiques by Women of Color as a threat to solidarity. Within feminist organizations, the response among White women was often reactionary, resulting in increased formalization and the re-inscription of rules and regulations consistent with White culture (Sandoval, 1990/1982). Painful experiences such as the National Women’s Studies Association conference of 1981 became powerful lessons that “you white women need to do your own work” (Mujeres Unidas, n.d., cited

by Lippin, 2007, p. 119).

Some of the White women who heeded those lessons came together in consciousness-raising groups, reading work such as Katz' *White Awareness: Handbook for Anti-Racism Training* (1978) (Lippin, 2007). Lippin (2007) recalled her experience in such groups in the following excerpt:

Our objectives included educating ourselves, through reading and attending events, becoming more conscious of our whiteness in our interactions, and using each other instead of People of Color to challenge our white supremacist thinking. In our own safe place we could air our confusions, our own pain, and our problematic behavior. In that safety, I don't recall our ever pushing each other past our limits, identifying perhaps a hiding quality also inherent in this safety.

(Lippin, 2007, p. 119)

In this recollection, Lippin (2007) pointed out several themes that are still salient when examining whiteness. First, there appears to be a tight connection between White racial identity development and White racial consciousness, a theme echoed in studies of White student affairs practitioners, regardless of gender (Mueller & Pope, 2001). Second, part of developing a White racial consciousness or identity is the realization that White people should challenge each other rather than rely on People of Color to do so. However, examining racial issues in all-White spaces is a double-edged sword because "Whites can choose to get involved in anti-racist struggle or not" (Rebollo-Gil & Moras, 2006, p. 386) and thus can hide or fail to hold each other accountable.

The complex nature of White identity development is reflected in much of the White privilege and whiteness scholarship of the 1990s and 2000s (e.g, Frankenberg,

1993; Kivel, 2002; Rothenberg, 2002; Fine et al., 1997; Wise, 2005). This collection of work, which owes much to the activism and scholarship of anti-racist White women, is replete with references to the ways in which White people resist acknowledging White privilege by invoking an ethnic, class, or gender identity (e.g., Fine, 1997; Kivel, 2002; Rothenberg, 2002; Wise, 2005). Most often, White anti-racist educators and scholars combat this resistance by refocusing the conversation to one about racial privilege – for example, by using McIntosh’s (1988/2004) well-known list of privileges associated with the “invisible knapsack” of whiteness. Indeed, challenging White people to work through this resistance is critical to facilitating the development of White racial consciousness and an anti-racist racial identity (Hardiman, 2001; Mueller & Pope, 2001; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000). However, working through resistance need not be at odds with engaging in a more complex conversation in which participants acknowledge the intersections of whiteness and other dimensions of identity (Lensmire, 2010; Winans, 2005).

In fact, the one-dimensional nature of much of the whiteness discourse has resulted in models of White identity that do not always resonate with White individuals (Lensmire, 2010; Winans, 2005), especially those for whom other social identities (e.g., class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability) are salient (Rothenberg, 2002). Indeed, “[s]ome of those of us who are white have a hard time accepting the idea that white privilege is a powerful force in society because we do not *feel* privileged” (Rothenberg, 2002, p. 3). Many White women “do not *feel* privileged” because of significant experiences with sexism, yet because of White supremacy within feminist movements, White women often do not recognize the interlocking nature of racism, classism, and sexism as systems of oppression (Collins, 2009/2000; Frankenberg, 1993; hooks, 2000).

Stated differently, the intersection of race and gender that White women inhabit can result in a “one up-one down” identity (Accapadi, 2007, p. 2010) in which individuals may experience marginalization based on one identity (gender) and thus fail to examine the power and privilege associated with another identity (race). Although attention to the intersections of multiple social identities is growing (e.g., Abes et al., 2007; Jones, 2009; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Stewart, 2008, 2009), scholarship examining the intersections of dominant and oppressed identities is limited. Further, little research explicitly examines the social construction of whiteness among White women. The most notable exception is the work of Frankenberg in *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (1993).

White Women, Race Matters

Influenced by socialist feminism, anti-racist activism among feminists of color, and her own growing awareness of racism in feminist movements, Frankenberg (1993) conducted a life history study with 30 White women, seeking to investigate the meaning of whiteness. Frankenberg argued that race structures the lives of White people, not just People of Color. In mapping the points of origin for the study, Frankenberg (1993) identified the 1980s as a time when “white feminist women like myself could no longer fail to notice the critique of white feminist racism by feminist/radical women of color” (p. 2). Frankenberg noted that when charged with racism, she and her White, socialist feminist university colleagues “had a limited repertoire of responses...: confusion over accusations of racism; guilt over racism; anger over repeated criticism; dismissal; stasis” (p. 2). Such responses may have arisen from the notion, “shocking” to these “well-meaning individuals” (p. 3), of “being part of the problem of racism (something I had

associated with extremists or institutions but not with myself” (p. 3). Alongside these experiences with White colleagues, Frankenberg was part of a support group of “working-class women of color and white women” (p. 4) in which she “realized almost for the first time in [her] life the gulf of experience and meaning between individuals differentially positioned in relation to systems of domination, and the profundity of cultural difference” (p. 4).

Occupying the complex social location of these dual associations “and their disjunction” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 4), Frankenberg identified a set of six principles that guided her project. First, Frankenberg made “an analytical commitment to three axioms” (p. 5) from socialist feminism:

first, that in “societies structured in dominance” we, as feminists, must always remember that we act from within the social relations and subject positions we seek to change; second, that experience constructs identity; and, third, that there is a direct relationship between “experience” and “worldview” or “standpoint” such that any system of domination can be seen most clearly from the subject positions of those oppressed by it. (p. 5)

Meanwhile, the working-class, primarily Women of Color network led to three additional realizations. Fourth, “there is frequently a gulf of experience of racism between white people and People of Color” (p. 5). Fifth, “white women might have a range of awareness in relation to racism” due to, for example, their connections to communities of color. Sixth, “there *is* a cultural/racial specificity to white people, at times more obvious to people who are not white than to white individuals” (p. 5).

Framed by these six principles, Frankenberg's (1993) research questions focused on how racism shapes White women's lives; "the social processes through which white women are created as social actors primed to reproduce racism within the feminist movement," and how White women's lives could "become sites of resistance to the reproduction of racism" (p. 5). Theorizing from lived experience but with a structural critique, Frankenberg employed an intersectional analysis to examine the "social geographies of race" (p. 22) in White women's childhoods, White women's discourse about interracial relationships, processes of "thinking through race" (p. 22), and the everyday, material practices in which White women engaged regarding race and whiteness.

Although all of Frankenberg's (1993) findings are relevant to the present study, several are especially noteworthy. First, Frankenberg (1993) did *not* find "that one experience of marginality – Jewishness, lesbianism – led white women automatically toward empathy with other oppressed communities" (p. 20). Second, women's narratives revealed that "from the standpoint of race privilege, the system of racism is made structurally invisible" (p. 201). Third, whiteness as a culture emerged as a slippery concept that "shifts from 'no culture' to 'normal culture' to 'bad culture' and back again" (p. 202). Thus, a dualistic view of culture is dangerous because:

white women who yearn for belonging to a bounded, nameable culture, or who emphasize the parts of their heritage that are bounded over the parts that are dominant, run the risk of romanticizing the experience of being oppressed. (p. 230)

Beyond these powerful insights, the most striking aspect of Frankenberg's (1993) findings is what they reveal about the ways in which whiteness shapes White women's lives without their realizing it. For Frankenberg's (1993) participants, talking about whiteness was "a 'taboo' topic that generates areas of memory lapse, silence, shame, and evasion" (p. 23). These implicit findings – what White women *didn't* say – revealed as much, if not more, about the nature of whiteness than what they *did* say.

Critiques of *White Women, Race Matters*. Several reviews of *White Women, Race Matters* (Frankenberg, 1993) identify noteworthy critiques, both positive and negative. Collins – a renowned sociologist, women's studies scholar, and leading theorist of Black feminist thought – also published a review of *White Women, Race Matters* (Frankenberg, 1993) in the feminist journal *Signs* (Collins, 1995). Collins' (1995) review paired Frankenberg's book (1993) with *Black Popular Culture*, an anthology edited by Dent and Wallace (1992). Collins applauded both texts and noted that "[r]ead together, these two volumes not only reveal how efforts to develop a politic of responsibility among White women and efforts to maintain a politic of resistance among Black people inform each other but also identify the growing significance of culture to both enterprises" (Collins, 1995, p. 731). Specific to *White Women, Race Matters* (Frankenberg, 1993), Collins (1995) credited Frankenberg for not interviewing only White feminists but "a spectrum of White women" (Collins, 1995, p. 729). For Collins (1995), the central contribution of Frankenberg's (1993) work was the identification of three different paradigms of race: essentialist racism, the color-blind/power-evasive paradigm, and the race cognizant paradigm. Because most of the women in Frankenberg's (1993) study operated from essentialist racism or the color-blind/power-

evasive paradigm, they were, whether by omission or commission, unaware of the realities of race and racism. Thus, it was impossible for them to articulate a White racial identity grounded in a commitment to anti-racism. Collins' (1995) discussion of the role of these paradigms in Frankenberg's (1993) findings is quite instructive and perhaps a more cogent summary than what Frankenberg (1993) herself provided.

In a second review of Frankenberg's (1993) study published in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Murrell (1995) pointed out that participants' narratives were brief and lacked critical analysis, resulting in a failure to link the narratives to the structural critique articulated in some of the other chapters. Second, Murrell noted that the focus on interracial relationships was confusing because "it is not always clear what this tells the reader about the social construction of Whiteness" (Murrell, 1995, p. 585). More pointedly, Murrell (1995) argued that Frankenberg (1993) stopped short of analysis of two key constructs in the text: miscegenation and "why, given that the feminist movement is grounded in class and race resistance, it has taken so long for feminist scholars to address the issues of race and racism" (Murrell, 1995, pp. 585-586). Ironically, this omission on Frankenberg's part may reflect her own findings about the ways in which whiteness structures women's lives: by generating "memory lapse, silence, shame, and evasion" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 23). Finally, Murrell (1995) critiqued Frankenberg's (1993) sample for being too convenient and even "accidental" (Murrell, 1995, p. 586). The fact that all participants were from California struck Murrell (1995) as "quite problematic" and not representative in the ways Frankenberg (1993) suggested. However, it is worth noting that Frankenberg (1993) explicitly conceded that "these narratives...might have read differently had they been gathered somewhere else"

(p. 19) and “[t]he study is not premised on the notion of a random sample whereby these thirty women are, in a ‘part-for-whole’ fashion, a microcosmic representation of the white women of the United States” (p. 20).

Finally, in a move similar to Collins (1995), Bischooping (1994) reviewed *White Women, Race Matters* (Frankenberg, 1993) alongside another text, *My Soul is My Own: Oral Narratives of African American Women in the Professions* (Etter-Lewis, 1993). Bischooping (1994) identified in the two texts a common theme of invisibility; in the case of Frankenberg (1993), regarding “the discourse and material relations of Whiteness, left unmarked or unnamed through its very dominance” (Bischooping, 1994, p. 375). Echoing Collins (1995), Bischooping (1994) does not find fault with Frankenberg’s (1993) analysis and praises it extensively. According to Bischooping (1994), one of the central contributions of *White Women, Race Matters* (Frankenberg, 1993) was the pairing of the color-evasive paradigm with participants’ perceptions of whiteness as an empty cultural reference point. This juxtaposition reinforced the power relations that maintained the invisibility of whiteness and thus perpetuated White privilege (Bischooping, 1994).

Frankenberg’s (1993) work is widely regarded by women’s studies, sociology, and education scholars as a powerful example of qualitative research that shifts the gaze (Fine, 1994) from the experiences of People of Color to how whiteness is maintained and reproduced among women. As such, *White Women, Race Matters* (1993) is among the most informative resources available on whiteness among women. However, the data are nearly twenty years old, from a single geographic setting (Murrell, 1995), and reflect only a snapshot in time. Further, the study is not an investigation of education or of students.

Notably, the negative critique of Frankenberg's (1993) work came from a psychologist, whereas the two favorable reviews came from sociologists. Perhaps this phenomenon is linked to Willie's (2003) observation that neither psychological nor sociological conceptualizations of race are adequate on their own. Nevertheless, the reviews of Frankenberg's (1993) work suggest that it is difficult to produce scholarship at the intersection of the two that satisfies the demands of both disciplines. This difficulty may explain why so few scholars in student affairs, a discipline with both psychological and sociological influences (Dungy & Gordon, 2011), have explicitly investigated whiteness, let alone whiteness with a gendered lens, or the experiences of White women as *White* women (rather than *women*) in student affairs.

Chapter Conclusion and Summary:

White Women (in Student Affairs), Race (Still) Matters

In the review of literature for their grounded theory study of college men's identity, Edwards and Jones (2009) argued that "the privileged nature of dominant group identities leaves them unexplored and unexamined not only in the literature but also in the individuals themselves" (p. 225). This concern strongly relates to the paucity of research examining the identity development of White women. Much of the research on *women's* development has reflected *White women's* development and not the development of Women of Color (Jones, 1997; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Torres, 2011; Watt, 2003, 2006). However, as noted by Edwards and Jones (2009) in their study of men's identity development, Laker (2003) argued that "[t]he early research did not study 'men.' Rather, it studied 'students' who were men. There was no gender lens in the research and thus the resulting theory cannot capture the gendered nature of identity

development” (p. 1). To apply this insight to the present study, Laker’s (2003) argument can be restated in two ways:

- As a critique of women’s identity theories: *The early research did not study “White women.” Rather, it studied “women” who were “white.” There was no racial lens in the research and thus the resulting theory cannot capture the racialized nature of women’s identity development.*
- As a critique of White identity theories: *The early research did not study “White women.” Rather, it studied “White people” who were either “women” or “men.” There was no gendered lens in the research and thus the resulting theory cannot capture the gendered nature of White people’s identity development.*

Stated differently, there is a need for research that examines “the whiteness of white women’s experience, rather than leaving it unexplored” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 18), as well as the gendered nature of White women’s racial identities. Findings from this study have the potential to address this gap in the context of the student affairs profession and perhaps higher education as a whole.

This chapter has reviewed literature relevant to this study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs. Guided by the notions of “theoretical borderlands” (Abes, 2009, p. 143) and nested social contexts comprising an ecology of individual development (Renn, 2003), this chapter has introduced nested areas of literature as a series of “sensitizing concepts” (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2006; Dey, 2007; Kearney, 2007). In grounded theory inquiry, the purpose of the literature review is to introduce sensitizing concepts that have guided the researcher’s thinking about the phenomenon of interest. Accordingly, the first major section of this chapter explored

power, White privilege, and whiteness as broad contexts influencing White racial identity. In the next major section, I examined educational and professional influences on White racial identity among SA/HE graduate students and professionals. Next, I presented foundational theories of student identity development, reviewed student identity development literature that has addressed women and gender, and introduced racial identity development. Following that section, I explored influential models of White racial identity development, along with the related constructs of White racial consciousness, racial justice ally development, and privileged identity exploration. Finally, I reviewed literature examining whiteness among women, and I concluded with a section articulating the need for my study in light of the literature reviewed in this chapter. The following chapter will describe the methodological approach and methods of this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the methodology that guided this study of racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs. First, I present the epistemological and theoretical foundations for the study, which included social justice research (Charmaz, 2005), constructivism (Charmaz, 2003, 2005, 2006), feminist methodology (Olesen, 2007; Wuest, 1995) and Critical Whiteness research (Frankenberg, 1993; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000). Next, I explain the selection of grounded theory as the methodological approach for the study. I then describe procedures for sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Further, I discuss trustworthiness (Jones et al., 2006) and a section on ethical issues I faced, as well as my approach to reciprocity. Finally, I consider reflexivity, subjectivity, and assumptions and biases.

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to investigate racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs. Specific research questions included:

1. How does racial identity develop over time among White women?
2. How do White women construct racial identities?
3. In what ways do educational and professional experiences, including those that occur in SA/HE master's degree programs, influence White women's racial identities?
4. In what ways do multiple layers of social context, including power and privilege, influence White women's racial identities?

Epistemological and Theoretical Foundations

Jones et al. (2006) cautioned qualitative researchers that they “must become aware of the philosophical stances that inform their perspectives” (p. 8) when designing and situating a study. Thus, in this section I explore the epistemological and theoretical perspectives guiding this study. *Epistemology* represented “assumptions about the acquisition of knowledge” (Jones et al., p. 9). Crotty (1998) defined a *theoretical perspective* as “the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (p. 20). These definitions guided my thinking about the epistemological and theoretical foundations of the study.

Baxter Magolda (2009) argued that a crucial direction for student development theory scholarship is to study these theories alongside multiple perspectives “from academic traditions outside of student affairs and higher education” (p. 634). One approach to investigating multiple theoretical perspectives is to consider points of confluence and divergence between these frameworks as occurring within “theoretical borderlands” (Abes, 2009, p. 143). In this chapter, I present four theoretical perspectives that describe the particular theoretical borderlands in which this study was situated. More specifically, I present social justice research (Charmaz, 2005) as an epistemological and theoretical umbrella encompassing three more discrete perspectives: constructivism (Charmaz, 2003, 2005, 2006), feminist methodology (Olesen, 2007), and Critical Whiteness Studies (Frankenberg, 1993; Owen, 2007). Because each of these four perspectives has informed my scholarship and practice in student affairs, each perspective also informed not only the methodology, but my positionality as a researcher (Jones et al., 2006). The following section reviews each of these perspectives with attention to

how they informed both the epistemological and theoretical foundations of this study. My positionality as a researcher was reflected in the Prologue and is further addressed at the end of this chapter.

Social Justice Research

Charmaz (2005) described social justice as a broad area of inquiry that “can sensitize [grounded theory researchers] to look at both large collectivities and individual experiences in new ways” (p. 513). According to Charmaz, (2005) social justice research involves attending to:

ideas and actions concerning fairness, equity, equality, democratic process, status, hierarchy, and individual and collective rights and obligations [and] being human and ... creating good societies and a better world. It prompts reassessment of our roles as national and world citizens. It means exploring tensions between complicity and consciousness, choice and constraint, indifference and compassion, inclusion and exclusion, poverty and privilege, and barriers and opportunities. (p. 510)

Charmaz’s (2005) definition of social justice research aptly describes the foundations of this study. My interests in White identity construction, the experiences of women students, and SA/HE graduate preparation all emerged from personal and political commitments to fairness, equity, equality, and human rights, particularly as they concern higher education. To engage in the study of identity is certainly to think about what it means to be human, to create good societies, and to build a better world. The responsible study of White identity must entail an honest and ongoing engagement with White privilege and a commitment to dismantling it. This engagement with White privilege, in

turn, invokes each of the tensions Charmaz (2005) identified.

“Social justice” is a contested terrain among education scholars (North, 2008). As such, “social justice” may reflect a range of values, commitments, activities, positionalities, identities, and epistemological, methodological, and personal entanglements. Although such complexity can be hard to navigate, North has argued that singular perspectives on what constitutes social justice research and practice “will not result in more just and equitable forms of education” (p. 1182). The use of multiple theoretical perspectives to guide this study responds to North’s call to approach social justice as a murky and complex terrain. Thus, I frame social justice research as a dynamic epistemological and theoretical “umbrella” encompassing the constructivist, feminist, and Critical Whiteness perspectives that also guide this study.

Constructivism

Constructivism was one of the epistemological and theoretical perspectives guiding this study (Broido & Manning, 2002; Charmaz, 2003, 2005, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 2001; Jones et al., 2006; Lather, 2007). Constructivists believe that knowledge emerges from the meaning individuals make of their lived experiences. As researchers, constructivists seek understanding through the interpretation or translation of individual experience (Charmaz, 2005; Creswell, 2007; Jones et al., 2006). Constructivist researchers also believe that knowledge is co-constructed by numerous social actors, including participants and researchers (Charmaz, 2006). The disciplinary roots of constructivism (Broido & Manning, 2002; Charmaz, 2005) reflect the work of John Dewey and Jean Piaget in psychology, and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman in sociology, among others. However, the foundations of this

study more closely align with sociological constructivism, from which grounded theory methodology emerged (Charmaz, 2005). Sociological constructivism is rooted in symbolic interactionism, a perspective that “assumes people construct selves, society, and reality through interaction” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 189). These symbolic interactionist roots are visible in contemporary constructivist qualitative research in higher education, which reflects the meaning participants make of their lived experiences through interaction with multiple social contexts (Jones et al., 2006).

Scholars are not unanimous in their opinions on the distinction between constructivism and other epistemological paradigms. According to some scholars (Charmaz, 2005, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Crotty, 1998), constructivism is consistent with the belief that sociocultural contexts, as well as hierarchies of power and privilege, shape the meaning individuals make of their experiences. Other scholars (Guba & Lincoln, 2001; Jones et al., 2006; Lather, 2007) have suggested that an emphasis on contexts and hierarchies more accurately reflects a subjectivist, emancipatory, or advocacy/participatory worldview. This study is informed by the constructivist epistemology advanced by Charmaz (2003, 2005, 2006), which emphasizes the role of sociocultural contexts and social structures in shaping lived experience. This emphasis on social context and structure also characterizes feminist inquiry, and thus feminist methodology (Olesen, 2007).

Feminist Inquiry

Feminist inquiry encompasses multiple epistemological, theoretical, and disciplinary locations (Olesen, 2007). Indeed, “feminist epistemologies and research approaches have grown increasingly complex...generating controversies among

adherents of different views and frameworks, as well as within given frameworks”(Olesen, 2007, p. 421). Because of the complexity of feminist inquiry, Harding (1991) and others (Wuest, 1995) have argued that there is no one feminist qualitative research method; “rather, there are distinct methodological features with epistemological implications that characterize feminist inquiry” (Wuest, 1995, p. 125). Olesen (2007) summarized some of these features succinctly:

The way in which research is conducted suggests whether it is feminist work: It does *not* depict women as powerless, abnormal, or without agency. It reveals micropolitics of the research process. It explicates difference carefully, and avoids replicating oppression, also known as “blaming the victim”.... Further, reflecting complex alterations in feminist qualitative work, it stresses ethical dimensions, the inter-relatedness of researcher and participant, and multiple ways of knowing.
(pp. 421-422)

Much of feminist research is rooted in the foregrounding of lived experience, with an emphasis on gender as an organizing framework for experience (Lather, 2007; Scott, 1999) and often, but not always, on the experiences of women (Stanley & Wise, 1990).

One of the deepest challenges of feminist inquiry focusing on gendered experiences and voices is to position the research in a way that avoids romanticizing and eschews a false dichotomy between experience and analysis (Scott, 1999), as well as between the subjectivities of the researcher and the researched (Bloom, 1998). Even when researchers position a study with the challenges of feminist inquiry in mind, many complexities and questions emerge, making it difficult to anticipate *how* a feminist approach might influence both the process and the results of a study. Nevertheless, in

designing and conducting this study my intention was to embody the characteristics of feminist inquiry described above by Olesen (2007). Many of these elements also characterize Critical Whiteness, another theoretical perspective informing this study.

Critical Whiteness

According to Frankenberg (1993), whiteness is “a location of structural advantage, of race privilege...a ‘standpoint,’ a place from which White people look at others, at ourselves, and at society... [and] a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed” (p. 1). Critical Whiteness is a theoretical perspective from which scholars and practitioners interrogate, challenge, and subvert whiteness and White privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Fine et al., 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). More specifically, Critical Whiteness scholars and practitioners seek to subvert the structural advantage of being White, critically examine the White standpoint and the structures of power and privilege that have constructed it, and most importantly, to mark and name the cultural practices associated with whiteness.

Critical Whiteness stems in part from the legal studies field of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which is both a theoretical perspective and a movement “of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). In education, CRT “can be a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that People of Color experience” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 21). Conversely, Critical Whiteness can be an explanatory tool for the sustained structural advantage that White people experience in education.

Although some Critical Whiteness scholars (e.g., Roediger, 1994) seek to abolish whiteness, others suggest that the goal is to destabilize whiteness as a location of

structural advantage and domination. Owen (2007) has convincingly argued that “knowing the means and mechanisms by which Whiteness reproduces the system of white supremacy” (p. 205) is critical to destabilizing it. As described in Chapter 2, Owen (2007) identified such means and mechanisms in the form of seven “functional properties” of whiteness, arguing that “[a] complete critical theory of whiteness will need to explain how each of these properties contributes to the reproduction of the system of white supremacy” (pp. 206-207). To deconstruct this system, “[s]tructures of whiteness will need to be unmasked, challenged, disrupted and dismantled” (Owen, 2007, p. 218) across multiple social and political contexts.

Summary

Abes (2009) has suggested that “using multiple theoretical perspectives to research student development theory highlights the complexity and messiness of student development” (p. 150). Because it mirrors students’ complex and messy realities, the use of multiple perspectives has the potential to push student development research “in a direction that challenges power inequities and speaks to students’ understandings of themselves” (p. 155). Similarly, Baxter Magolda (2009) argued that “[w]orking with multiple theoretical frameworks helps to address nagging questions in student development theory” (p. 17). However, Abes (2009) cautioned that the integration of multiple theoretical perspectives to guide a single study offers both challenges and possibilities. In designing this study, I anticipated that challenges would emerge from the “theoretical borderlands” (Abes, 2009, p. 143) in which the study was situated. I will address some of these challenges in this chapter, but first I will discuss the origins and evolution of grounded theory, the methodological approach guiding this study.

Methodology and Methods

Grounded theory for social justice (Charmaz, 2005) was the overall methodological approach used in this study. Brown, Stevens, Troiano, and Schneider (2002) offered a sound argument for the appropriateness of grounded theory as a methodological approach for student affairs research, given the complexity and poorly understood nature of the student experience. Specifically, they suggested that grounded theory “can be an effective tool in conceptualizing complex phenomena, providing language to describe it, detailing how it occurs, and ultimately, student affairs educators’ contributions to this process” (p. 182).

In the introduction to their edited volume, *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory*, Bryant and Charmaz (2007) describe grounded theory methodology as “a systematic, inductive, and comparative approach for conducting inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory” (p. 1). Characterized by researchers’ ongoing interaction with the data, detailed procedures for data analysis and coding, and “the iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analysis” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1), grounded theory is the most prevalent qualitative methodology across numerous fields (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Constructivist grounded theory is a fairly contemporary methodological development reflecting the epistemological shifts in the social sciences that occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006). To illustrate this history, the objectivist origins of grounded theory are described in the following section. Then, I offer descriptions of constructivist and social justice grounded theory. My intention is to present social justice

grounded theory as an epistemological and methodological “umbrella” appropriate for addressing the research questions of this study.

Origins: Objectivist Grounded Theory

Developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss, the grounded theory approach was first published in their seminal methodological work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Using a combination of Glaser’s quantitative training at Columbia University and Strauss’ background in the Chicago School traditions of symbolic interactionism, pragmatist philosophy, and ethnography, their joint inquiry into the process of dying in hospitals reflected Glaser and Strauss’ shared critique of sociological research at the time, which emphasized the use of large-scale surveys to verify the *a priori* assumptions guiding extant theories (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). In their investigation of dying in hospitals, Glaser and Strauss conducted empirical observations, and from those observations, generated a new theory of the dying process with clearly specified dimensions, properties, and conditions (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Importantly, Glaser and Strauss theorized about actions, not individuals. Through inductive logic and the application of structured procedures for coding and analyzing data, in this and other early work Glaser and Strauss generated theories of action grounded in the interactions between multiple social actors.

Early grounded theory methodology thus has its origins in the critique of “paradigmatic orthodoxy” (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 42) of prevailing social science research and its use of deductive logic to validate existing theories. However, objectivist grounded theory, as it is now called (Charmaz, 2006), has itself been the subject of much criticism. Glaser and Strauss’ early work was situated in the post-positivist movement of

the early 1960s (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Indeed, Glaser's positivistic training is evident in the title of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, which suggests that "reality...can be discovered, explored, and understood" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 34). Constructivists, feminists, and others (e.g., Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2003, 2006; Wuest, 1995) have been vocal critics of this assumption. Critics have also argued that Glaser and Strauss stopped short of applying the principles of symbolic interaction to the role and positionality of the researcher. Others (e.g., Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) have countered that Strauss' early work indeed reflected an awareness "that people's perspectives shaped how they view objects" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 34), an assertion congruent with constructivist and feminist perspectives.

Thus, the origins of grounded theory are somewhat paradoxical: the methodology challenged some prevailing epistemological methodological traditions, while reifying others. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) captured this paradox aptly: "Not surprisingly, Glaser and Strauss over-emphasized the faults of those they challenged and under-emphasized the problems of the alternative they proposed" (p. 43). The silver lining of these complex origins is that as a methodology, grounded theory has great possibility for researchers seeking to weave together more than one epistemological or theoretical strand. This evolving epistemological complexity is evident in constructivist, feminist, critical, and social justice approaches to grounded theory, as the following sections illustrate.

Epistemological (R)evolution: Constructivist Grounded Theory

The divergence in Glaser's and Strauss' approaches to grounded theory, evident in the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998), did little to alter the perception (or reality) that

grounded theory methodology relied on positivistic assumptions (Charmaz, 2006). While Glaser maintained a focus on empiricism and discovery, Strauss and Corbin turned to theory verification. Both approaches assumed “that data represent objective facts about a knowable world” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131) and came to be associated equally with objectivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). In contrast, the constructivist epistemological approach to grounded theory “places priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Constructivist grounded theory both emerged from and builds on, the symbolic interactionist roots of objectivist grounded theory: “It not only theorizes the interpretive work that research participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation. ...The theory *depends* on the researcher’s view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 130). Thus constructivist grounded theory directly addresses the common critique that objectivist grounded theory fails to account for the positionality of the researcher.

Owing to the psychological and sociological roots of constructivism (Broido & Manning, 2002; Charmaz, 2006), constructivist grounded theory also entails the investigation of social contexts surrounding the phenomenon under investigation. Such contexts may include “larger, and often, hidden positions, networks, situations, and relationships”; “differences and distinctions between people”; and “the hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity that maintain and perpetuate such differences and distinctions” (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 130-131). This emphasis on surrounding social contexts distinguishes constructivist from objectivist grounded theory, which assumes a single, discoverable reality that exists regardless of context (Charmaz, 2006).

Constructivist grounded theory is thus a methodological approach that reflects the ongoing epistemological evolution and revolution in the social sciences that began in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Constructivist grounded theory also offers much to scholars seeking to engage in social justice research (Charmaz, 2005). For example, grounded theory is appropriate for researchers who inquire about major social and cultural processes with the goal of remedying inequities in those processes. The connection between grounded theory and social justice, however, goes beyond the formation of research questions. Constructivist grounded theory offers social justice researchers a robust set of tools for identifying and analyzing social processes. By investigating resources, hierarchies, policies, and practices, grounded theory researchers can make “explicit connections between the theorized antecedents, current conditions, and consequences of major processes” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 512), thus advancing social justice.

Scrutiny: Grounded Theory for Social Justice

The word *scrutiny* comes from the Latin words *scrutinium*; *scrutari*, meaning “to search, examine”; and *scruta*, meaning “trash” (“Scrutiny,” 2011). Each of these meanings reflects Charmaz’s (2005) discussion of the role of scrutiny in grounded theory for social justice. According to Charmaz (2005), the paradigm shift away from “the cloak of neutrality and passivity enshrouding mid-century positivism” (p. 511) has had the unintended consequence of leading some researchers away from the theoretical scrutiny characteristic of objectivist grounded theory. A renewed focus on scrutiny, in Charmaz’s (2005) view, entails “[g]athering rich empirical materials” and “making systematic recordings” (p. 511), which in turn generate “comparative materials to

pinpoint contextual conditions and to explore links between levels of analysis” (p. 511). In this way, scrutiny leads a grounded theory researcher to a thorough excavation of the many contextual strata in which the phenomenon of interest is embedded. This excavation requires carefully recording each object one encounters as well as the context for the encounter. It also requires documenting what is *not* encountered, thus exposing take-for-granted assumptions and casting off “the cloak of neutrality and passivity.” Perhaps not coincidentally, “shroud” has the same etymology as “scrutiny” (“Shroud,” 2011).

Guided by the notion of theoretical scrutiny, Charmaz (2005) offered several key insights in her careful analysis of how constructivist grounded theory methodology might be used to advance social justice research. First, consistent with Glaserian grounded theory, Charmaz (2005) argued that “[a]ny extant concept must earn its way into the analysis” (p. 512). Thus, in constructivist grounded theory for social justice, even concepts such as hegemony and domination must not be taken for granted. Importantly, what must be investigated is not *whether* these concepts are present; rather, the question is “if, when, how, to what extent, and under what conditions these concepts become relevant to the study” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 512).

Another important insight in Charmaz’s (2005) analysis is the identification of the possibilities that can emerge from grounded theory using a social justice lens. According to Charmaz (2005), when grounded theory researchers use social justice as a sensitizing concept, they enable new perspectives on “both large collectivities and individual experiences” (p. 513). Within such perspectives, grounded theory for social justice yields particularly rich information in three areas: resources, hierarchies, and policies and

practice (Charmaz, 2005). In each of these areas, Charmaz (2005) posed a number of questions meant “to stimulate thinking and to suggest diverse ways that critical inquiry and grounded theory research may join” (p. 514). These questions and others may guide researchers using grounded for social justice in their efforts to collect and analyze data about complex phenomena.

Resources include various dimensions of information and power. Thus, salient questions for data collection and analysis might include: “What are the resources in the empirical worlds we study? What do they mean to actors in the field? Which resources, if any, are taken for granted? By whom?” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 513). Other questions about resources concern their control, availability, sharing, hoarding, concealment, and distribution (Charmaz, 2005).

In addition to resources, hierarchies emerge in grounded theory studies using a social justice lens (Charmaz, 2005). Analytical questions relevant to hierarchies include:

What are they? How did they evolve? At what costs and benefits to involved actors? Which purported and actual purposes do those hierarchies serve? Who benefits from them? Under which conditions? How are the hierarchies related to power and oppression? How, if at all, do definitions of race, class, gender, and age cluster in specific hierarchies and/or at particular hierarchical levels?

(Charmaz, 2005, pp. 513-514)

Additional questions concern the moral justification for such hierarchies and the ways in which such justifications are maintained (Charmaz, 2005).

Finally, grounded theory for social justice facilitates an understanding of policies and practices and their consequences (Charmaz, 2005). In this arena, “structure and

process” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 514) converge, offering areas rich for interrogation by researchers. Relevant questions include, “What are the rules—both tacit and explicit? Who writes or enforces them? How? Whose interests do the rules reflect? From whose standpoint? Do the rules and routine practices negatively affect certain groups or categories of individuals? If so, are they aware of them?” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 514). Further analytical questions investigate the conditions of and consequences for participants’ awareness (or unawareness) of rules, policies, and practices relevant to the convergence of “collective and individual life” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 514) in which the phenomenon under investigation is situated.

Importantly, to realize the full potential of grounded theory for social justice, Charmaz (2005) calls for reclaiming the traditions of Chicago school sociology from which her own views of constructivist epistemology originated. She suggests that the central tenets of the Chicago school are that it “assumes human agency, attends to language and interpretation, views social processes as open-ended and emergent, studies action, and addresses temporality” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 521). Equally important is that throughout the chapter, Charmaz (2005) employs what she calls “[t]he *critical* stance in social justice” (p. 508, emphasis mine). For Charmaz (2005), constructivist grounded theory is not inconsistent with a critical perspective. Charmaz argued that in constructivist grounded theory, “what observers see and hear depends upon their prior interpretive frames, biographies, and interests as well as the research context, their relationships with research participants, concrete field experiences, and modes of generating and recording [data]” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 509). These tenets of constructivist grounded theory are consistent with a critical perspective as described by Creswell

(2007): “Researchers need to acknowledge their own power, engage in dialogues, and use theory to interpret or illuminate social action” (p. 27).

Thus, Charmaz (2005) connects constructivism with a critical perspective, making a powerful case not only for social justice research (Charmaz, 2005) as an epistemological umbrella, but also for social justice *grounded theory* as a *methodological* umbrella. More specifically, while social justice research draws on constructivist, feminist, and Critical Whiteness theoretical perspectives, Charmaz’s (2005) work on social justice grounded theory reinforces and adds to the work of scholars who have identified, with varying degrees of specificity, *how* each of these three perspectives would inform a grounded theory study throughout the research process.

Through the targeted questions about resources, hierarchies, and policies identified above, Charmaz (2005) offered a nuanced, yet flexible, roadmap from epistemology to methodology. Charmaz’s (2005) questions guided my thinking about how to operationalize this study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE programs. Specifically, I considered the resources associated with White privilege – the “unearned entitlements” and “unearned advantages” available to White women in SA/HE. What would these entitlements and advantages look like, and how had they accumulated over time, for White women preparing to enter the profession? I also reflected on the role of hierarchy: did White women experience race and gender in a hierarchical way? Was one of these identities more salient than the other, and was hierarchy the same as salience? How did the concept of hierarchy emerge in White women’s families of origin, educational experiences, and professional environments?

Finally, I wondered about the policies and practices, or “the rules –

both tacit and explicit ” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 93) – governing White women’s performance of racial identity in personal, educational, and professional contexts. What are the “rules” of whiteness for White women in SA/HE graduate programs? How might these “rules” relate to racial privilege and oppression? What are the negative consequences of these “rules” for White women, their Peers of Color, and the students with whom they work now and with whom they will work in the future? By reflecting on Charmaz’s (2005) guiding questions, I mapped my way from grounded theory for social justice in the abstract to the sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures used to fulfill the research questions of this study. I outline these components in the following sections.

Sampling Philosophy

Citing the widely recognized work of Patton (2002) and Strauss and Corbin (1998), student affairs researchers Jones et al. (2006) reminded readers that decisions about sampling should be “guided by the goal of maximizing opportunities to uncover data relevant to the purpose of the study” (p. 71). Further, particularly in grounded theory research, “the sampling process interacts with data analysis” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 71) and may occur throughout the study. The sampling philosophy for this study was guided first and foremost by these two broad principles. More specifically, given the nature of constructivist grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006) and the purpose of this study, purposeful sampling (Jones et al., 2006; Patton, 2002) primarily guided the inquiry. As the theory unfolded, I employed more specific approaches to achieve the purposes of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006). I elaborate on these specifics below.

First, however, the two broad principles identified above – maximizing opportunities to uncover relevant data, and recognizing that sampling overlaps with data

analysis (Jones et al., 2006) – warrant more attention. Opportunities to uncover relevant data, of course, require relevant data sources. Beyond relevance, however, Morse (2007) has suggested that grounded theory research requires participants who are “excellent” (p. 231). Drawing on Spradley (1979), Morse defined “an excellent participant for grounded theory” as “one who has been through, or observed, the experience under investigation” (p. 231). More specifically:

Participants must therefore be experts in the experience or the phenomena under investigation; they must be willing to participate, and have the time to share the necessary information; and they must be reflective, willing, and able to speak articulately about the experience. (p. 231)

“Excellent” participants must therefore have expertise, experience, and the willingness and time to participate. Not coincidentally, racial and economic privilege figure prominently in the production of leisure time, as well as in trust in the academy and its representatives (Bousquet, 2005; hooks, 1994; Mohanty, 2006; Rakow, 1991; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Veblen, 1889/1994). In designing this study I anticipated that participants in this study would likely be no exception, embodying the racial and educational privileges of whiteness and of enrollment in graduate school. However, I determined they must also have something to say about being White women, and the desire to say it – not only to themselves, but to me. I further determined that I would use “excellence” as a criterion not only for individual participants, but for the sample as a whole. I elaborate on my definition of an “excellent sample” below in the section on sampling procedures.

In addition to maximizing opportunities to uncover relevant data, grounded theory researchers must also recognize that sampling overlaps with data analysis. Through theoretical scrutiny, social justice grounded theory researchers engage in constant comparison (Charmaz, 2006) between micro-level interactions and surrounding macro-level social structural conditions. From this constant comparative process, insights emerge about the resources, hierarchies, and policies and practices surrounding the phenomenon under investigation (Charmaz, 2005). As such insights emerge, grounded theory researchers investigate them not only through further constant comparative analysis, but through more conversations with current participants and, as needed, the recruitment of additional participants. In turn, new insights generated from these interactions generate more data. This iterative process is a hallmark of grounded theory research and is known as *theoretical sampling* (Charmaz, 2006; Covan, 2007; Jones et al., 2006). Consistent with grounded theory for social justice (Charmaz, 2005), sampling and data analysis were inextricably intertwined throughout this study of racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs. I address theoretical sampling in greater detail later in this chapter.

Sampling Procedures

I designed the sampling procedures for this study to reflect those used by Edwards and Jones (2009) in their study of college men's gender identity. In that study, the authors used intensity sampling to generate 102 prospective participants. Of those, 35 expressed interest in participation, and based on demographic information about their identities and experiences, five men were selected as the initial sample, with five additional participants added later through theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006). These

procedures generated a sample of information-rich cases and led to a compelling grounded theory of college men's identity, with the notion of a gender-performative mask or "man face" as a memorable core category (Edwards & Jones, 2009). Because I, too, sought to generate a compelling grounded theory of identity, I modeled the sampling procedures for this study on those in Edwards and Jones' (2009) inquiry.

Primary sampling criteria. Consistent with constructivist grounded theory and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) as well as the purpose of this study, I used a blend of criterion and intensity sampling (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006) to develop a pool of prospective participants who met the criteria for an "excellent" participant as defined by Morse (2007, p. 231). For this study I defined "excellent" participants as those who met the two primary sampling criteria for this study: they had to be enrolled in a master's degree program that prepares SA/HE professionals, and they had to identify as White women.

Enrollment in a SA/HE master's degree program. The Professional Preparation Commission of ACPA – College Student Educators International (ACPA) maintains a Directory of Graduate Programs Preparing Student Affairs Professionals (Commission on Professional Preparation, n.d.). Institutions are listed in the directory because they "have at least one graduate program that prepares student affairs professionals" (Commission on Professional Preparation, n.d., para. 1). One hundred thirty-four institutions listed in the directory offer a master's degree that prepares student affairs professionals. To participate in this study, individuals had to be enrolled in one of these programs, and they had to have completed at least two full-time semesters of coursework (or its part-time or quarter-system equivalent). To meet this criterion, participants indicated their enrollment

and progress toward degree completion on an initial interest form (Appendix A). Notably, for full-time students, many if not most SA/HE master's degree programs take two academic years to complete. Although both part- and full-time students were invited to complete the initial interest form, because data collection began in the fall, most individuals had just passed the approximate halfway point in their graduate studies.

Identifying as a White woman. Because this study investigated racial identity among White women, all prospective participants had to identify as White women. To meet this criterion, those who completed the initial interest form had to respond in the affirmative to the following required, yes/no item on the initial interest form (Appendix A):

Because I value inclusiveness, I hope that the participants in this study will be diverse in many ways, including monoracial vs. multiracial identity, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, social class, dis/ability, and religion.

However, the primary purpose of the study is to explore racial identity among White women. Recognizing that you have many dimensions to your identity, do you consider yourself a White woman?

The purpose of this item was to identify whether each prospective participant identified as a White woman, while also introducing participants to the research (not to mention the researcher's values and beliefs) about identity that informed the study.

The intent of the language in this item was to be inclusive as possible while also delimiting the scope of the study. I sought to do everything possible to invite and welcome the participation of those who identified as multiracial or transgender, because these identifications do not preclude identifying as White or female. Likewise, students

who identified with any ethnicity or sexual orientation were welcome to participate. I paid careful attention to these two dimensions of identity because of the all too frequent conflation of ethnicity with race, and of sexual orientation with gender expression and identity. Being open to multiple identifications is an important way in which researcher decisions may contribute to more complex understandings of college students' identities (Abes, 2009; Abes et al., 2007; Torres et al., 2009). In addition, I used open-ended language ("...diverse in many ways, including...") to indicate my awareness that there are certainly more dimensions to social identity than those I chose to list.

Prospective participant recruitment. As the first step in the sampling process, I recruited a pool of prospective participants who were enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs and identify as White women. Students interested in participating in my study completed an initial interest form online (Appendix A). Via Google spreadsheet technology, the information provided on each initial interest form automatically populated a downloadable spreadsheet. My intention was to generate a spreadsheet containing initial information about 30-50 White women enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs. I selected the frame of 30-50 prospective participants to be consistent with the effective sampling procedures employed by Edwards and Jones (2009). My intention was that the entries in the spreadsheet would constitute a pool of prospective participants who met the primary sampling criteria for this study.

When designing the study, I anticipated a need to target several sources for potential participants and thus planned a series of correspondences. First, I sent an email (see Appendix B) to CSP-TALK, an electronic mailing list for faculty members in SA/HE graduate programs. In this email I invited faculty members to encourage White

women in their programs to complete the initial interest form by clicking on a link within the email. I was then prepared to make additional contacts through ACPA and NASPA – Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, the two primary national associations for student affairs professionals. Working within each association’s guidelines for research, I intended to contact members who were current SA/HE master’s degree students and identified as White women.

However, I did not make additional contacts through professional associations because within four days of sending the email to SA/HE graduate preparation faculty, 135 individuals had completed the initial interest form. Because this number nearly tripled the maximum value of the range of prospective participants I had identified (i.e., 30-50 individuals), I closed the initial interest form and did not contact the professional associations. Instead, I moved forward with selecting a final sample.

Sample selection. From the spreadsheet generated by the initial interest form (Appendix A), I used intensity and maximum variation sampling (Creswell, 2007) to draw an initial sample. I was purposeful about the size of the sample. In addition, I used Morse’s (2007) criterion of excellence in selecting not only individual participants, but the sample as a whole. I address each of these dimensions below.

Sample size. Jones et al. (2006) reminded qualitative researchers that decisions about sample size should be guided by “the methodological approach, coupled with the purpose of a study” (p. 70). Specific to grounded theory, Charmaz (2006) noted that the criterion of theoretical saturation often supersedes sample size, “which may be very small” (p. 114). Similarly, Morse (2007) suggested that “the better the data quality, the fewer interviews will be necessary, and the lower the number of participants recruited

into the study” (p. 230). These guidelines provide some context for understanding the range of sample sizes in recent grounded theory studies of identity in the college student development literature (see, for example, Jones, 1997 – 10 participants; Edwards & Jones, 2009 – 10 participants; Harris, 2010 – 68 participants; Hesse-Biber, Livingstone, Ramirez, Barko, & Johnson, 2010 – 34 participants; Stevens, 2004 – 11 participants; Pusch, 2005 – 13 participants; and Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005 – 13 participants). In these studies, several of which emerged from doctoral dissertations, a sample size of fewer than 15 participants is the norm. Consistent with this literature base, I selected a sample of 11 participants. Guided by the principle of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006; Covan, 2007; Jones et al., 2006), I was open to the possibility of adding more participants in later stages of data collection and analysis, but as I will discuss below, I elected not to do so because I had reached theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006) in the data analysis process.

Diversity of sample. Seeking “information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely” (Creswell, 2007, p. 127), I selected 11 participants whom I deemed to have the potential to offer rich stories about their experiences with White identity. Additionally, consistent with maximum variation sampling (Creswell, 2007) and building on lessons learned from previous studies of White women (Frankenberg, 1993), these participants reflected diversity across multiple dimensions of social identity, geographic regions, age and life experiences, and other educational and professional experiences.

Contemporary student development theory scholarship (Jones, 2009; Torres et al., 2009) and the social justice framework guiding this study (Charmaz, 2005) highlight the

importance of an intersectional approach to identity. An intersectional approach to the study of identity suggests that multiple social identities (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000) develop and are constructed simultaneously. Thus, taking an intersectional approach to the study of White identity among women required attentiveness not only to the intersecting dimensions of race and gender, but to other dimensions of difference, including monoracial vs. multiracial identity, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, social class, dis/ability, and religion.

In taking an intersectional approach, my goal was not to “represent” categories of difference. As Morse (2007) argued, “a complex cross-cultural study” (p. 232) would require theoretical saturation *within* cultural groups (or those who share a dimension of identity). This kind of cross-cultural analysis was not my intention, nor did I wish to essentialize any individual or identity by making assumptions about representativeness. Rather, I sought to construct a sample and, thus, the emergent grounded theory in an inclusive manner (Jones et al., 2006; Morse, 2007). Thus, I attended carefully to categories of difference that were salient in the lives of participants and relevant to the purpose of the study.

In addition to social identities, I attended to geographic regions, age and life experiences, and other educational and professional experiences. Each of these criteria constituted a layer of social context (Renn, 2003) consistent with the fourth research question guiding this study: In what ways do multiple layers of social context, including power and privilege, influence White women’s racial identity? First, because of the importance of U.S. geography in constructions of White identity among women (Frankenberg, 1993; Murrell, 1995), geography was an important sampling criterion for

this study. In addition to geography, I sought to include a diverse range of educational (e.g., institutional type and control; academic major; and co-curricular experiences in college and graduate school), professional, and life experiences in the initial sample. Finally, I did not seek to operationalize power and privilege in terms of specific social contexts; rather, I hoped that by including a range of contexts, power and privilege might emerge organically from the data (Charmaz, 2005).

Thus, I designed the initial interest form (Appendix A) to gather information about prospective participants' multiple dimensions of social identity, geographic regions, age and life experiences, and other educational and professional experiences. First, I asked potential participants to tell me more about how they viewed themselves with regard to various dimensions of social identity. I also asked individuals to indicate where they lived at the time of form completion, as well as anywhere they had lived for longer than one academic year. Next, I invited participants to indicate salient life experiences, such as age, veteran status, parental status, partnership or marital status, and being an adoptee. Finally, I invited participants to indicate salient educational and professional experiences, including college generational status, undergraduate institution(s) attended, and work experiences in SA/HE.

After closing the initial interest form on Google (Appendix A), I downloaded the spreadsheet containing the names and responses of the 135 individuals who had completed the form. First, I reviewed the entries to ensure that all individuals identified as White women and were currently enrolled in SA/HE graduate preparation programs. I then excluded the 69 individuals who indicated they had just begun their first year in graduate school, resulting in a pool of 66 individuals who were in their second year of

full-time study in a SA/HE master's degree program. I then closely examined this group of 66 individuals to select an excellent and inclusive sample (Morse, 2007). First, I examined how participants had responded to the items about race, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, dis/ability, and religion, as well as the open item that invited further information about participants' identities. Consistent with the purpose of the study, I highlighted responses that struck me as reflective and articulate (Morse, 2007) about identity in general and White identity in particular. I also highlighted responses that conveyed salience of dimensions of identity other than race, along with responses that described influential personal experiences and family and social contexts (e.g., being a first-generation college or graduate student, growing up in a military family, studying abroad, being a survivor of interpersonal violence, struggling with depression or anxiety, or having a gay parent). Next, I excluded prospective participants who did not have at least one response highlighted. Within the pool that remained, I examined individuals' geographic origins and current locations, which allowed me to ensure that the emerging sample was geographically inclusive. Finally, I selected and contacted 12 individuals, 11 of whom were still available and interested in participating (one individual was supportive but felt she did not have time).

Ultimately, I constructed a sample of 11 White women, ages 23 to 28 at the time they completed the initial interest form, who had completed about half of their coursework toward a master's degree in SA/HE. Without seeking to saturate categories of difference (Morse, 2007), I created a sample of individuals whose social identities, educational experiences, geographic locations, and other life experiences reflected multiplicity and difference rather than homogeneity. The criterion of excellence (Morse,

2007) guided me throughout the sample selection process in that I sought expertise “in the experience...under investigation” (p. 231) and the reflectiveness and ability “to speak articulately about the experience” (p. 231). I sought these qualities not just in each individual, but in the sample as a whole. Thus, I chose a group of White women in SA/HE programs whose expertise, reflectiveness, and articulateness about racial identity reflected multiple salient social identities and life experiences. Participants will be introduced in Chapter 4 with attention to salient identities, educational and professional experiences, and region(s) of residence from birth to age 22, as well as the locations of their graduate programs. To protect confidentiality, I eliminated all references to states and cities, instead referring to the regions of the U.S. described by the Census Bureau (United States Census Bureau, n.d.). Table 1 describes these regions.

Theoretical Sampling

As noted earlier in this chapter, an important feature of grounded theory methodology is that “the sampling process interacts with data analysis” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 71) and may occur throughout the study. Thus, as the grounded theory emerged, I was open to the possibility of engaging in theoretical sampling, which is “seeking and collecting pertinent data to elaborate and refine categories in your emerging theory” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 96). I was prepared to use theoretical sampling to guide the selection of additional participants through snowball and opportunistic sampling methods (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006). For example, I was prepared to return to the initial pool of 30 to 50 individuals and add new participants through intensity and maximum variation sampling (Creswell, 2007). Ultimately, I did not engage in theoretical sampling because I reached theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006) using existing data. I will

Table 1

U.S. States Divided into Geographic Regions

Region	States included in region
East North Central	Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
East South Central	Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee
Mid-Atlantic	New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
Mountain	Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming
New England	Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
Pacific	Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington
South Atlantic	Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia
West North Central	Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
West South Central	Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas

Note. Adapted from “Census Regions and Divisions of the United States,” by United States Census Bureau, n.d., retrieved from http://www.census.gov/geo/www/us_regdiv.pdf

elaborate on theoretical saturation later in this chapter when I discuss data analysis procedures. First, I turn to data collection.

Data Collection

Once I had constructed the sample, I contacted the 11 individuals I had identified and began the process of obtaining informed consent and scheduling interviews. The primary data collection strategy for this study was to conduct individual interviews, as described in more detail below.

Approaching the interview. Qualitative researchers’ approaches to the interview are as numerous and complex as the phenomena they investigate (Fontana & Frey, 2000). In his seminal work on the ethnographic interview, Spradley (1979) provided detailed

instruction on interview techniques that support the overall purpose of ethnography: “*learning from people*” (italics in original; p. 3). Fontana and Frey (2000) described qualitative interviews as “active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (p. 646). Even within a single perspective under the social justice “umbrella” – feminist inquiry – there is no singular approach to the interview; in fact the process is fraught with complexities (e.g., Bloom, 1998; Olesen, 2007; Visweswaran, 1994). The guidance of Jones et al. (2006) is helpful: “We encourage researchers to ‘lean’ into these complexities. In fact, avoiding them would be irresponsible” (p. 3). However, the authors also cautioned that qualitative researchers may get lost when they “use a method of collecting data that is not consistent with a particular methodology and not grounded in its founding philosophy” (p. 32). Thus, although this study and this researcher are both influenced by multiple perspectives, it is most prudent to return to the social justice perspective guiding this study (Charmaz, 2005). Accordingly, my approach to the interview primarily reflected the guidance of Charmaz (2005), a constructivist grounded theorist for social justice.

Interviewing for social justice. When I introduced grounded theory methodology, I mentioned Charmaz’s (2005) discussion of the need for constructivist grounded theorists to reestablish the rigorous theoretical scrutiny characteristic of objectivist grounded theory. In that discussion, Charmaz outlined a number of guidelines that are useful to consider when constructing a philosophy of interviewing consistent with a social justice perspective. These guidelines include the following:

- Establish intimate familiarity with the setting(s) and the events occurring within it – as well as the research participants (p. 521).

- Focus on meanings and processes (p. 522).
- Engage in a close study of action (p. 523).
- Discover and detail the social context in which the action occurs (p. 524).
- Pay attention to language (p. 525).

In addition to language, Charmaz (2005) urged researchers to attend to silences, or what is not said, at every level from the individual to the organizational, in order to get at “[i]nvisible aspects of social structure” (p. 527).

Charmaz’s (2005) guidelines are consistent with the research questions and theoretical perspective guiding this study. “Intimate familiarity” with participants is a hallmark of qualitative inquiry, especially with women as researchers and participants and in studies of identity (e.g., Jones, 1997). Indeed, through the interviews I established deep familiarity with participants’ lives and attended to the issue of temporality, given my focus on how racial identity had developed over time (Charmaz, 2005). Further, I found that my interest in understanding educational and professional influences was consistent with the need to establish familiarity with the setting in which participants are situated – in this case, SA/HE programs. Attention to meanings and processes was central to this study, as suggested by the research questions concerning the *construction* of racial identity and layers of influential social context. Similarly, my focus on identity construction was consistent with Charmaz’s (2005) suggestion to “[e]ngage in a close study of action” (p. 523), and the attention to social context is explicit in the third and fourth research questions. Finally, attention to language and silences will be addressed more explicitly in the discussion of data analysis later in this chapter. Extending the notion of silence to the visual realm, the fourth research question guiding this study

focused on issues of power and privilege, both of which are “[i]nvisible aspects of social structure and process” (p. 527) and thus “precisely what critical inquiry needs to tackle” (p. 527).

Although these guidelines for social justice grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005) aligned with the research questions for this study, it was imperative that a social justice perspective guide the actual interview process. Because grounded theory for social justice is also constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005), I attended to the particularities of interviewing from a constructivist approach. This approach is known as intensive interviewing (Charmaz, 2006).

Constructivist approach: The intensive interview. Intensive interviewing is a technique that “permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 25), making it ideal for constructivist grounded theory. Using intensive interviewing, grounded theorists “ask participants to describe and reflect upon his or her experiences in ways that seldom occur in everyday life” (p. 25), thus elucidating the phenomenon under investigation. A meaningful form of interaction for both participants and researchers, intensive interviewing allows researchers to “[g]o beneath the surface” (p. 26) in a respectful, flexible manner, while participants can “[b]reak silences and express their views” (p. 27) and guide both the conversation and the shared meaning-making process with researchers. Articulating the fit between constructivist grounded theory and intensive interviewing, Charmaz argued that both “are open-ended but directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet flexible” (p. 28). These characteristics also resonate with a social justice approach (Charmaz, 2005) because of the emphasis on exploring hidden meanings, elucidating what is taken for granted in

everyday life, and empowering participants to break silences. Thus, intensive interviewing procedures were an appropriate fit for this study.

Interview Protocols and Procedures

In grounded theory projects, interview procedures require both control and flexibility (Charmaz, 2006). For example, given the iterative nature of sampling, data collection, and data analysis, it is appropriate for grounded theorists to approach the design of initial interview protocols rather broadly, knowing that later interviews will be more specific based on emerging codes and categories in the data. Guided by these principles, I conducted one intensive, semi-structured interview (Fontana & Frey, 2000) with each of the 11 participants in the study. Following initial data analysis, I then conducted a second set of intensive, semi-structured interviews. In the following sections, I elaborate on interview protocols and procedures in detail.

First interview protocol. The protocol for the first interview is included in Appendix C. Consistent with intensive interviewing (Charmaz, 2006), the purpose of this protocol was to serve as an “interview guide with well-planned open-ended questions and ready probes” (p. 29) that would elicit thoughtful reflection from participants, and leave me free to focus on listening to and engaging with them. I did not address each of these items in every interview. Rather, the protocol provided a list of possible questions that I narrowed based on pilot testing and what I knew about each participant by the time interviews began.

The purpose of this interview was to generate an initial understanding of participants’ racial identities, as well as the surrounding influential layers of social context, during early life. The meaning of “early life” shifted given participants’ ages

and life experiences, but conversations generally focused on childhood, high school, and college, with limited discussion of graduate school. Consistent with a semi-structured approach (Fontana & Frey, 2000) and Charmaz's (2006) guidelines for intensive interviews focusing on personal experiences, initial questions were broad in nature, while intermediate questions were more specific based on participants' responses. Ending questions generated further reflection but facilitated closure to the conversation.

Second interview protocol. The second interview protocol appears in Appendix D. Like the first protocol, the second protocol was intended to serve as a flexible guide (Charmaz, 2006) that would encourage participants' reflection and allow me to listen and engage. The purpose of the second interview was to pick up where the first interview ended chronologically, exploring participants' post-college, professional, and SA/HE graduate school experiences. Again, the focus was on racial identity, along with influential layers of social context. In many cases, I also engaged in more explicit discussion of White privilege and personal views related to diversity issues (e.g., affirmative action) during this interview, given increased rapport with participants (Glesne, 2006) and the more complex understanding of these issues that participants demonstrated when reflecting on more recent parts of their lives.

Pilot testing. I pilot tested the initial interest form and first interview protocol in person with a White, female SA/HE master's degree student who had taken a course I had instructed the prior year. I conducted the interview on the campus housing the SA/HE program in which the student was enrolled. Following the interview, I asked the student for feedback. Generally her feedback was quite positive, indicating that the questions and prompts were appropriate and easily understood and that they would

generate meaningful responses. Her feedback also indicated that the timing and pacing of the interview was appropriate and that a semi-structured approach was indeed appropriate, as we did not discuss every single question in depth and did discuss additional issues in response to the experiences she shared. She did suggest that I emphasize my own identity as a White woman in SA/HE, because that fact had made it easier for her to share information about her racial experiences. In response, I incorporated that feedback into interviews when introducing myself and the study.

Procedures for in-person interviews. I conducted 10 of the 11 initial interviews in person by traveling to the campuses of the institutions housing the SA/HE programs in which participants were enrolled. I conducted these interviews in private but comfortable locations of the participant's choosing (Glesne, 2006). Most of the interviews were conducted in the offices assigned to participants in their graduate assistant roles (e.g., hall director) or in nearby offices or conference rooms. In one case I interviewed a participant in the living room of her residence hall apartment, and I met another participant at her home since she was recovering from surgery. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Procedures for phone interviews. Given that geographic diversity was a key sampling criterion in this study, and given limited resources, it was not possible to conduct every interview in person. Once I had selected the sample and understood the geographical distribution of participants, I decided to conduct initial interviews in person and the second round by phone. In one case, I conducted both interviews by phone because an in-person interview was not geographically feasible.

Phone interviewing is increasingly common given the complexity of many contemporary qualitative studies (Burke & Miller, 2001). Burke and Miller (2001) developed a series of recommendations for novice researchers, “in particular academics in their doctoral education” (p. 14), intending to use phone interviewing as part of their qualitative studies. These guidelines included providing interview questions in advance, preparation for the technological aspects of audio-recording phone conversations, and appraising responses (e.g., “that’s a powerful insight”) since participants cannot see the interviewer and thus have no visual cues about how the interviewer is receiving their responses.

I found Burke and Miller’s (2001) recommendations helpful and operationalized many of them when conducting phone interviews. I elected not to provide the interview questions in advance given my desire to build as much rapport as possible with participants before asking them to discuss the sensitive topics of race and childhood with me. I conducted the conversations via Skype, a free voice-over-Internet service. I did not video-tape conversations but did audio-record them using specialized software called Call Recorder for Skype. As with in-person interviews, all phone interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. In addition, during the interviews I provided verbal feedback as appropriate, commenting on participants’ responses and letting them know when I needed a moment to write something down or reflect on what they had said before responding.

Data Analysis

In this section I describe the coding procedures I used, along with the constant comparative approach (Charmaz, 2006) to data analysis. As intended, the result of data

analysis was an emerging grounded theory of racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE programs.

Constant comparative approach. Consistent with constructivist grounded theory methodology, I used coding procedures to “shape [the] analytic frame” for data analysis (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45). Codes were generated, revised, and compared to one another using the constant comparative approach, a hallmark of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). This “iterative” process (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1) involves using coding procedures to generate codes and categories that reflect multiple layers of meaning and, simultaneously, comparing these codes and categories to one another in every imaginable combination. This approach is analogous to the use of a camera’s zoom feature when viewing a natural landscape through the viewfinder. When zooming in, the viewer can appreciate a much more detailed portrait of one section of the landscape. When zooming out, the viewer realizes there is a much broader context for the earlier, more detailed image, and can then shift the camera and zoom back in on another spot. More nuanced views at various points along the zoom lens continuum can be imagined. When all of these images are examined and compared, viewers have a much more complex understanding of the landscape before them. In this fashion, grounded theories slowly emerge from large, even overwhelming, amounts of data, generating nuanced understandings of complex social processes. Labor intensive but gratifying, this constant comparative approach is described in more detail in the following description of coding procedures.

Coding procedures. In this section, I describe the procedures used to code the data. These procedures included initial coding, focused coding, memo writing, and axial and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006).

Initial coding. The first stage of constructivist grounded theory data analysis is known as initial coding, in which the purpose is to stay as close to the data as possible, remaining “open to exploring whatever theoretical possibilities we can discern in the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 47). Coding word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-to-incident, grounded theorists “fracture” the data (p. 60) to generate units of data at several levels of detail. This process facilitates an analytic turn toward broader codes that are empirically grounded in participants’ experiences but reflective of a deeper level of meaning that transcends individuals. In this stage of data analysis, I coded each transcript individually using word-by-word, line-by-line, and incident-to-incident coding procedures. In this fashion, I generated units of data that could be compared within and across transcripts, as well as across different interviews from the same individual. I became extremely familiar with the data during this stage, when qualitative interviewers famously experience the phenomenon of swimming, if not drowning, in the data as they engage in the “unloosening” of individual data sources (Jones et al., 2006). However, it is also at this stage that I began to find “leads,” develop hunches, and locate theoretical possibilities that signaled readiness for the next stage of data analysis: focused coding (Charmaz, 2006).

Focused coding. In the focused coding stage, grounded theorists begin to work with codes that are “more directed, selective, and conceptual” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57) than initial codes. At this stage, the researcher uses criteria such as frequency and

significance to make decisions about which codes can “categorize your data incisively and completely” (p. 57). In this study, I generated an unmanageable number of possible focused codes at first. Then, using the constant comparative approach (Charmaz, 2006), I refined this list of focused codes to the most incisive, comprehensive, and parsimonious ones. To get to this point, however, I employed an additional tool for data analysis: the writing of analytical memos (Charmaz, 2006).

Memo writing. Memo writing constitutes the researcher’s first attempt to put the emerging focused codes into narrative form (Charmaz, 2006). At first, the purpose of each memo is typically to develop a focused code (Charmaz, 2006). Researchers are advised to describe each possible focused code in their own words, but deeply grounded in participants’ experiences via the individual words, lines, and incidents embedded in initial codes. Through the memo-writing process, researchers come to understand which focused codes are most incisive and comprehensive; they also are able to begin specifying the properties and dimensions of an emerging code, as well as the conditions under which it occurs (Charmaz, 2006).

In this study, I generated memos at multiple stages in the coding process. At first, I wrote memos to document analytical hunches as they emerged. I posed questions, compared individuals and incidents, and reflected on my biases and positionality as a researcher. Later, I used memos to explore connections between codes, questioning whether emergent categories were incisive and comprehensive enough to rise to the level of a focused code. At times, my memos included drawings and sketches as I considered the connections between conceptual categories. Memo writing encouraged “me to go back and forth between data and my emerging analysis and to relate it to other

categories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 75). Although memo writing can (and should) occur at multiple points in data analysis, I described it here because it often facilitates the analytic turn from focused to axial and theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006).

Axial and theoretical coding. The purpose of *axial coding* is to articulate relationships between categories and subcategories (Charmaz, 2006). With origins in objectivist grounded theory, axial coding is more prescriptive than other forms of coding. In constructivist grounded theory, axial coding is most useful for providing structure to the data analysis process (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) noted that she had not used formal axial coding but had “developed subcategories of a category and showed the links between them” (p. 61). In analyzing data for this study, I drew on the principle of articulating relationships between categories, but I was not overly prescriptive. Rather, I considered relationships between categories throughout the data analysis process, especially when writing memos.

Theoretical coding is central to grounded theory data analysis procedures (Charmaz, 2006) and perhaps the most rewarding, as it allows the researcher to “tell an analytic story that has coherence” (p. 63). Through theoretical coding, grounded theory researchers make one more significant analytic turn, integrating the most substantive codes into an emerging theory. Central to theoretical coding is the notion of “coding families” (p. 63), originally developed by Barney Glaser as a taxonomy of analytic categories. Notably, Glaser offered “no criteria for establishing what we should accept as a coding family or reasons why we should accept his depiction of them” (p. 65). Thus, as Charmaz (2006) argued, grounded theorists should look beyond the “positivist concepts” (p. 66) from which Glaserian coding families emerged, instead seeking guidance from

frameworks such as feminist theory and postmodernism. For example, Charmaz (2006) identified “agency and action, power, networks” and “inequality” (p. 66) as possible coding families to consider.

In this study, consistent with a social justice perspective (Charmaz, 2005), I considered several coding families, including racial identity, racial consciousness, racial dissonance, White privilege, and identity intersections. However, I also kept in mind that “each preconceived idea should *earn* its way into [the] analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 68). Theoretical coding was indeed a rewarding part of data analysis, as it was in that stage that the transcripts, initial and focused codes, memos (including drawings), and emergent categories began to come together as a whole greater than the sum of its parts. Thus, a grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE began to emerge.

Saturation of theoretical categories and the role of theoretical sampling.

Although the coding procedures I have just described fall along a continuum of complexity, the analytical process in constructivist grounded theory is anything but linear (Charmaz, 2006; Jones et al., 2006). Instead, the constant comparative approach engages researchers in a complex and circuitous journey. As previously noted, one of the hallmarks of constructivist grounded theory is theoretical sampling and the concurrent nature of sampling, data collection, and data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, as I engaged in multiple phases of data analysis, I was attentive to the principle of theoretical sampling and considered whether additional data collection would be necessary.

Consistent with grounded theory methodology, my goal was to “saturate” emerging theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). Theoretical saturation is the point at which “gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights” (p. 113) or

new dimensions or properties. As I analyzed data from the first set of interviews, I made note of emerging categories and concepts, and I incorporated new questions into the second interview protocol (Appendix D) to gather information that would advance these analyses. After analyzing data from the second set of interviews and synthesizing those analyses with my insights about the first set of interviews, I concluded that I had reached theoretical saturation. When data analysis no longer yielded new insights, I was confident that the emerging categories and concepts responded to the purpose of the study and research questions.

Sorting, diagramming, and integrating. In the very advanced and theoretical stages of data analysis, grounded theory researchers will have developed an extensive set of memos (Charmaz, 2006). To make yet another analytic turn, at this stage researchers sort, diagram, and integrate their memos, with the goal of generating images and drafting the text for papers or chapters (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) stressed that “sorting, diagramming, and integrating your memos are interrelated processes” (p. 115) connected by the common goal of “creating robust categories and penetrating analyses” (p. 121).

By this stage, I had filled a notebook with memos, notes, and drawings, and it was time to integrate them. In the spirit of theoretical sampling, I found that the emerging theory became more clear as I continued to follow Charmaz’s (2006) suggestions: using the constant comparative approach; sketching still more maps and diagrams; considering the logic and temporal ordering of categories; and above all, creating “the best possible balance between the studied experience, [my] categories, and [my] statements about them” (p. 117). Ultimately, the result of data analysis was the emergence of a grounded theory that integrated multiple theoretical categories. The two largest theoretical

categories each represented a *core process* associated with racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs. Each *core process* was in turn associated with a number of smaller theoretical categories, which emerged as *themes* of the two core processes. Using Inkscape (an Open Source software program that allows users to create and edit graphics), I created a series of drawings to illustrate a “big picture” image of each core process. Then, I created a more detailed drawing of each associated theme. Chapter 4 will present the emergent grounded theory in terms of these two core processes and their associated themes, with an image to illustrate each theme and core process.

Use of software. The use of software is a contentious issue in qualitative inquiry, with some scholars cautioning that particularly among novice researchers, software can lead to a superficial and undisciplined approach to data analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Additionally, Jones et al. (2006) advised novice researchers that data analysis software “can only assist, not take the place of, the researcher” (p. 97). Of particular concern for grounded theory analyses is Greene’s observation (in Jones et al., 2006) that “These software packages appear more suited for objectivist grounded theory than constructivist approaches” (Greene, 2000, p. 520, in Jones et al., p. 97). However, this admonition primarily concerns the use of software for theory construction, rather than simply for data management purposes (Jones et al., 2006). Given sufficient experience coding data by hand, there are benefits to using software for data management, including the organization and orderly retrieval of data (Hesse-Biber, 2007). When designing this study, I already had significant experience analyzing qualitative data, both by hand and using software, using multiple methodologies including grounded theory, narrative inquiry, case study research, and phenomenology.

Thus, my intention in this study was to reap the benefits of software use without its detrimental effects on theory development.

Accordingly, I coded all data sources using HyperRESEARCH, a qualitative data analysis software with which I was already familiar. As anticipated, I used HyperRESEARCH for initial coding and early stages of focused coding (Charmaz, 2006) to assist me in organizing large amounts of data (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jones et al., 2006). To refine focused codes, and for later stages of data analysis, I used the software primarily to search codes and transcripts, but also for some coding.

Trustworthiness

Despite the complexity of qualitative inquiry, many scholars agree on general criteria for evaluating qualitative studies. Foremost among these criteria is trustworthiness (Glesne, 2006; Jones et al., 2006; Marshall, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Morrow, 2005). Trustworthiness is “how researchers establish confidence in the research findings” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 98). One of the most important means of establishing trustworthiness is to engage in member checking, in which qualitative researchers share emergent results with participants to ensure that they “see themselves” in the data (Jones, 2002; Jones et al., 2006). I engaged in member checking in this study, but importantly, this process did not consist of simply handing participants transcripts for them to proofread. Instead, I developed a summary of the emerging theory reflecting all of the participants, and I shared that write-up, along with a one-page participant profile, with each participant. Seven out of 11 participants responded to the materials I shared, and I summarized their responses in Appendix E. Each of these seven participants shared

that she saw herself in the emerging theory, and most added that they were eager to read the results in their entirety.

As additional methods for conferring trustworthiness on findings, Jones et al. (2006) recommended that researchers keep a researcher journal, read original epistemological and theoretical texts, “intentionally question research decisions” (p. 99), use an inquiry auditor or research mentor, and purposefully embed techniques that will help confer trustworthiness at multiple points in the research process. I did keep a researcher journal, often going back and forth between journaling and memoing as I analyzed data. In designing this study, I read many epistemological and theoretical texts and reviewed them while collecting and analyzing data. In addition, I am most fortunate to have a number of formal and informal research mentors. First and foremost is my advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Susan Robb Jones, who not only has methodological expertise but is also a leading identity scholar. I also had the research mentorship of the other members of my dissertation committee, other faculty members in my doctoral program, and colleagues on two research teams. It was particularly helpful to have a mentoring community of doctoral students conducting grounded theory dissertations. Ongoing professional development, reading, and dialogue with my advisor, research mentors, and peers helped me to continue attending to trustworthiness throughout the research process. Dialogue also served as a method of peer debriefing.

Constructivist grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006) and grounded theory for social justice (Charmaz, 2005) offer additional strategies for establishing trustworthiness. Adhering to the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006) helped ensure that codes, sub-categories, categories, and concepts all connected and reflected the

integrity of participants' voices. Additionally, memo-writing helped to explicate analytic leads and provided a process to check for the parsimony and salience of emerging categories and concepts (Charmaz, 2006).

Further, Charmaz (2005, 2006) identified four criteria ideal for evaluating grounded theory studies: *credibility*, *originality*, *resonance*, and *usefulness*. I sought *credibility* through the goal of achieving “intimate familiarity” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182) with the topic, data, and participants, leading to claims that I believe are consistent with the data and would lead another researcher to similar conclusions. I also designed this study with *originality* in mind, given that existing theories do not shed sufficient light on this topic, which I believe to be of great practical and theoretical significance to my field. Consistent with the criterion of *resonance*, (Charmaz, 2005), I collected and analyzed data with the intention of drawing “links between larger collectivities and individual lives” (p. 528) that resonated with participants and “portray[ed] the fullness of the studied experience” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 182). Finally, I am hopeful that my study has met the criterion of *usefulness* by illuminating how White women in student affairs and higher education form racial identities. I hope that by generating knowledge about the construction and development of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master’s degree program, this study contributes to a more racially and socially just practice and theory in student affairs.

Ethical Issues

I used a number of strategies to address potential ethical issues that may emerge in this study. First, the study was reviewed by the University of Maryland Institutional Review Board (IRB), and all data collection and analysis procedures complied with IRB

instructions. Second, participants selected pseudonyms for use in data analysis and presentation. Member checking also helped safeguard against any ethical challenges by providing an additional venue through which participants could voice any concerns about the research process or findings.

Identity is a challenging and personal topic. I anticipated that engaging in this study might be an emotional process for participants. Throughout the process, I did my best to engage a non-neutral stance and position myself in the research. Accordingly, I intentionally and appropriately disclosed to participants some relevant aspects of my own identity in keeping with the principle that “I should not expect the participants to discuss anything with me that I would not discuss with them” (Abes, 2005, personal communication, as cited in Jones et al., 2006, p. 166). For example – and in response to feedback from pilot testing – I shared with participants that I identify as an anti-racist White person and that I am both devoted to and critical of the student affairs profession. When appropriate and without interfering with the intensive interviewing process (Charmaz, 2006), I also disclosed other dimensions of my social identity (e.g., I identify as queer and Jewish), particularly with participants who had mentioned that those same identities were salient to them. In one instance, I shared with a participant that I had worked with sexual assault survivors and had survivors in my family; she had disclosed in her initial interest form that she was a survivor, and I wanted to be sure she knew I would treat her experience with respect.

I anticipated that the interview process could bring up painful experiences for students (Jones et al., 2006). Dr. Pepper Phillips at the University of Maryland, College Park counseling center agreed to serve as a consultant for this study. This strategy was

recommended by Jones et al. (2006) stemming from the dissertation work of Jones as well as Abes. I did not seek consultation from Dr. Phillips because I did not see a need to do so, yet it was important to have planned for that contingency.

In 2010-2011 I was an adjunct instructor in a college student personnel graduate program, and I aspire to become a permanent faculty member in the field. I anticipated that these roles might concern participants because I have professional colleagues who are connected to many SA/HE graduate programs. Thus, I shared information about my career goals with participants from the outset, and in instances where we knew people in common (in some cases, on their campuses), I reassured participants about my commitment to confidentiality. In particular, I let participants know that I had not shared my plans to be on campus with their faculty members. I also explained that the purpose of grounded theory research is to generate a theory that was *of* their experiences, but was not *precisely* their experiences and thus would be difficult to link to individuals. Despite the reassurance this information may provide, my role may still have affected participants' decisions about what to share or cause discomfort.

Another concern I anticipated was the possibility of hearing negative feedback from participants about their experiences in SA/HE programs, graduate assistantships, or other educational or professional settings within student affairs. In most cases I found that when content of this nature emerged, it was vague enough that I was able to include it in the findings without much detail that could be linked to an individual or office. However, in a few instances participants were hesitant to share an anecdote or detail about fellow cohort members, particularly when talking about difficult classroom dialogues around diversity. In one instance I offered to turn off the digital recorder, and

the participant then offered to relay her story “off the record” for context and then summarize it in vaguer terms “on the record.” Her concern was not that I would hear the story, but that it would be traceable back to her if it appeared in print. In another instance, a participant began to tell a story and then hesitated, realizing she would betray the confidentiality of a peer if she proceeded. In that instance she simply stopped telling the story and picked another example. My intention was that member checking would provide participants with an opportunity to express their concerns if I had included something with which they are not comfortable. If a participant had asked me to remove content of this nature, I would have done so but would have encouraged her to share her feedback with a faculty member or professional mentor at her institution.

In closing, it was impossible to anticipate all possible ethical issues that might have emerged. However, my methodological and clinical training, commitment to social justice, and the support of my advisor and committee members guided me well in anticipating and responding to the minor issues that did arise.

Reciprocity

The concept of reciprocity is a guiding principle of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006; Jones et al., 2006). Although I am quite hopeful that this study will contribute to social justice in some small way, this project emerged from *my* “compelling interest” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 25). I turned to this question in part to make meaning of my own experiences as an anti-racist White woman in student affairs, and I was eager to dive into the meaning-making process with participants. This process depended more than anything else on participants’ generosity with their time and insights – resources that, as I recall all too well from my own experiences, are quite scarce as a master’s

students. Moreover, I asked participants to share their experiences with a complete stranger on a topic as intimate and personal as identity. In designing this study, I wondered: How would I express my gratitude for all that I was asking participants to give to me, and what would be in it for them?

In designing ethical qualitative studies, researchers seek guidance from many sources as they make decisions about reciprocity. For example, when thinking about the responsibility of navigating “the complex terrain of honoring the particular while conveying the collective story” (Jones, 2002, p. 469), Jones drew from Morrison’s (1987) novel, *Beloved*, to articulate her intention to become “a woman who is a friend of the mind” (Jones, 2002, p. 469). I, too, sought to become a friend of the mind to the women in this study. In thinking further about my own take on reciprocity as I designed this study, I was also drawn to the notion of the “excellent” participant in grounded theory research (Morse, 2007). As Morse suggested, an “excellent” participant is one who has the willingness and ability to speak about the phenomenon of interest. If an excellent participant must speak, then an excellent researcher must listen. North (2009), guided by Parker (2006), has emphasized the importance of listening across difference as a pedagogy for social justice. According to Parker (2006), listening across difference requires humility, caution, and reciprocity:

Reciprocity centrally involves the effort to take the perspective of another. If I engage in this practice, I intentionally privilege the speaker’s vantage point and listen knowing that the speaker understands better than I do his or her social position, emotions, beliefs, and interpretations. This can be a powerful move, for

it keeps me from attaching to (believing) my understanding of another's experience. (p. 16)

At first glance, while eloquent and highly relevant to social justice, this meaning of reciprocity seems to be quite different than the way it is typically conceptualized in discussions of qualitative research methodology. However, Parker's (2006) notion of reciprocity guided my decisions about reciprocity in its more traditional form—the question of what participants would receive in return for the time and resources they devote to this study.

First and foremost, participants in this study had my full attention as a listener across difference (North, 2009; Parker, 2006). Guided by humility, caution, and the knowledge that “the speaker understands better than I do...her social position, emotions, beliefs, and interpretations” (p. 16), I listened to what participants do and do not say, both in real time during interviews and later as I pored over “the data” – *their* words, *their* experiences, *their* lives. Beyond any material manifestations of reciprocity, listening deeply to participants, and taking great care to honor what they share with me, was one of the most meaningful ways for me to express my gratitude for their generosity.

However, given the challenging economic climate and the realities of graduate student life, I felt compelled to express my gratitude in a material way as well. Upon reflection, I determined that supporting some small part of participants' educational journey could be a helpful gesture. I further decided that I wanted any such supportive gesture to be consistent with the social justice perspective (Charmaz, 2005) guiding this study. Thus, I chose a \$10 gift certificate to Biblio.com, an online bookseller that supports independent bookstores and “efforts to bring literacy and education to

impoverished indigenous communities” (Social Responsibility, n.d., para. 7) in Bolivia. Increasingly, students rely on online sellers like Amazon.com and Half.com to purchase both used and new books at the lowest prices they can find (Young, 2010). Through Biblio.com’s search engine, I confirmed that many student affairs and higher education books are available for purchase. Thus, a gift certificate to Biblio.com provided a small but pragmatic token of material support for participants’ educational expenses. However, it also supported the efforts of a company committed to environmental stewardship, ethical profit, support for small and local businesses, and the social cause of global literacy (Social Responsibility, n.d.). I also hoped this gesture would raise participants’ awareness about the privileges and choices they have as consumers, a concept closely connected to White privilege and the Critical Whiteness perspective (Owen, 2007).

Thus, I gave a \$10 gift certificate to Biblio.com to each of the 11 women who participated in this study. This gift certificate was not an incentive; rather, it was a token of appreciation, and I did not tell participants about it until our interviews had been completed. I also randomly selected one individual who had completed the initial interest form (Appendix A) to receive a \$25 gift certificate. This gesture was an incentive; it was advertised in the email to prospective participants (Appendix B).

Reflexivity, Subjectivity, Assumptions, and Biases

An ongoing practice of reflexivity situates qualitative researchers with respect to the questions they investigate, the participants with whom they engage, the findings that emerge, and the meaning researchers make of these findings (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2006; Jones et al., 2006). The purpose of this section is to identify

strategies I used for reflexivity and to offer some reflections on how my subjectivity, assumptions, and biases may have influenced this study.

“Working the Hyphens” as a Framework for Reflexivity and Subjectivity

Many approaches to reflexivity exist; my own reflexive practice is guided by the work of Fine (1994) in her article “Working the Hyphens.” Fine (1994) called on qualitative researchers to “identify transgressive possibilities inside qualitative texts” by foregrounding the co-construction of Self (researcher) and Other (researched) in all aspects of their work. Fine (1994) argued that qualitative researchers can foreground this co-construction by “working the hyphen” between researcher and researched. For Fine (1994) “[w]orking the hyphen means creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, ‘happening between,’ within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence” (p. 72). Working the hyphen(s) means a recognition of heterogeneity, a grounding of all research participants in contexts of oppression, researcher reflexivity, collaboration, self-consciousness, and relational analysis—all of which are tools to “unravel, critically, the blurred boundaries” (p. 57) that persist in all stages of research and writing. Like an initial code in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), working the hyphens suggests action. It invokes multidimensionality and constant motion through space and time. As a sensitizing concept (Blumer, 1969; Dey, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Kearney, 2007), “working the hyphens” will guide my reflective practice throughout this project. Indeed, “[n]ot to make explicit what draws a researcher to a particular question of care and curiosity is to risk de-meaning the hyphen of Self-Other, and returning to the story of ‘I’ writing about ‘them’” (Jones, 2002, p.

463). This principle guided the writing of the initial researcher reflexivity statement in the Prologue to this proposal.

Assumptions and Biases

In qualitative research design, one of the most important parts of reflexive practice is to foreground the researcher's assumptions and biases (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2009; Glesne, 2006; Jones et al., 2006). Because of my belief in the knotty entanglement of Self and Other (Fine, 1994) and in the inextricability of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2001), I do not believe it is possible to separate one's assumptions and biases from the research process or outcomes. Indeed, the theoretical frameworks of power, privilege, and whiteness surrounding the topic of this study suggest that it is difficult if not impossible for those with privilege to account for all of the influences of that privilege in their everyday lives (Brookfield, 2005; Foucault, 1978/1990; Frankenberg, 1993; Johnson, 2006; Owen, 2007). I would argue that the power and privilege of being a researcher functions in precisely this way. However, attempting to account for one's biases and assumptions may facilitate progress toward unpacking the "invisible weightless knapsack" (McIntosh, 1988/2004, p. 104) of privilege associated with the researcher role.

Accordingly, I am aware that the following assumptions and biases, among others of which I am unaware, influenced the process and outcomes of this dissertation study. I believe in and have experienced firsthand the formative nature of educational and professional experiences in shaping development and learning, including the development and construction of social identities. I also believe that social identities are multidimensional, intersecting, and influenced by many layers of social context (Abes et

al., 2007; Jones, 2009; Jones & McEwen, 2000). I further believe, and it has been my experience, that social identities are socially constructed and dynamic; how individuals identify changes over time, both within their life spans and historically speaking.

The particular social identities with which I resonate have innumerable implications for this study. I am a White woman. I am a U.S. citizen and have lived my whole life in the southeastern and mid-Atlantic United States. I am also upper middle class, Jewish, and non-disabled. I identify as queer and am also legally married to a heterosexual man, so I have a complex relationship to heterosexism and homophobia. The salience of each of these identities has shifted over time (Jones & McEwen, 2000) depending on my age, place of residence, and relationship status, among many other factors.

I have additional assumptions and biases that pertain to White racial identity in particular. My commitments to anti-racism, feminism, the LGBTQQIA community, and social justice are fierce, long-standing, and absolutely central to my sense of who I am as a person and an educator. Within Jones and McEwen's (2000) model of multiple dimensions of identity, I would place these commitments at my core. Thus, although I believe in the importance of developing models of White identity that resonate with individuals who do not share these commitments, my hope is that those commitments will develop over time. Further, I believe that increased awareness of one's racial identity facilitates the development of anti-racist commitments among White individuals. As I describe in the Prologue, I further believe, and have experienced firsthand, that White individuals learn to be anti-racist through role models who show them the way (Olson, 2010; Thompson, 2001). In addition, although I have deep gratitude and

reverence for the generosity of People of Color whose teachings have influenced me, I firmly believe that it is *not* the job of People of Color to “school” White individuals about issues of race, power, and privilege. Part of my own commitment to educational research and practice is to teach and embody anti-racist values to college students and those who educate them.

Other assumptions and biases are the result of my family background and major events of family and social significance. Although my father, stepfather, and one grandfather were all major influences on my life, I was primarily raised by my mother and bubby (grandmother), with my stepmother playing an important role as well. As described in the Prologue, not insignificantly, each of these adults was a White individual who believed in gender and racial equality and also had more far-reaching social justice commitments. My grandparents were charter members of the Southern Poverty Law Center, and my father almost won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting on police brutality and racism in Miami in the early 1980s, long before “police brutality” was a household phrase. My mother-in-law was also a major influence. As a White woman and student affairs educator committed to feminism and anti-racism, she may have shaped my professional path more than anyone else. The deaths of my father in 2001 and my mother-in-law in 2008 were very significant life events and have reaffirmed my commitment to social justice work to honor both their legacies. In addition, there are women in my immediate family who have recovered from eating disorders, who have had legal and illegal (pre-*Roe vs. Wade*) abortions, and who have survived rape, cervical cancer, and breast cancer. These life events are important to my family history and,

because they have affected White anti-racist women, have led me to see issues of gender and race as interconnected.

On a less personal but equally significant level, as I described in the Prologue, I also hold assumptions and biases because of my educational and professional experiences in student affairs, higher education, and social work. I have experienced most educational and professional settings in these fields as well-intentioned but not always delivering in terms of social justice. White privilege is omnipresent, yet invisible and unspoken (McIntosh, 1988/2004). The same is true for male privilege, yet at the same time, the over-representation of White women in student affairs and social work has led, in my experience, to a dichotomous conversation in which White women resist acknowledging their White privilege by hiding behind their experiences with gender oppression. Being troubled by this phenomenon is what led me to this study.

Concluding Thoughts on Reflexivity, Subjectivity, Assumptions, and Biases

As I pondered the ethical issues associated with this study, I was reminded of the feminist practice of “reflexive accounts” (Olesen, 2007, p. 424). Frankenberg (1985) offered an example in the following poem about her plans to conduct the study she would eventually publish in *White Women, Race Matters* (Frankenberg, 1993):

White Privilege

Today I got permission to do it in graduate school,
That which you have been lynched for,
That which you have been shot for,
That which you have been jailed for,
Sterilized for,
Raped for,
Told you were mad for –
By which I mean
Challenging racism –
Can you believe

The enormity
Of that?

(Frankenberg, 1985)

Frankenberg's words suggest a deep commitment to her own accountability to Women of Color. I too am most grateful to the social justice-seeking students, mentors, practitioners, and scholars – of multiple racial and gender identities – who continue to guide my journey. Moreover, like Frankenberg, I am aware that this project is a poignant example of White privilege in my own life: the privilege to be educated; to have the time (both paid or leisure) to reflect and both the time and ability to engage in reflective writing; to have the freedom to live my life as a writer, a scholar, an educator, a thirty-something full-time doctoral student both living and anticipating a productive and comfortable personal and professional life. The flip side of my privilege is the oppression and subjugation of “Others” (Johnson, 2006). In particular, I think of the Women of Color in the global South whose daily labor is exploited for the benefit of people like me. This work extends to the world of scholarship and activism about racial privilege, where even if they intend otherwise, their “words are heard far more readily than the same words spoken just as forcefully by People of Color” (Wise, 2005, p. 93). Further, my being aware of this phenomenon, and even reflecting on it, is not enough to avoid or eliminate it (Merchant, 2001).

I strongly believe that the time I have spent on reflection has improved my practice and my scholarship as an anti-racist educator. Returning for a moment to the notion of reciprocity, perhaps this very practice of reflection—with its accompanying emotions of hope, grief, humility, and gratitude—is what I am uniquely positioned to offer to participants. Might the process of engaging in this project offer each participant

a model for ongoing reflection on her identity, her *embodiment*, as a White woman? Might such an ongoing practice of reflection lead her gently down the path of becoming an anti-racist student affairs educator? Might it become part of the toolkit she will need in order to work the hyphens she encounters along the way?

There will be many challenges associated with a White woman researcher doing research on White women's constructions of White identity. My identity, my life experiences, what I have read, and what I believe, will all influence the research at every step – and have already just by my selection of this topic. At this juncture I recognize that I cannot possibly chronicle all the ways that my subjectivity might influence the process. My subject position as a researcher in many ways mirrors my positionality with regard to White privilege—I have the privilege not to see whiteness or my own power and privilege in the research process. This predicament threatens to thwart my efforts to join with other scholars “to remove the white glaucoma that has ruined scholarly vision” (Fine, 1997, p. 57). Awareness of the ubiquity of whiteness is not enough to change the reality of it (Merchant, 2001; Zurita, 2001). Are there ways, however, in which an ongoing practice of reflexivity will enable us to work the hyphen (Fine, 1994) between awareness and change? For myself, for the new professionals in the field I call home, for the students we serve, and for the larger vision and embodiment of social justice to which I hope we are all committed, I certainly hope so.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have described the methodology for this grounded theory study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE programs. The epistemological and theoretical foundations of the study included social justice research, constructivism,

feminist inquiry, and Critical Whiteness. Grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2006) guided the methods and approaches to sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Further, in this chapter I discussed criteria and strategies for establishing trustworthiness, and I presented some ethical challenges and approaches to managing them. Next, I discussed researcher reflexivity and subjectivity, and I presented an initial reflection on experiences leading to my “compelling interest” (Jones et al., 2006, p. 25) in the research question. Finally, I outlined some of my assumptions and biases relevant to the study. The following chapter presents the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to investigate racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs. Specific research questions included:

1. How does racial identity develop over time among White women?
2. How do White women construct racial identities?
3. In what ways do educational and professional experiences, including those that occur in SA/HE master's degree programs, influence White women's racial identities?
4. In what ways do multiple layers of social context, including power and privilege, influence White women's racial identities?

Overview of Findings

Findings are presented in several sections. First, each participant is introduced through an individual narrative, drawing heavily on her own words in interviews and the initial interest form. Next, I offer a presentation of findings corresponding to the two core processes and associated themes that emerged from data analysis. The first core process, “‘Changing My Perspective’: Becoming Conscious of Race and Developing a White Identity,” foregrounds a series of developmental shifts through which participants became conscious of whiteness and developed racial identities. Through richly textured recollections, participants used a series of visual metaphors to describe shifts in their emerging consciousness of race and their development of White identity. Each of these shifts constitutes a theme within “Changing My Perspective.”

“Changing My Perspective” is composed of the following themes. First, as children, participants’ racial consciousness was virtually nonexistent, as described in *Not Seeing Race, Not Registering Difference: “Everything Was Just So White.”* Then, through interactions with White male and White female family members, as well as People of Color in their families and communities, participants caught fleeting images of racial differences and racism. These fleeting images are illustrated in *Peripheral Visions: Catching Glimpses of Race*. Later, participants’ experiences in college, the working world, and graduate school led to turning points that awakened their racial consciousness. This awakening is the subject of “*Opening My Eyes*”: *(Dis)covering Racial Difference, Racism, and White Privilege*. Together, the series of shifts between *not seeing race*, *peripheral visions*, and “*opening my eyes*” constitutes the beginning of a developmental process of *changing one’s perspective* about race and about being White.

Visual representations of this developmental process are provided in Figures 1 through 4. Each theme in the process of *changing one’s perspective* corresponds to a visual metaphor, represented as a new lens the individual acquires as a result of new knowledge or experience. Each new lens, in turn, enables a change in perspective. Although each visual shift is central to the developmental process of *changing one’s perspective*, the core category within this process is *opening one’s eyes*. *Opening one’s eyes* represents one or more “pivotal moments” in the process of learning to recognize racism and White privilege. These eye-opening moments are so pivotal that the individual “can’t not see” racism anymore. However, recognizing racism and White privilege generates new information that conflicts with participants’ prior worldviews, thereby generating *racial dissonance*.

The second core process, the *emergence of racial dissonance*, disrupted the process of *changing one's perspective*. Thus, after *opening one's eyes*, the presentation of findings shifts from a developmental perspective to a cross-sectional snapshot of the second core process in the grounded theory; namely, the process of negotiating racial identity after the “pivotal moments” that opened participants’ eyes to racism and White privilege. In this cross-sectional illustration of the grounded theory, the core category was *responding to racial dissonance* that occurred after opening one’s eyes.

When new insights threatened previously held worldviews about race, participants were forced to confront racial dissonance, or discomfort and ambiguity about race, identity, and privilege. In response, participants employed strategies corresponding to three modes: *resisting*, *engaging*, and *transforming* racial dissonance. Some strategies reflected a single response mode, while others corresponded to more than one response mode. Participants *resisted* racial dissonance by “putting up walls” of denial and anger; *engaged* racial dissonance by exhibiting a hunger for knowledge; and *transformed* racial dissonance when realizing that they knew “too much not to do anything.” In addition, participants *resisted and engaged* dissonance through complex emotions and intersecting identities; *engaged and transformed* racial dissonance when considering whether to “call out” racially problematic actions; and *resisted and transformed* racial dissonance through (1) misguided interactions with Peers of Color, and (2) troubling motivations behind their opinions about affirmative action policy in higher education.

Chronologically, participants most often used resistance strategies soon after opening their eyes to racism and White privilege, followed by engagement and transformation strategies. However, some participants employed strategies in a different

order, and participants sometimes responded to racial dissonance from the standpoint of overlapping response modes. A cross-sectional representation of the grounded theory revealed that by confronting and responding to racial dissonance, participants navigated a challenging terrain and emerged with the capacity to adopt a new lens. When emerging from that terrain, participants resumed the developmental process of changing their perspectives about race and White identity. Like the progressive or graduated lenses commonly worn in glasses, this lens contained two regions with different prescriptions. The first prescription, *“Wearing a Conscious Lens of Whiteness”: Adopting a Complex Awareness,*” allowed participants to see the intricacies of White identity and privilege operating in a given context. Importantly, this complex awareness included examining the intersections between racial identity and other salient identities, including gender, sexuality, and social class. The second prescription, *“A Vision for My Life”: Why Working through the Dissonance is “Worth It,”* enabled the viewer to focus at greater distances and to imagine how a healthy White identity, paired with a commitment to challenging racism and White privilege, could benefit one’s professional and personal future.

Finally, the chapter concludes with a postscript depicting the meaning participants made of the overwhelming response rate to this study. In the words of participants, “I would love to help.” This final section demonstrates how participants performed and developed racial identities as White women in student affairs graduate programs by the very act of choosing to participate in this study.

Figure 4.1 depicts the emergent grounded theory, which is composed of two core processes, “Changing My Perspective” and the emergence of racial dissonance, and their

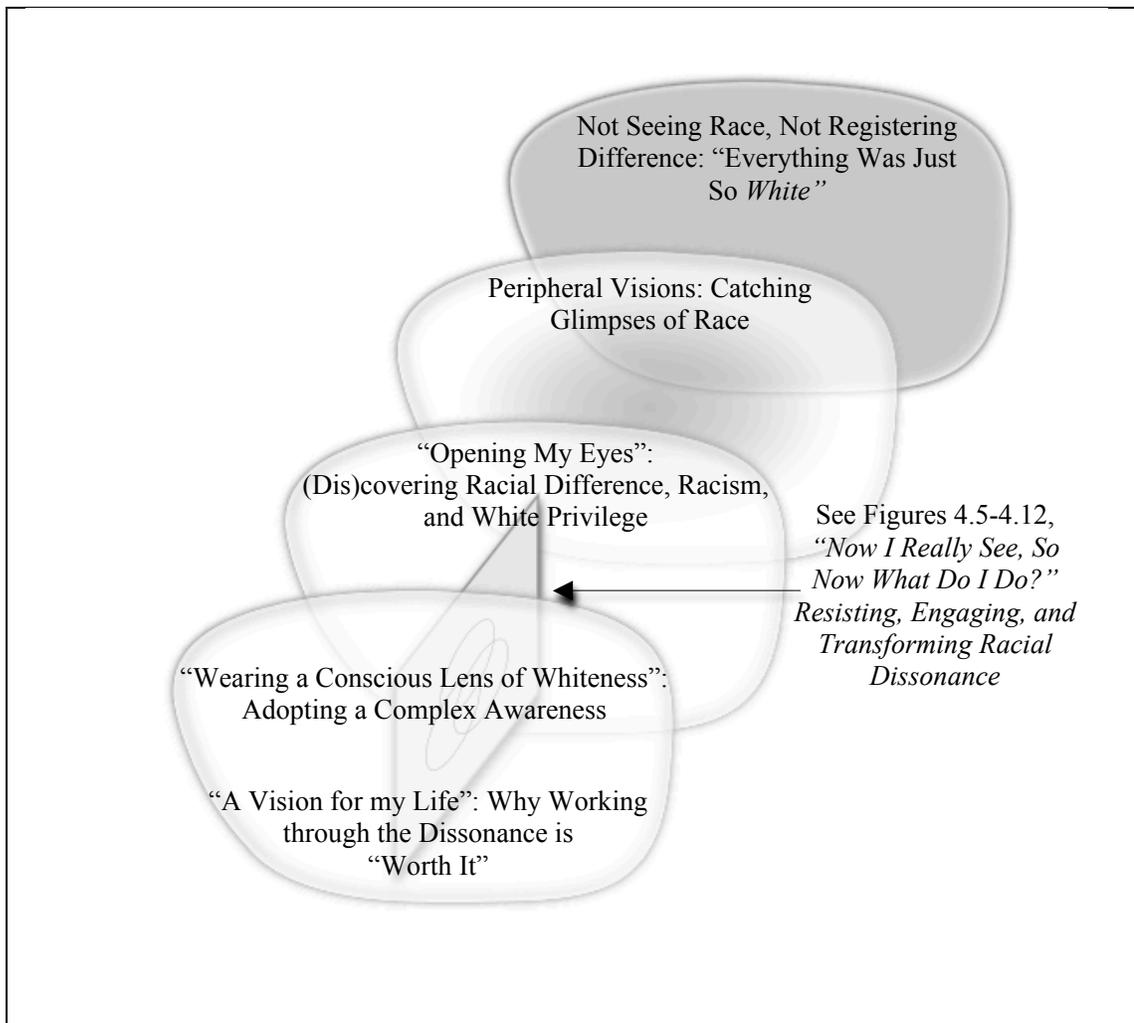


Figure 4.1. “Changing My Perspective”: Racial Identity among White Women in Higher Education & Student Affairs Master’s Degree Programs.

associated themes. As this chapter proceeds, I will pull this image apart and present additional figures that illustrate both core processes and each associated theme.

Participant Profiles

As detailed in Chapter 3, 11 individuals participated in this study by completing an initial interest form and two interview conversations. If data collection and analysis constituted a journey, then meeting and coming to know these 11 White women was the first stop along the way. In this section, I introduce each participant, framing her

narrative with her own words and statements. When writing the profiles, I reviewed participants' responses to the initial interest form, interview transcripts, and my own notes. My goal was to emphasize not only the identities and experiences that participants described as salient, but also the experiences that emerged through theoretical scrutiny as important contextual influences on racial identity (Charmaz, 2005; Jones, 1997). In addition, Table 2 presents each participant in terms of key demographic and identity characteristics. Becoming acquainted with these White women will provide a relational context in which to make meaning of the findings of this grounded theory investigation.

Alexandria

Alexandria is a “straight” White woman “without disabilities for the most part” who grew up in a rural environment in the East North Central region. Alexandria considers herself “a part of the middle class”; she has paid her own way through college and graduate school, accumulating significant debt. While growing up, she helped her parents “with the bills” and took care of her siblings; her mom worked as a night custodian, while her father worked in road construction. Alexandria “believe[s] in complete equality” and identifies as “somewhat liberal, an environmentalist, a feminist, a sister, daughter, a cousin and so much more.”

Alexandria is a first-generation college student who worked full-time while attending a large public university in her home state as a full-time commuter student. Having “always felt a bit lost” regarding her ethnic heritage, Alexandria longed to “go back to the roots” of her family’s German background and studied abroad in Germany for a year. This experience threw her “into a whole new world” that helped her unlearn stereotypes and experience new cultures. As a senior, Alexandria wanted “to help other

students find the passion of studying abroad,” so she applied and was accepted to her university’s student affairs and higher education graduate preparation program.

Imagining graduate school as “unattainable,” Alexandria was surprised to discover that “I can really do this” and quickly developed close relationships within her cohort. She has attended the White Privilege Conference and advised an organization for Students of Color. Alexandria has enjoyed working with international students, student veterans, and study abroad as part of her graduate experience, and she hopes to work in international education or study abroad when she graduates.

Becky

Becky is a middle-class White woman who spent her childhood in farming and coal mining towns in a Mountain state. With a Jewish grandmother and evangelical Christian parents, she has a “unique” religious identity as a “philosophical Christ-follower” who was often marginalized as a child in predominantly Mormon communities. Becky “sees beyond gender in sexuality” and identifies as pansexual, yet this identity “doesn’t really mesh” in her family life.

Becky moved to the capital city of her home state to attend a small private liberal arts college, where she majored in sociology and found that the topic of racial inequity in education “exploded” in her life, which “empowered [her] to learn more.” She was active in student activities, student government, Habitat for Humanity, and alternative break programs. After graduation, Becky returned to her college for a position working with student government, activities, and resident life. The next year, she continued in that position as a graduate assistant (GA) and enrolled in the SA/HE graduate program at a nearby university. Although she has enjoyed those roles, Becky reported “feeling an

end to my tenure here” because of her limited ability to “make the impacts I want to make” regarding diversity and social justice. This summer she will join Teach for America for a two-year position in a Latina/o community, working toward a career in “making policy change” in K-12 education.

Lucy

Lucy grew up in the East North Central region in a suburb of a large city. She identifies as a lower middle class “U.S. American” with Eastern European ancestry and sees herself a White person with “grounded but ever-flourishing cultural competence.” Lucy attended a Catholic school through eighth grade and a public high school, and although she grew up Catholic, she now has “a more liberal and inclusive view of Christianity.” She identifies as “feminine” and heterosexual, although she questioned her sexual orientation in college through “friendships with several lesbian women.”

A first-generation college student, Lucy found college to be a transformative time because of “a million different experiences” that expanded her worldview. She attended a small, private, Christian liberal arts college in a neighboring suburb. Through her extensive co-curricular involvement and multicultural coursework, Lucy immersed herself in unfamiliar cultures, formed strong friendships across boundaries of race and sexuality, found mentors, and identified a passion for student affairs and higher education. As a SA/HE graduate student in New England, Lucy has learned new ways to “push the social justice envelope” through her GA role in resident life. She hopes to “go back to a private liberal arts institution” because she wants to “push for change, and that’s really difficult to do at a large public institution when you’re further down in the chain” of leadership.

Table 2

Demographic and Identity Characteristics of Participants

Pseudonym	Background and salient identities	Region(s) of residence, ages 0-22	
		Location of GPP	
Alexandria	Middle class and worked full-time through college; straight; German heritage and studied abroad in Germany; considers weight a disability; spiritual; "liberal, environmentalist, feminist, sister, daughter, cousin"; first-generation college student	East North Central	East North Central
Becky	Middle class; pansexual; "philosophical christ-follower" who grew up as religious minority; German, English, and Polish-Jewish ethnic identity; passionate about education policy	Mountain	Mountain
Lucy	Lower middle class, Midwesterner; Eastern European ancestry; heterosexual (has questioned sexuality); "liberal and inclusive view of Christianity"; finds it hard to connect with White colleagues "who do not have the same (or higher) level of cultural competence"; first-generation college student	East North Central	New England
Michaela	Upper class; lesbian; "masculine expression of gender identity"; "conscious lens of Whiteness"; Jewish with "no connection to my religious/spiritual identity"; has experienced depression; first-generation college student	Mid-Atlantic, Pacific	East North Central
Michelle	Lower class to middle class; adopted; survivor; "girly type of girl"; "family is everything"; not religious; small hearing/processing disorder; "not sure" about ethnicity but connects to German culture; first-generation college student	West North Central	West North Central
Rachel	Middle class; heterosexual with closeted gay father; Norwegian ethnic identity; has ADD diagnosis; Lutheran; has difficulty connecting with some White colleagues "because of the ignorance that I experience"	West North Central	East North Central
Rose	Lower middle class to middle class; "sexual"; agnostic; has an uncle with cerebral palsy; "of mostly European descent"	West South Central, East North Central	South Atlantic
Sally	Middle to upper class; heterosexual; Christian "and my faith is very important"; "military brat"; "American" ethnicity with European origins	South Atlantic, East South Central	South Atlantic
Stacy	Lower middle class, heterosexual; Irish ethnicity; agnostic/atheist; worked for six years before graduate school	Mid-Atlantic	Mid-Atlantic
Stephanie	Middle class; heterosexual; Irish ethnic identity; agnostic; attended White Privilege Conference; "independent female leader, close family ties, single, volunteer, advocate"; first-generation college student	East North Central	West North Central
Zoey	Upper class; heterosexual; suburban; private schools; brothers with disabilities; devout Christian; feminist; Dutch ethnicity; "used to really dislike being White"	West South Central	East North Central

Michaela

Michaela is a White woman and an “out and proud” lesbian “with a masculine expression of gender identity.” After ten years in a large Mid-Atlantic city, Michaela moved to the Pacific region, where her parents soon went through “a really ugly divorce.” “Things kind of went downhill” for Michaela, who was treated for depression and anxiety. Describing her family as upper class and her Pacific community as highly materialistic, Michaela now realizes the isolation of her teenage years was “directly related” to her sexuality and gender presentation.

Michaela attended a public, mid-sized liberal arts college in the Pacific region, where she was an RA, majored in psychology, and minored in multicultural studies. Her coming out journey began in college due to a gay mentor and coursework emphasizing race, privilege, and oppression. With support from her mentor and family, Michaela “tried on” a more masculine gender presentation and “felt so much more like me.” Michaela found a passion for student affairs and “fell in love” with a graduate program in the East North Central region in part because of a faculty member who “integrated her identity into her work.” Michaela chose that program and now conducts research with this faculty member. Wearing a “conscious lens of whiteness” in her residence life GA role, Michaela has enjoyed challenging students to recognize their racial and economic privilege, but for her first full-time role she seeks an institution with a more diverse student population. She is also interested in becoming more connected to her family’s Jewish identity.

Michelle

Michelle is a heterosexual White woman from the West North Central region who was “raised in a lower class income family with a single mom” and two brothers. She moved around several times as a child to live with grandparents and other relatives while her mother worked; her father was an alcoholic and often in rehab or jail. As a child, Michelle survived abuse “and it has made me a stronger person.” Michelle was able to start the healing process when her stepfather adopted her as a senior in high school; “it made me feel like we had a whole family and we were not fractured.” Michelle experienced a change in social class and status because of her stepfather’s income and family name, which was “one of the oldest names” in the town’s history. She has a sense of connection to her stepfather’s German ethnicity. Although “raised in the church” as Baptist, she is not religious.

Michelle identifies as “adopted,” “a survivor,” and “a wife, daughter, sister and aunt.” She also identifies as “an educated woman” who is the first in her immediate family to complete a college degree. After a year at a small, urban liberal arts college, Michelle transferred to a large, public university in a medium city. There, she chose a communications major and became an RA in the building in which her mother had resided during her one semester of college. Michelle also met her future husband, a fellow RA, in that building, echoing her belief that “family is everything.” Michelle’s supervisor in her RA role became a mentor and her “ticket into the field” of student affairs. She is now completing her SA/HE master’s degree at the same institution, working as an assistant hall director in the same building where her journey began.

Rachel

Rachel is a middle class, heterosexual White woman who grew up in the suburbs of a large city in the West North Central region. Connected to her Norwegian ethnicity primarily “through meals and ceremonies” at church, Rachel identifies as Lutheran but believes “there is more than one way to God.” She was diagnosed with ADD in elementary school and struggled to learn to read. As a graduate student she worries about her writing even though she has not “had problems with it,” questioning “what did I miss when I got pulled out” of class as a child.

When Rachel was in high school, her mother died of complications from rheumatoid arthritis. Rachel is very close with her father, who now identifies as gay but struggles to accept this identity and is out only to his daughter. Rachel attended a small, private liberal arts university where her co-curricular engagement, social justice major, and mentoring from a student affairs professional contributed to a “really well-rounded learning experience” regarding race and other dimensions of difference. Rachel chose the SA/HE graduate program her undergraduate mentor had attended. Housed in a large, public university in the East North Central region, this program has exposed Rachel to diversity advocacy, leadership, and service through her GA roles and new membership in a historically Black sorority. She wants “other people to learn what I know” about race and social justice, and she is seeking a full-time practitioner role in which she can engage those interests.

Rose

Rose is a White woman “of mostly European descent” who spent her childhood in the West South Central region, where she loved “all the color and the vibrancy” of her multicultural community. At age 11 Rose moved with her family to the East North Central region, and her parents divorced soon after. Rose and her brother lived with their mother during her teenage years, when her father’s “nefarious actions” caused financial problems. Rose’s father now has neurological and alcohol-related health problems, and her uncle has cerebral palsy; thus, disability issues are salient. Rose describes herself as “sexual” because none of the traditional terms “felt right.” Identifying as agnostic and lower middle-class, Rose was involved in science and theatre as a high school student in an environment full of “very stereotypically WASPy rich whities.” Many of her close friends also did not fit the mold and were gay or Asian.

Rose attended a large, public university in the East North Central region, where she paid her own way through college through residence life positions. Having designed her own college major in sexuality studies, as a senior Rose was “not entirely certain” of her post-college plans, but her RA course instructor encouraged her to consider student affairs. After three years living at home and working at a day care center, Rose “really missed being able to help students navigate the higher education setting.” She selected a SA/HE graduate program in the South Atlantic region because of the warm weather, small urban environment, diversity, and “southern hospitality.” She is interested in residence life and academic advising.

Sally

Sally is a middle- to upper-class, heterosexual White woman and a Christian whose “faith is very important” to her. Identifying as “a military brat” and an “American” with European ethnic origins, Sally and her family lived in the Pacific, South Atlantic, and East South Central regions when she was a child. Sally was homeschooled, which she described this way: “I never felt like I was being taught; I felt like I was learning.” When she was twelve, Sally’s family settled in the suburbs of a large city in the East South Central region, and she began attending public school. In high school, Sally was an active cheerleader who took honors and AP classes, and school “felt like a dating game” in which “being female” was very salient.

Awarded academic scholarships, Sally attended a large, public, urban university close to home. Although she had “never envisioned [herself]... getting involved on campus,” Sally was elected vice-president of her sorority as a first-year student after the president encouraged her to run. As a senior, Sally was a leader in four organizations, an orientation leader, and a student employee in admissions. Sally credits her sorority’s president with helping her discern a career path: “if it was not for her encouraging me to get involved...I wouldn’t be in student affairs.” Although she had “never thought [she’d] get a master’s degree,” Sally applied to SA/HE programs in the East South Central region. She was accepted to her top-choice program and assistantship, which she credits with “God opening doors.” After graduation, Sally is excited to work in student affairs. She is also interested in

“teaching history,” “being a college counselor at a high school,” and “being a stay-at-home mom or maybe opening a bakery – who knows?”

Stacy

Stacy is a heterosexual, lower middle-class, ethnically Irish, White woman from “a really small town” in the Mid-Atlantic Region. Her parents are teachers and “very open-minded”; their close friend is a gay man who “has been living with HIV for 30 years.” In high school, Stacy’s athletic talent went in a surprising direction given her liberal, feminist upbringing: she became a “weird hippie cheerleader” and came to love the sport. She attended a large, public, rural university in her home state, where she continued with cheerleading and took on leadership roles. Although Stacy loved her human development major and two-year internship in play therapy, she wanted to do something different after college.

For a year Stacy worked in the service industry, mostly in a very wealthy vacation destination where she “met people from all over the world” and “grew up a lot.” Next, Stacy decided to “use that degree that I’m paying for” and found a position near her hometown as a case manager for at-risk teenage girls. This “powerful experience” opened her eyes to racial and economic disparities and taught her “how to get around the system and be a good advocate.” Stacy then worked for a nearby college for several years in student affairs, finding a passion for the field. After six years out of college, Stacy enrolled in a nearby SA/HE program with a longstanding national reputation and no GRE requirement, consistent with her dislike of standardized testing. Stacy’s GA position in student activities has given her “the opportunity to work with diverse student populations,” and she will seek similar roles

when she graduates. Her long-term goal is to be a dean of students or vice-president of enrollment management.

Stephanie

Stephanie is a heterosexual, middle class, “able-bodied” White woman with an Irish ethnic background. A first-generation college and graduate student, she describes herself as a single “independent female leader” with “close family ties,” who volunteers and is an “advocate.” Raised in a rural environment in the East North Central region, Stephanie is an agnostic “small town girl” who has done farm and factory work, often alongside immigrant workers. Since attending college, she and her brother have both become “really open to talking” about diversity. Together, they have struggled to “break the cycle” and respectfully challenge their parents’ views, which have now evolved to reflect some of Stephanie’s and her brother’s insights.

Stephanie attended a medium, public university in another rural environment in her home state, where she was an animal science major and an RA and hall manager. Stephanie’s mentor encouraged her to attend nearby pre-professional conferences, which “really started drawing [her] in” to issues of diversity and social justice. She now attends a SA/HE program at a large, public, rural university in the West North Central region, and she “couldn’t be happier with the program.” While there, she has formed friendships in which she can talk about issues of privilege, oppression, and identity; she also attended the White Privilege Conference and completed a summer internship in a racially and ethnically diverse, urban environment Pacific state. Stephanie holds a GA position in an academic success office. Struggling to recognize “the importance of speaking up” about all that she

knows, Stephanie is interested in work that will bridge her interests in social justice, student leadership, and the field of animal science.

Zoey

Zoey is an upper class, heterosexual White woman who grew up in two suburban environments in the West South Central region. Her Christian identity and faith are very salient to her; she strives “to mimic the behaviors of Christ” through compassion, love, and selflessness. Zoey’s parents are doctors, and two of her three younger brothers have developmental disabilities. She attended private, predominantly Christian schools, where she played several sports and was active in student government. In high school, some of Zoey’s male peers “would make kind of disparaging comments about women,” and her gender is still very salient to Zoey.

Zoey chose a small, private, Christian liberal arts college in the East North Central region, where she first “really registered a racial identity” during “an orientation session on diversity.” Initially a pre-med major, Zoey soon changed her major to English and worked in the Writing Center. She also loved her work as an RA and was excited to find out “that people could actually do that for a job.” After college she “took a year off” and moved to a large nearby city where she had several jobs, including one as a substitute teacher at a school in a low-income African American neighborhood. In that role she “learned a lot about race in society, educational privilege, and social class privilege” while preparing SA/HE graduate school applications. That fall, Zoey moved to another state in the East North Central region to begin her top choice graduate program and GA position in residence life. One of the qualities that drew her to this program and position was a sense that “it

was okay for me to admit that I didn't know very much about diversity" and "this is an issue that I would like to know more about...so that I can be a more effective student affairs professional." Zoey is looking forward to her job search.

Summary of Participant Profiles

Although the nuances and complexity of their lives are impossible to capture through brief profiles, the previous major section reflects my attempt to provide an introduction to each of the remarkable women who chose to participate in this study of racial identity among White women pursuing their master's degrees in SA/HE. As I grew more familiar with participants' life stories through the data analysis process, I began to see how each woman became conscious of whiteness and formed a sense of self as a White woman. The remainder of this chapter is devoted to two core processes and their associated themes. Together, these processes and themes comprise a grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master's degree programs. The first core process illuminates how participants learned to see whiteness and developed racial identities over time, while the second process illustrates how participants negotiated multiple forms of race-related dissonance while in SA/HE graduate preparation programs.

"Changing My Perspective":

Becoming Conscious of Race and Developing a White Identity

This section illustrates the developmental process in which participants became conscious of race and developed White identities. The phrase "changing my perspective" was an analytical code that came from Sally's phrase, "having this change of perspective." Sally used that phrase to describe her awakening

consciousness of race in graduate school, which “change[d] things” for her as she contemplated her personal and professional future, since “you can’t unlearn something” as powerful as racial consciousness and the formation of a White identity.

All of the participants used visual metaphors to describe shifts in their racial consciousness, and each of these metaphors corresponds to one component of “*Changing My Perspective*.” First, *Not Seeing Race, Not Registering Difference: “Everything Was Just So White”* portrays participants’ earliest years, in which race was neither visible nor salient. Next, *Peripheral Visions: Catching Glimpses of Race* describes how participants began to see race through interactions with White male and White female family members, as well as People of Color in their families and communities. Finally, through experiences in college, the working world, and graduate school, participants discovered that beyond their individual experiences, the world was full of examples of racism and White privilege. These revelatory experiences are the subject of “*Opening My Eyes*”: *(Dis)covering Racial Difference, Racism, and White Privilege*. Together, the series of shifts between *not seeing race*, *peripheral visions*, and “*opening my eyes*” constitutes the beginning of a developmental process of *changing one’s perspective* about race and about being White.

Not Seeing Race, Not Registering Difference: “Everything Was Just So *White*”

Figure 4.2 illustrates the theme of “Not Seeing Race, Not Seeing Difference: ‘Everything Was Just So *White*,’” the first theme in the core process of *changing one’s perspective*. When recalling her impressions of race and racial difference during childhood and adolescence, Stacy had very few memories to share,



Figure 4.2. Not Seeing Race, Not Registering Difference: "Everything Was Just So *White*."

emphasizing that "everything was just so *White*." Indeed, the social significance of race was virtually invisible to the White women in this study during their childhood and teenage years. When asked what they recalled having heard about race during that time period, both Becky and Lucy immediately replied, "nothing," and Zoey's response was similar: "to be honest, not a whole lot." Rachel explained that in the White community where she grew up, "[racial diversity] wasn't there so you didn't have to talk about it." Stephanie echoed Stacy's response about everything being "just so *White*," using almost identical words. Sally's response summarizes the invisibility and silence around race when growing up:

We never talked about race growing up, like never had any conversations about other races or being White, I guess, never talked about it. It never seemed like something we had to talk about, like duh, like you can look at us. ... I never remember having any conversations about race ever in my life with my family.

Sally and her family simply had no reason to talk about race; there was nothing to discuss.

Despite the “nothingness” of race in early childhood, most participants recalled interactions with People of Color at a young age. Michaela’s recollections of her “initial encounters with race as a child” took place in a highly diverse, urban context. She had a best friend at school who was African American, and she had two babysitters who were Women of Color, “from the Philippines if I remember correctly.” Michaela’s babysitters “were the ones that raised me” and “I loved them like my moms.” She also remembers cab drivers and an Asian woman who owned the farmer’s market down the street from where she lived. As a child, Michaela did not seem to make sense of the fact that the People of Color in her world seemed to have different class backgrounds than she did.

Michaela’s early interactions with People of Color took place in a large, racially diverse city, but most participants who grew up in predominantly White, rural environments also recalled a few cross-racial interactions, however few and far between. For the most part, though, the social significance of these racial differences did not “register” for participants. When I asked Rose, who grew up in the West South Central region, to recall what her childhood interactions with White and Hispanic friends taught her about race, she immediately responded, “you know, that it [race] wasn’t any big thing.” Similarly, Lucy pointed out that although she hung out in middle school with “one friend who was Mexican” and another who was Japanese American, “[i]t didn’t really register that there was some difference between our racial identities or the way that we were brought up or anything like that.” Zoey had

several Friends of Color in her predominantly White, private elementary school, yet there was no talk of race during that time. Rachel had a best friend in third grade that was mixed” but “never saw her as being another race.” Thus, for many participants, early experiences with People of Color did not “register” as “any big thing.”

Peripheral Visions: Catching Glimpses of Race

Figure 4.3 depicts “Peripheral Visions: Catching Glimpses of Race,” the second theme in the core process of *changing one’s perspective*. In their childhood and teenage years, some participants caught occasional glimpses of difference in their peripheral vision, illuminating the otherwise invisible landscape of whiteness in their lives. Interactions with family members and People of Color were central to these

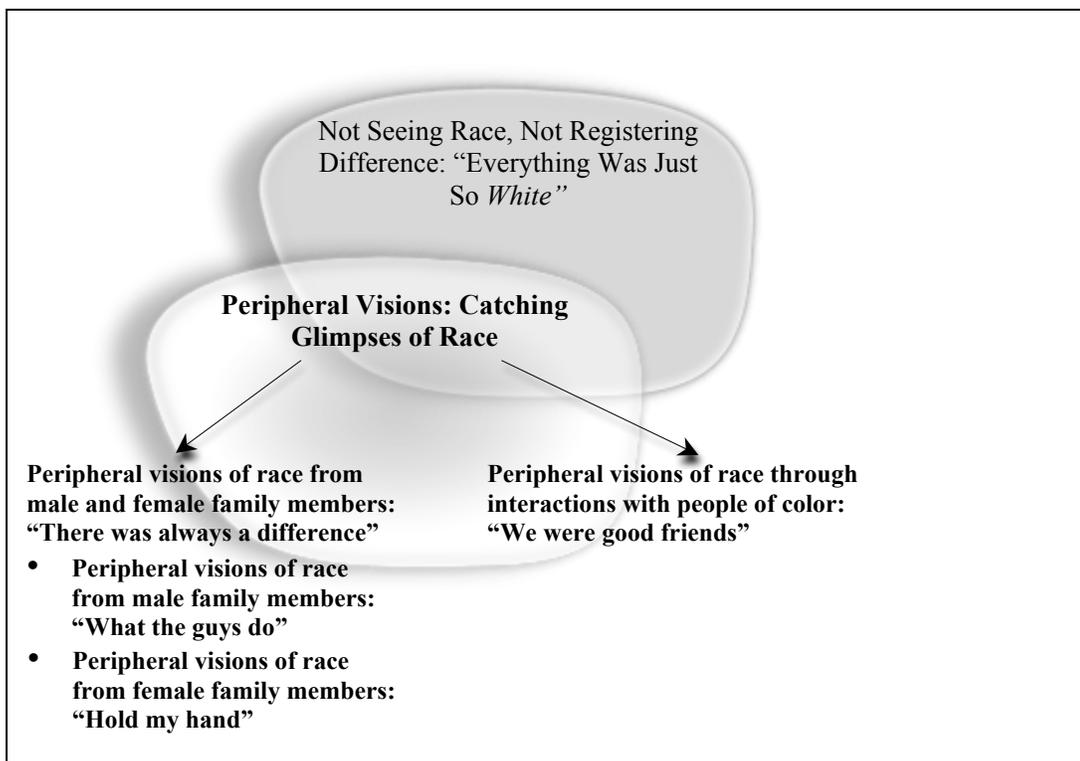


Figure 4.3. Peripheral Visions: Catching Glimpses of Race.

occasional glimpses of race, racial difference, and racism. Occurring in a range of settings that included home, school, athletics, work, and college, participants encountered race through the attitudes and behaviors of their family members, as well as through the meaning they made of their interactions with Peers of Color in those settings. Rarely did these peripheral visions of race lead to the process of looking inward at one's White identity, nor did they help participants learn to see the ways in which White culture or White privilege structured their everyday lives.

Peripheral visions of race from male and female family members: “There was always a difference.” Not surprisingly, family members often played a role in making participants aware of race, particularly during their childhood and adolescent years. When recalling what her family members said about race and about People of Color during her childhood, Michelle remarked that there were important gender differences. Comparing the racial attitudes of women and men in her family, Michelle struggled to find the words: “It was always like this very maternal versus very ... there was always a difference.” Indeed, for many participants, gender played a complex role in mediating the race-related messages participants received from family members, with differences in the messages from male and female family members (note: no participants reported having family members whose gender identity or expression differed from cisgender male and female categories).

Peripheral visions of race from male family members: “What the guys do.” Several participants recalled learning about race from their fathers or other men in their families. In Michelle's words, “there was a lot of racism in my family, especially with the men.” Michelle attributed the racial attitudes of the men in her

family to their experiences serving in the military and working in coal mines, and in her father's case, substance abuse rehabilitation programs and jail. As a result, "the N-word was a pretty common word" among the men in Michelle's family. Having cultivated racist attitudes in these predominantly male settings, the men in Michelle's family reinforced these beliefs when spending time together:

My grandpa wouldn't make comments when he was in front of my grandma or my aunts or anything, but it was always more when he was with his brothers or it was more of like this was what the guys do.

As an example of "what the guys do," Michelle recalled that in high school, her cousin had had a long-term girlfriend who was biracial and "half Black." Although they dated for years, the girlfriend "never came to a family Christmas" because "grandpa would be upset if a Black girl showed up to our Christmas party."

Michelle learned more about "what the guys do" from her father and brothers. For her seventh birthday party, Michelle had a sleepover, and one of her closest friends, "a Black girl," was one of the guests. When her father got home the next morning after a night of drinking, he was "very mad that she was at our house." At that age Michelle had already heard "about spics and the N-word" from the men in her family, but "she "didn't associate those words to a color of skin until...it was my dad using those words that associated with a specific person." Later, Michelle saw her brothers form many of the same racial attitudes as the older men in her family. She views her brothers' attitudes as a consequence of their "spending a lot more time with [her] real dad than [she] ever did," along with their time in the military and staying in the town where Michelle went to high school and doing "blue collar work"

rather than leaving town for college and middle-class jobs.

Like the men in Michelle's family, Alexandria's father also learned "life lessons" about race and passed them onto his daughter. His sister "married a guy from Africa," and according to Alexandria, "hearing from my mom's perspective my dad was really open and everything" at first. However, Alexandria's uncle then abandoned his wife and their two young children; "he just up and left and moved back to Africa and left the kids with [Alexandria's aunt] when they were little." At that point her father's "extreme racist came out" because he "saw what happened to [his sister] and...took it personally," turning his personal experience into "thinking negatively about African Americans especially in general."

Reflecting on what she had learned about race in her childhood, Alexandria owned that when younger, she was afraid when "coming into an area with a larger diverse population." Describing "a certain image type like the baggy pants, the graffiti type thing" and using words like "dangerous" and "anxieties," Alexandria admitted being "a little bit nervous because of all the things that you [I] would hear at home." The things Alexandria heard included her father's stereotypes about African American men, as well as her mother's more open-minded views. Alexandria seemed to internalize both perspectives, becoming only "a little bit nervous" but admitting "it was always African American men" whose presence made her feel that way. Importantly, Alexandria conveyed that her father's outlook changed later in life; he met and befriended several Mexican men through work and has now learned to "think before he speaks."

Similarly, Zoey learned about race through her father, “a storyteller” who sometimes recalled his childhood adventures in a large city in the West South Central region:

He went to a predominantly African American school in a very socioeconomically depressed neighborhood and he was bullied to the point where he didn’t know if he was going to make it through that year that they spent in [the city] because he would consistently get beat up.

Asked about the circumstances in which her father would tell this story, Zoey replied, “[i]t would come up if we were around any sort of rough neighborhood or what he would classify as rough...a little more rundown or that didn’t look as socioeconomically suburban. Just a neighborhood that looked more poor.” Thus, Zoey was exposed to her father’s story about African American bullies in an urban school yard while she herself was watching similar neighborhoods go past her field of vision from the car window. However, her father sometimes shared the bullying story with her brother who has autism and “would go around asking people for money” at school, lacking the social awareness to pick up on his peers’ cues that “maybe they felt a little bullied.” Zoey’s father thus told his story not only when driving through a “rough neighborhood,” but to teach his son an important life skill.

Michelle, Alexandria, and Zoey were not the only participants who learned about race in their early lives from men in their families. In high school, Lucy dated a biracial boy who “looked Black,” and “that just did not go over well” with her father, who sometimes also made negative comments about gay people. Both of Becky’s grandparents made racist comments at times, but her grandfather rarely did

because “he used to be a traveling electric engineer, so he’s been everywhere across the United States, and he’s an incredibly cultured individual.” As another example, Stephanie recalled that her father did not talk about race at home, but he made quiet comments to his family when seeing People of Color in public: “we would be in town and we would see a Black guy walking down the street” or “there would be some people out in a parking lot,” and her dad “would make some smart comment.”

Finally, Rose’s father provided unique exposure to racial difference through his work at a Mexican restaurant when the family still lived in the West South Central region. One day, Rose’s father brought a gift home from work:

He brought me home a Barbie doll I think that somebody had left at the restaurant and hadn't come back to claim.... I remember being disappointed because it wasn't the blonde Barbie doll. I don't think she was White either, but mostly it was over the blonde hair. I remember that she didn't look like Barbie and so I was disappointed about that.

While working at a different restaurant, Rose’s father invited his Mexican coworkers over to build a vehicle for a work-sponsored “bed race” competition. A young child at the time, Rose would play with her dad and his coworkers as they worked on their vehicle, “and it wasn’t, ‘Oh, they’re so different from me.’ I don’t know. It was just, ‘Hey, let’s play.’” Thus, Rose encountered race in multiple ways through her father’s work.

In sum, although participants were rarely conscious of race in their early lives, their interactions with White men in their families – particularly their fathers – brought race into the edges of their consciousness. The men in participants’ families

brought race into participants' lives through racist attitudes formed in the military and the coal mines; multiple and conflicting messages about interacting with Children of Color; and attitudes about inter-racial relationships that ranged from ambivalence to disgust.

Peripheral visions of race from female family members: "Hold my hand."

Although participants learned complex lessons about race from both men and women in their families, there were gender differences in what family members taught and what participants learned. Michaela, who spent the first half of her childhood in a large Mid-Atlantic city, recalled walking with her mother past a Person of Color who appeared to be homeless. As they walked past, Michaela's mother said quietly, "hold my hand," as she often did when encountering a Person of Color. Michaela shared:

I always thought, "Why do I have to hold your hand, Mom?" Then she said, "Because you don't know them," and I said, "Well, okay, of course I don't know them, but I don't know everybody, and...I don't have to hold your hand around everybody I don't know." She said, "You just don't know what they could do."

Reflecting on what she learned from holding her mother's hand, Michaela concluded, "that was the first point I realized that these people not only looked different from me, but my mom felt differently about them and my dad felt differently about them in terms of safety." Michaela also remembered that when they went to the farmer's market owned by an Asian woman, Michaela's mother would often comment in frustration, "I just wish she would speak English." Reflecting on what she had learned about race from these interactions alongside her mom, Michaela remarked: "I

was exposed to a lot of People of Color but it was always in the context of my mom saying, 'Hold my hand,' and things like that. So I think I was socialized with this idea of fear." Thus, Michaela learned to associate People of Color with danger, a lesson she learned primarily from her mother as she tried to keep Michaela "safe" in an urban setting.

Other participants had different recollections about the "life lessons" they learned about race from the women in their family. Describing her mother's outlook on race, Alexandria commented, "she's very open to any kind of experience and just meeting new people." Alexandria explained that although her mom had lived most of her life in the town where Alexandria grew up, she did spend a few years in a West South Central state, where she encountered racial and ethnic diversity:

Where she lived there was a high population of Spanish or Mexicans so she was able to interact with other cultures whereas my dad I don't think really had the opportunity growing up or even where he worked to really interact with people of other cultures.

Alexandria described herself as "a lot like her [mom] when it comes to wanting to see the world" and attributed her love of international travel to that desire.

Other participants also talked about how they learned to view race through the eyes of women in their families. Becky acknowledged that her grandmother, who has lived most of her life in a small town in the Mountain region, "used the N-word, not frequently, but when she would get frustrated about things." For Michelle, the women in her family offered a stark contrast to the men in terms of racial attitudes: "my mom doesn't care. Black, white, red, yellow, doesn't care...all of the messages

that I got were of complete support like you're all equal, everyone is the same.”

Further, Michelle's grandmother and aunt “both worked at a boy's home that is like state care...they were always much more open. It was not abnormal for my grandma to bring some random person home for Thanksgiving or something.”

Finally, Rose talked about what she learned from her grandmother about race:

Sometimes around her it is a bit of an adventure in terms of biting my tongue when she says things and not being like, “Grandma, that is racist.” ...[S]he gets cut off in traffic and she yells, “You half Black son of an Arab.” ...[Y]ou just hope she doesn't say it loud enough that anyone else heard her.

Rose tried to put her grandmother's outbursts into context, realizing that “a mixed marriage used to be if a Protestant married a Lutheran.” In any case, her grandmother's occasional racist comments echoed loudly in Rose's world, which was otherwise silent about racial difference. Making meaning of her grandmother's comments, Rose explained, “you just know that you're not going to do that and you teach your children better than that and you go from there.” However, she heard a different message from her parents:

In terms of my mom and dad, they had bigger fish to fry in terms of getting divorced and having enough money to feed us and that kind of thing that race was not an issue. We took what we could get.

Although Rose knew that it was wrong to say racial epithets, she also learned that racial understanding was a luxury not afforded to her because of her parents' financial and marital problems. Thus, racism was a matter of occasional outbursts from an

older generation; otherwise, race was inconsequential – because there were “bigger fish to fry.”

Overall, the women in participants’ families – especially mothers and grandmothers – occasionally made race visible through complex messages about safety, protection, and fear. Through women in their families, participants came to understand People of Color as dangerous, irritating, harmless, or needy. When comparing the roles of female and male family members in participants’ peripheral visions of race, some gender-related patterns emerged. Some participants recalled more openness to racial difference among the women in their families than among the men. Notably, when encountering racist attitudes among male family members, participants attributed these attitudes to work contexts, including coal mining and the military. In contradistinction, Michelle’s mother and aunt conveyed a charitable attitude toward People of Color through their work when they brought “some random person home for Thanksgiving” from the boys’ home where they worked. Further, in all of the instances in which a family member disapproved of an interracial friendship or romantic relationship, the family member was a father or grandfather.

Finally, for participants who sometimes heard racial epithets such as “the N-word” from family members, male family members were usually the ones to say these words but avoided saying them around women. Although some female family members chided the men for their language, others – especially grandmothers – occasionally used racial epithets when frustrated or getting cut off in traffic. Gender, then, seemed to mediate the nature of the messages participants received from family members when encountering race. However, despite the presence of explicit racism

and racial stereotypes in some of these encounters, participants overwhelmingly learned from their family members that racial difference – indeed, race itself – was peripheral to the everyday landscapes of their lives. Interactions with People of Color reinforced the peripheral nature of race.

Peripheral visions of race through interactions with People of Color: “We were good friends.” During our first interview, I asked Alexandria when she had encountered African Americans as a young person. She replied, “growing up I can only remember three people in my hometown that were African American, and we were good friends.” The notion of being “good friends” with one or more People of Color emerged as an unspoken standard when participants tried to remember their cross-racial interactions with peers – and in one case, coworkers – in middle school, high school, and college. Although many participants did have cross-racial friendships, these relationships were in one way or another peripheral – if not to participants’ daily lives, then certainly to the dynamics of their schools and communities as a whole. However peripheral, these relationships did add to the visibility of race in participants’ lives.

Stephanie began to see race during the summer between her seventh and eighth grade years when she attending a pre-college program for students who “weren’t necessarily on the path to college because of parents.” With other White students from her rural county in the East North Central region, Stephanie joined African American students from a large city for a week-long program held at a state university campus. By “hanging out with them,” Stephanie realized that the African

American students “had different experience than us” because of “what color our skin is,” yet beyond that “they [were] not really any different than I [was].”

Athletics also offered a space for interaction and observations about Peers of Color. In junior high, Lucy was on her school’s basketball team and played against some teams “that were closer to the city and had more of a diverse population.” In that context she sometimes heard “comments about the African American girls being aggressive or being better at the sport than we were.” Similarly, Michaela played basketball and noticed that the sport “had a lot of African American women.”

Participants learned to see race not only through their interactions with Peers of Color, but through the interactions they did not have because of social and educational stratification. Several participants noticed that their Peers of Color did not occupy the same educational spaces as they did, or that Peers of Color interacted differently in those spaces. In high school, Becky lived a block away from a school for troubled youth, and she recalls hearing people say, “that’s where all those Native American kids go.” In retrospect, she realizes this observation was a peripheral vision of racism: “I didn't connect that until I was much older. Why are the Native American kids going there? Why can’t they go to regular high school? What does that mean?”

Sally offered specific recollections about cross-racial interactions during her high school years. One of her most salient memories was “the groups of Black students who were the loud and very ... like the teachers would consider obnoxious.” In Sally’s words:

In a way, they were obnoxious because they were loud, but they were just loud, they always hung around in big groups. They would block the hallway. They had no concept of who they were inconveniencing, like slowing down traffic.... . . .So I just remember thinking that, but I don't know if it was necessarily if I thought Black people are inconsiderate, or those kids who are Black are inconsiderate, it was more like those kids, they're inconsiderate but they're also Black.

Sally's uncomfortable honesty was tangible as she described this memory of Black students as "obnoxious," "loud," and "inconsiderate" – associations that were reinforced by her teachers. Through her observations of Black students in high school, Sally recalled that although she may not have generalized to Black people in general, she certainly formed judgments about the students she saw:

I remember almost being afraid of like that type of Black person too, like the kind that are really loud and, not afraid but just being like I don't know if I can interact with them, like they just all, they're always in a group and it's not like you can break into a group like that.

"That type of Black person" intimidated Sally to the point of fear.

Later in the conversation, Sally suddenly remembered her friend Joseph (a pseudonym), who was Black. Sally went to church with Joseph and gave him a ride to school every day. They also "sat together at lunch every day" but "never had classes together" because Sally "was in a lot of honors and APs." Conveying the racially segregated nature of the academic tracking in her high school, Sally further explained, "most of the people I sat at lunch with were not in my classes, but we were

all friends.” As she concluded this story, the guilt on Sally’s face was visible as she exclaimed, “I can’t believe I didn’t mention him as another Black person that I was friends with, like we basically shared car rides together every day.” Still uncomfortable, she changed the subject, telling the story of a minor car accident she had had in front of Joseph’s house.

Like Sally, Rose’s and Zoey’s interactions with Peers of Color in high school demonstrated a peripheral awareness of social stratification related to race. As Rose noted, “I hung out with the Asian kids because I was a good student, so there was some level of stereotyping” at the “very rich White WASPy Republican high school” she attended. Rose also remembered the twins who were among “just a few” African Americans at her high school. Rose was not friends with these two students, but when one of them got pregnant, Rose’s peers responded in a way she did not admire: “Everyone was like, ‘I knew it was coming,’ playing on sort of the stereotype that you typically see a lot of African American women get pregnant early.” Similarly, Zoey commented that unlike elementary school, race “definitely came up more in high school when I was friends with someone who was Black” because “she would sometimes point out that there were only three Black people in our class” and “not very many people looked like her.”

The interactions with People of Color that Stephanie described took place not in school, but at the factories and farms where she often held jobs. At a dairy farm, Stephanie worked alongside Columbian immigrants. Because Stephanie did not speak Spanish, “the communication was interesting”:

The herd manager was very fluent in English and the workers were not, so if I needed to communicate, I had to communicate through him. They would still come and talk to me all the time.... They would try to ask me in English how to say certain thing things and then I would say the phrase ... and then they would repeat after me. So it was a great way for them to learn from me and I was more than willing to help them out because ... it was always a fun conversation so that was an interesting place.

Stephanie experienced a two-way hierarchy in which she relied on the herd manager to communicate with her coworkers, yet another part of her role was to “help them out” with learning English.

Through that role and other jobs as a manual laborer in factories and farms, Stephanie developed relationships with her coworkers who were Mexican and Colombian immigrants. In these contexts Stephanie made meaning of larger sociocultural conversations about immigration:

A lot of the politicians and different people are really against having some sort of set up for immigrants and specifically the Mexican population that comes into the United States and they're like, “They're taking the jobs away,” but when you really live and see and work in that environment ... you realize just how exactly hard that labor is. ...I think it's easy when you've never been exposed to that sort of job market or those types of jobs to say, “Oh, well, if those jobs were available, any middle ... White privileged American will take them,” and that's not true. They wouldn't last in the job for more than eight hours and they would be like, “I quit, I'm done.”

Despite what she heard (and did not hear) about race at home and among other peers, Stephanie learned from her work environment to respect the hard labor of her immigrant colleagues and the sacrifices they made in search of better lives for their families. Stephanie drew on this lesson later in life when she learned more about race, White privilege, and racism, realizing she had a context through which to understand something about the experiences of people who were racially or ethnically different from her. However, Stephanie also learned from these interactions to see herself as a “helper” to her immigrant coworkers, implying a racialized power differential.

Meanwhile, Alexandria had a different narrative about her interactions with People of Color in her hometown. Despite having “good friends” of Color when she was very young, Alexandria described the changing racial dynamics of her community as more distant from her experience by the time she was in middle and high school:

Growing up, it was very White-centric, majority and then it was towards middle school, beginning of high school that we had a large population of Hmong move into the city. So we did have them as our minority group. ...[A]lso in the recent years, I’ve noticed there’s been a population of Ho-Chunk because we’re close to the reservations...[and] a casino not too far away so we’re very close to them. ...[I]n recent years, there’s been an influx of populations from Mexico.

As Alexandria grew older, the Hmong, Ho-Chunk, and Mexican communities grew in size, leading to some peripheral awareness of the complexities of racial and ethnic difference.

In addition to middle and high school, some participants had peripheral visions of race in college. Stacy described her undergraduate institution as “very, very segregated.” One day in the residence hall, the president of the Black Student Union invited Stacy and her roommate to an event sponsored by Caribbean students. That event “was the first time [Stacy] was the only White person in the room,” which made her question “why are we the only White people here?” However, she did not revisit this question for many years because “everything was so White [she] didn’t have to think about it.”

Sally also had peripheral visions of racial difference while in college. Comparing her urban university to her suburban high school where there were so few Black students “you could almost count them,” Sally commented that in college, she “just interacted a lot more” with Black students. Sally went on to describe her involvement with the Greek community, through which she often interacted with peers in historically Black organizations, and her role as an orientation guide, through which she “spent the whole summer with another group of students who [were] racially different” from her. In particular, from rooming with a Black student she “learned a lot about how Black women have to take care of their hair.” Primarily, however, during college Sally was only aware of race around the edges of her sense of community with all of her peers:

It feels like in a community, like we're all in a [name of university] family together. We all cheer for the [athletic mascot]. We all sing the fight song.

So in that sense, it felt more like an us instead of an us versus them.

Thus, Sally was aware of racial differences through interactions with her Peers of Color, yet singing the fight song as an "us instead of an us versus them" was a more consistent representation of how she felt about race in the Greek community while in college.

Finally, Rose had a peripheral vision of race through an observation that did not involve her peers and that occurred in middle school, yet it foreshadowed a transformation in racial consciousness that would not fully unfold until graduate school. As a young teenager, Rose visited her father in the large, Mid-Atlantic city where he then resided. Rose remembered that when they "stopped at a gas station or maybe a fast food place, some place like that," she saw a Mexican man:

...and then I looked around and there was just a great deal of ethnic diversity in everyone that was actually sitting at the tables and that kind of thing. I remember thinking, "God; I miss this...that color and the vibrancy that different cultures bring." It was a distinct thought of, "Oh, I miss this."

Unlike most participants in this study, Rose lived in a racially and ethnically diverse community in her early childhood and then moved to a predominantly White area. Visiting her father in a big city reminded her of the "color and vibrancy that different cultures bring" and made her realize what her life was missing. Missing diversity was a potentially eye-opening experience for Rose, but when her time in the big city ended, she left the images of color and vibrancy behind.

Thus, as early as middle school and as late as their college years, the White women participating in this study were able to catch occasional glimpses of racial difference through their interactions with People of Color. However, these images were fleeting and “registered” in the margins of their consciousness.

Overwhelmingly, race did not exist in their field of vision because “everything was just so *White*.” The following section identifies some of the consequences of experiences like Rose’s: peripheral visions of race, around the edges of a field of vision in which race was otherwise invisible.

“Opening My Eyes”:

(Dis)covering Racial Difference, Racism, and White Privilege

Eight different participants used the phrase “opening my eyes,” “eye-opener,” or a similar variation on 22 different occasions to describe experiences that served to awaken their consciousness to racial difference, racism, or White privilege.

Sometimes, these eye-opening experiences were connected to other dimensions of difference, privilege, or oppression. In other instances, participants recalled these experiences as having to do solely with race. These “eye-opening” moments occurred in college, whether through coursework or co-curricular engagement; during participants’ time in the world of full-time work between college and graduate school; and in graduate school through coursework, co-curricular experiences, and pre-professional opportunities. Figure 4.4 presents an image of “Opening My Eyes,” the next theme in the core process of *changing one’s perspective*. This section explores how participants came to open their eyes.

“Life Lessons”: Opening One’s Eyes through Co-curricular Experiences in College

During the summer between her senior year of high school and first year of college, Michelle found out that her assigned roommate was a Black woman from a large city in a region of the country about which Michelle knew almost nothing. Questioning whether she wanted to “live with that person” and whether it would “be a good experience,” Michelle turned to her mom, who simply replied, “You’re doing it.

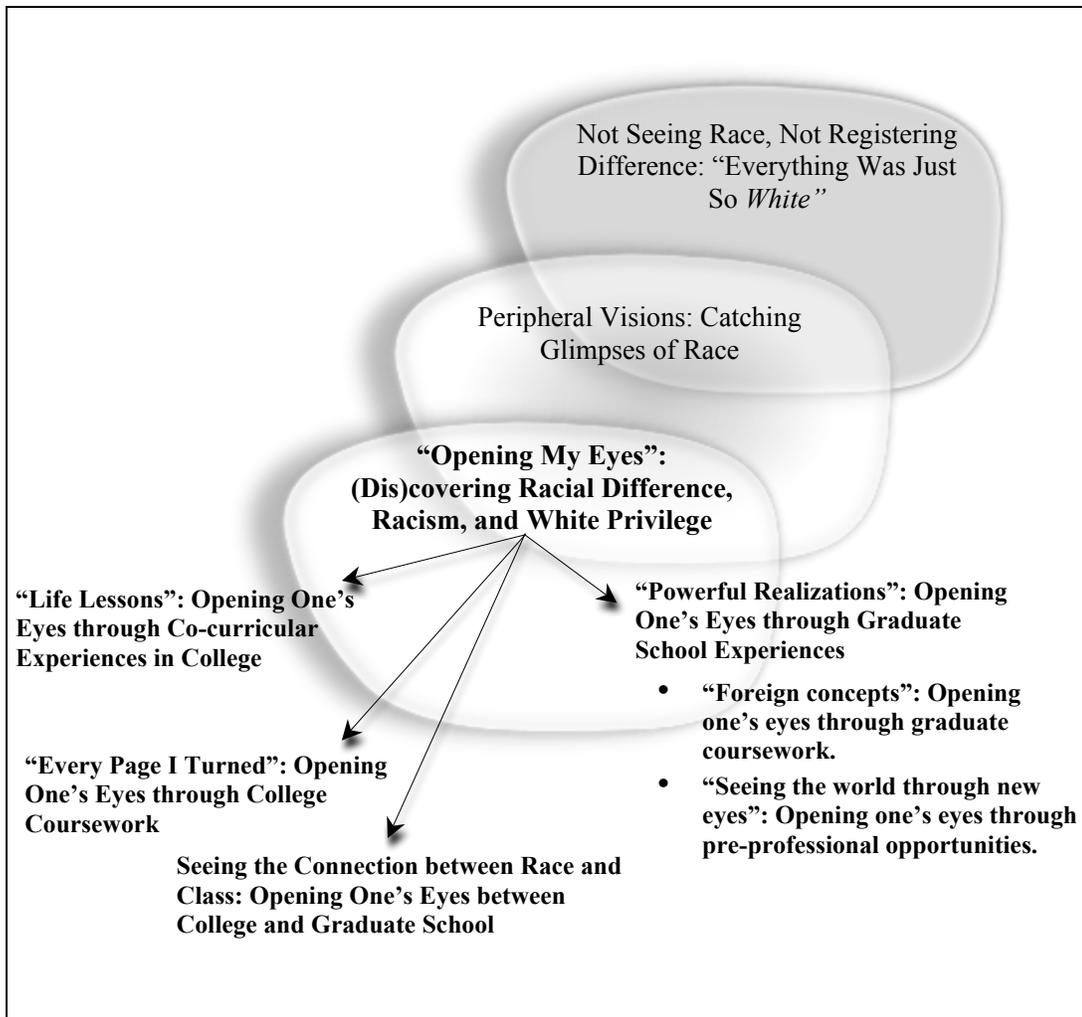


Figure 4.4. “Opening My Eyes”: (Dis)covering Racial Difference, Racism, and White Privilege.

It is a life lesson. That is what college is for.” Indeed, residential experiences in college provided participants with many opportunities to open their eyes and learn “life lessons” about race, in some cases for the first time, as Rachel explained: “It wasn’t until I hit college that I really realized or articulated that there are people of different races, or ... the troubles that it sometimes causes.” This section explores the role of undergraduate co-curricular experiences in opening participants’ eyes to the realities of race.

Most participants lived in residence halls for part or all of their time in college, and many became RAs or held other student staff positions in residence life. In those settings and through relationships developed there, participants’ eyes were opened to the daily realities of racism, racial difference, and White privilege in students’ lives. Rachel recalled an experience in her first-year residence hall that forever changed her perspective:

My freshman year, the hall director at the time, I remember him saying ... we watched *American History X* as a program. He at one point said that basically because he is White he is racist. ... To me at the time that was a profound statement. It still kind of is. I think that was one of the starters for me.

Confronted with the idea that all White people might be racist, Rachel began to consider racism as something larger than hateful epithets spewed by isolated individuals. Realizing that she agreed with her hall director, Rachel began to seek more knowledge about race-related issues.

For Stephanie, racial difference and White privilege began to “hit home” through several experiences that she traced back to her role as an RA. While on her

way to the dining hall with a group of fellow RAs and their hall manager (a more experienced, but younger, student staff member), Stephanie responded to someone's anecdote with the offhanded comment, "That's so ghetto." The hall manager stopped in her tracks, turned to Stephanie, looked her in the eye, and said, "That's not appropriate." She turned away, and the conversation resumed. Stephanie recalled this confrontation vividly:

[I]t was super embarrassing for me because I was kind of like the perfect little angel and never did anything wrong. ...It was difficult. I definitely was probably a little angry, too, at her and stuff for doing that, but I never told her how I felt and so it's interesting like I don't even know if she would remember calling me out on it, but it's like one of those things that now I'm thankful that she did...[S]he definitely made an impact. And it was a lifelong impact and it was just that five-second 'that's not appropriate,' and that look that she gave me, like, "You just said that. I cannot believe you just said that." It was one of those things that I will remember forever.

The "lifelong impact" of this conversation is quite evident to Stephanie when looking back on the development of her emerging White identity. Indeed, in response to a question from me about how she made sense of this conversation in terms of White culture, Stephanie remarked, "it's like we always try to be right or we're always in such a position of power that people don't often call us out, so when we do get called out, it's kind of painful for us."

Beyond the residence hall setting, involvement in other dimensions of co-curricular life opened some participants' eyes to racial difference, racism, and White

privilege. Rachel recalled an instance in which being in student government created an opportunity to learn about racism through conversations with her peers:

I remember one year we had, for Halloween, a couple of students painted themselves Black... Someone posted posters on campus with these pictures from Facebook and saying it was Black face so that kind of sparked a whole lot of conversations on campus. I was in student government and so I attended these conversations. I remember [it] being kind of pivotal, just talking with other students.

In Rachel's words, "being involved on campus really helped" her to develop an understanding of racist incidents and their impact on students.

International travel was another catalyst for opening one's eyes in college, particularly for Alexandria. Although studying abroad in Germany was a hard decision because of the money and the prospect of being so far away from home, Alexandria quickly realized that it was one of the best decisions she had ever made. She recalled:

I got on the plane and I got there and loved it. I didn't even want to come home. ... I loved meeting new people and meeting new cultures and just exploring the world. ... I traveled anywhere I could possibly go. I went to tons of European countries, just absolutely loved it. I met so many wonderful people along the way.

In Germany, Alexandria "felt completely out of [her] bubble" and was "thrown into a whole new world." One of the most powerful aspects of her experience was learning

about discrimination against the Turkish community, which constitutes the largest ethnic minority in Germany:

A couple of the German friends that I made while I was there they made comments about the Turkish population taking their jobs and stuff like that. ...They're still technically Germans because they were born in Germany but they're viewed as outsiders because they're coming from a different culture or a different country, which is how I related it to the US. ...The US has always had negative stereotypes of African Americans and just seeing that ... every culture has their own difficulties they need to work through.... It got me thinking about these issues.

Describing her time in Europe as “never very far from [her] mind,” Alexandria concluded that her study abroad experienced “helped [her] look at things from other lenses or other perspectives.” Because of her time in Germany, Alexandria was “bitten by the travel bug” and opened her eyes to racial issues, including “how different areas look at race and culture.”

Although Lucy, too, encountered race as part of a study abroad term in college, her travel built on several eye-opening volunteer and service-learning experiences near her campus, all with an intercultural focus. First, she taught English to Spanish-speaking men from Mexico for six months, an experience in which she did not recall having “thought a lot about race or racial identity. It was kind of like, ‘I’m going to do this volunteer thing and I like Spanish and I speak English so let’s do this.’” During that same time period, Lucy took her first course with a one-time

service-learning component. She and her classmates handed out soup to clients at an overnight ministry in the large city near her campus. Lucy recalled:

I remember that being one of the primary experiences that opened my eyes to social class. I think I kind of started seeing a connection with race and social class and just with the people that were there it was a lot of working poor people and a lot of people were primarily African American or Hispanic and had kids or had grandkids at home that they needed to take food to. ...It was just one night but I think that was the first time that I had really gone out of my comfort zone.

Getting out of her “comfort zone” allowed Lucy to see “a connection [between] race and social class” and encouraged her to take another course with an intercultural service-learning opportunity. In that setting, she worked with an Iranian refugee family, and “it was really the first time that [she] truly interacted with a different culture.” Finally, Lucy traveled to New Orleans with Habitat for Humanity to build houses “right after Hurricane Katrina.” Together with her coursework, these service experiences “played into [Lucy’s] awareness that kind of started developing that semester.”

Meanwhile, halfway across the country, Becky was also involved with Habitat for Humanity and “did a couple of alternative breaks,” one of which was in New Orleans. In addition to “an outlet” for her energy and meeting people, Becky connected her Habitat involvement with her growing awareness of racial difference, racism, and White privilege. Importantly, Becky came to this awareness simultaneously through coursework and co-curricular experiences. Indeed, academic

and co-curricular learning were intertwined for many participants in their eye-opening encounters with race.

“Every Page I Turned”: Opening One’s Eyes through College Coursework

Although not all participants talked about their college coursework as a place where they encountered racial issues, those who did spoke about it in powerful terms. As a second-year student seeking to fulfill a “diversity requirement,” Michaela signed up for her first multicultural studies course despite hearing from “all [her] White friends” that the course was “just about everything White people have done wrong.” Michaela, who had a way with words, was at a loss for them as she attempted to describe the impact of reading about privilege, oppression, identity, and difference at a time when she was beginning to recognize both her lesbian identity and her White identity:

[I]t was finally a point where I felt like I could put what I was thinking about my own identity into words. ...I finally could put language to all of the different things I was kind of thinking and experiencing and I was just totally enamored and I don’t even have words that I just was reading this and I felt so strongly and so, yes, I just, every page I turned I went yes, yes that’s right.

Reading statistics about racial inequities and reflecting on the role of White privilege in her upbringing, Michaela found this course “really eye-opening.”

Becky had a similar experience in her sociology courses, encountering some of the same readings and, like Michaela, engaging in class discussions and personal reflections about race in local and global contexts. Becky attributed the depth of her emerging racial awareness to her sociology major:

It just kind of like exploded on my life, because I became a Sociology major. I think if I would have been any other major it would have been a lot more slow and those conversations wouldn't have been had...you jump right into it in that field.

For Becky, her academic major caused the topic of race to “explode on her life” and thus opened her eyes to the complex matters of racial oppression and privilege.

Mirroring Michaela's experience in multicultural studies, Rachel found her way to her college's social justice major serendipitously. Having greatly enjoyed a religion class, Rachel went to the professor, who became her advisor, and asked for advice on selecting a major. Encouraged to consider the social justice major, Rachel chose a concentration in women's studies and continued to take religion classes. The opportunity to talk about “different cultures and different religions” through her coursework opened Rachel's eyes to racial issues. Importantly, when she learned something new, she would often “ask people what they think” outside of class, thus enriching her classroom learning and opening her eyes further through her co-curricular experiences. Conversations with her peers – for example, about contemporary gender roles in the United States – allowed Rachel to clarify and strengthen her own perspectives and appreciate the viewpoints of others.

Finally, Lucy had a number of undergraduate coursework experiences that she considered to be eye-opening. In the course through which she volunteered at the nighttime ministry, Lucy encountered readings and ideas that “got [her] thinking more about intercultural topics and social justice.” That course propelled her to enroll the following semester in psychology, intercultural studies, and communication

courses focusing on social justice issues. After declaring a major in intercultural studies, Lucy enrolled as a junior in a course focusing on race and equity in education. Facilitated by “a phenomenal professor,” this course provided opportunities to talk about “race and White privilege” and to journal about race, which was a new experience for Lucy and “probably one of the more...beneficial activities to do to understand...where you’re coming from.” Lucy “took a lot away” from that class and connected it “to who [she] was as an individual in terms of...racial identity.” In addition, Lucy’s academic experiences allowed her to integrate what she had learned from in-depth co-curricular experiences, including service-learning, activism, student organization involvement, an RA position, and study abroad experiences. Together, Lucy’s academic and co-curricular experiences helped her to open her eyes to race and White privilege as social justice issues.

Importantly, not all participants related their undergraduate coursework to eye-opening experiences with race and social justice. In Zoey’s words, “the concept of social justice is a little bit more foreign because it wasn’t something that I encountered a whole lot in college.” Graduate school coursework and assistantship experiences provided exposure to social justice for many participants. However, for some participants, the time they spent working between college and graduate school also offered opportunities to open their eyes to the realities of race.

Seeing the Connection between Race and Class: Opening One’s Eyes between College and Graduate School

For Zoey and Stacy, the time they spent working between college and graduate school offered opportunities to open their eyes to race and its intersections

with social class. After a period in the service industry, Stacy spent nine months as a case manager near her hometown working with teenage girls who were “at risk” for teenage pregnancy. Prior to that role, Stacy remembers that she understood “there was this association between socioeconomic class and race” but “couldn’t articulate...how I came to think that.” Once she began her work as a case manager, she developed a new understanding of the “poor areas” of the city where many of her clients resided:

[I]t wasn’t just African American families, it was all poor areas ... there were White people and there were Black people, and there were a lot of people in these areas that I just had never had a need to go through, or by, or whatever. And so I think that was the first time that I realized how segregated it was in terms of where you lived, mostly related to your class although it definitely, there tended to be more African American families that were living in those areas that were deemed poor areas of town.

Recalling the meaning she made of her observations about race and class, Stacy described her relationship with an African American female coworker: “she and I opened each other’s eyes to a lot of things” concerning race and class. For example, Stacy’s coworker introduced her to “the Black bar” in town, which Stacy had not even known existed, despite growing up in the town next door. By sharing their differently racialized perspectives on the community, Stacy and her coworker taught each other “how to get around the system and be a good advocate” while “trying to follow the rules as much as you could, how to sneak condoms in their backpacks and how to have these conversations” about sexual health. The eye-opening nature of

Stacy's relationship with her Black coworker was "much more powerful" than the conversations she had with her family, whose reactions to Stacy's work stories added up to little more than "that's got to be tough." Overall, Stacy's time as a case manager "opened [her] eyes" to a lot of what was going on in [her] own backyard that [she] just didn't know about."

Similarly, during her year living and working with African American youth in a large city, Zoey learned to "understand better the way that race is a lot of times heavily associated with social class." She came to this understanding by spending time in the community:

I had consistent contact with people like that, not that were just racially different from me, but were from a different racial background and were experiencing the effects of the social structures in our society that relegate them to not being able to obtain a college education and things like that.

By talking with low-income African American children "about how they want to go to Harvard," not only did Zoey come to understand the connections between race, class, and educational privilege, but she also had her eyes opened to "why social justice initiatives are important." Overall, for Zoey and Stacy, the time they spent working between college and graduate school offered an opportunity to witness how low-income youth, as well as Children and Adolescents of Color and immigrant youth, experienced the complex intersection between race and class in everyday life. Zoey and Stacy's own youth experiences differed greatly from the realities they witnessed, and thus, their eyes were opened to what they would later have the language to describe as their own racial, economic, and educational privilege.

“Powerful Realizations”: Opening One’s Eyes through Graduate School

Experiences

For many participants, some or all of the experiences that led them to open their eyes to racial difference, racism, and privilege did not occur until graduate school. Describing her cohort at the beginning of her last semester of graduate school, Michaela mused, “I think a lot of us have had really powerful realizations and reflections in this program.” Indeed, at the time of interviews for this study, most participants had experienced, and were still experiencing, multiple personal and professional transformations, including the ongoing development of a racial identity. In particular, participants opened their eyes to racial differences, racism, and privilege, and they attributed these transformations to coursework, assistantships, and other dimensions of their graduate school experiences.

“Foreign concepts”: Opening one’s eyes through graduate coursework.

Several participants opened their eyes to the concept of White privilege through their graduate coursework. The novelty of this idea was striking for Sally and, in her perception, for most of her cohort. In Sally’s words:

Generally speaking, my cohort members had never really tackled issues of privilege and oppression until we started grad school. . . .I’d say for the most part, it was foreign concepts to us last fall.

Sally went on to explain that her cohort encountered these topics together in the courses they took in the fall of their first year. As an activity in one course, they participated in the Privilege Walk, a common diversity and social justice education activity. In the Privilege Walk, participants line up side to side and then move

forward or back in response to a series of statements about life experiences that pertain to privilege and oppression. Typically, the statements are drawn directly from Peggy McIntosh's (1988/2004) groundbreaking article in which she refers to White privilege as "an invisible weightless knapsack" (p. 104) of "unearned entitlement[s]" (p. 107) and "conferred dominance" (p. 107). The Privilege Walk was "very visual" for Sally and her peers, and it led to great turmoil within the cohort about "what had happened, what was visualized in that activity." Not long afterward, Sally and her cohort read McIntosh's (1988/2004) article in another course. Sally's learning experience with her cohort is more fully addressed later in this chapter, but it is introduced here to illustrate the "very visual" way in which her eyes were opened to privilege and oppression through her graduate coursework.

Alexandria also had eye-opening experiences through her graduate coursework. For example, she learned about racial discrimination and lamented that not everyone has exposure to the eye-opening lessons she learned:

There was a study done we heard about in class where they took names of different students and but they used the exact same credentials but changed the name on the resume and [the White person got the job over] the African American person or the Muslim sounding name. ...So that kind of made me realize there's a lot of discrimination out there and a lot of people I just, I feel like they don't have the opportunity to see those different discrepancies or just to have their eyes opened to really what's going on.

Similarly, Stephanie, who "never talked about this stuff in undergrad," shared that her eyes were further opened to privilege and oppression through "the conversations that

[she and her peers] have had within some of [their] classes.” Because of coursework and dialogue in her counseling and student development theory courses in particular, Stephanie made this discovery:

A lot of time we think we know what the right answer is and we should tell people what to do..., or we're too afraid to ask some of the hard questions that need to be asked. That class [counseling] really opened up my eyes to the fact that privilege plays a huge part. ...[Y]ou think you can save someone or help someone or do the right things, when you need to give the student a chance to explain where they're at.

Stephanie made an important connection: because of privilege, professionals may avoid asking difficult questions, make misguided assumptions, and thus fall short of understanding and meeting students' needs.

In summary, some participants shared that graduate school coursework provided opportunities for them to open their eyes to racial differences, racism, and privilege. However, other participants traced their eye-opening moments to professional development opportunities in their assistantship settings in residence life.

“Seeing the world through new eyes”: Opening one’s eyes through pre-professional opportunities. For Alexandria, one of the most pleasant surprises about pursuing her master’s degree in SA/HE was being treated “like a real professional, like a professional in training.” Indeed, participants emphasized the importance of their GA positions, practica, and internships as learning environments that were critical to their growth. In those contexts, being treated “like a real professional” meant having the opportunity to attend trainings and conferences, advise student

organizations, and lead study abroad trips. Alexandria originally decided to attend graduate school to “help other students...see the world through new eyes,” yet some of her professional development experiences added to her own experience of seeing the world through new eyes. In fact, Alexandria, Stephanie, Rose, and Michelle all shared instances in which pre-professional opportunities opened their eyes to racial differences, racism, and privilege.

Alexandria’s eye-opening experiences studying abroad in Germany as an undergraduate encouraged her to seek out a summer graduate internship in a large, diverse city in the East South Central region. The time she spent there led her to encounter African American men and feel “like a minority” for the first time, leading her to reflect on how African Americans must feel in her predominantly White rural hometown:

Just going to the grocery store, I was the only White girl.... So it was very interesting to see how they feel coming to my hometown. ...Just seeing that shift in myself where I went from maybe internalizing the stereotypes that I grew up with and then to living in [state]. ...Being the minority...opened my eyes.

Alexandria went on to explain the nature of the “shift in [her]self.” Her experience of being “bitten by the travel bug” in Germany opened her eyes to the joys of learning about other cultures. That passion led her to seek an internship in a totally unfamiliar setting, where she embraced and was humbled by the experience of being a racial minority for the first time. The “shift in [her]self” was Alexandria’s term for the more complex “viewpoint” she developed as a result of her time in her hometown, in

Germany, and in the large, East South Central city where she completed her internship: “just being able to pull all three [contexts] together to make the final result.”

In addition to her internship experience, Alexandria has had eye-opening experiences as a result of advising an undergraduate student organization for Women of Color, a role for which she volunteered above and beyond her assistantship and coursework. Alexandria was very moved by the personal story of a Mexican student at the organization’s annual retreat. Hearing about this student’s experience caused Alexandria to reflect on privilege, oppression, race, and class in her own life:

Growing up, I never had to deal with race for myself, but there was another status. ...[M]y family was very poor. I would get picked on for not having the newest clothes and jackets and whatnot, and just taking my situation and remembering how I felt about that and then looking at their situations, obviously it must be difficult.

Further deepening her empathy, Alexandria attended the White Privilege Conference with some of the students she advised. Just as the story she heard at the student organization retreat led her to reflect on her racial privilege, the points of view she encountered at the White Privilege Conference caused Alexandria to see racism as “one less obstacle [she] had to overcome” because of being White. Summarizing her experiences in her coursework, as a student organization advisor, and as a conference attendee, Alexandria commented, “The White Privilege Conference ... and being involved and taking the diversity class are just vehicles to open your eyes and really experience something new.”

Stephanie attended the same annual White Privilege Conference while in graduate school. Although her undergraduate experiences opened her eyes to her responsibility for contributing to an inclusive environment, attending the White Privilege Conference opened Stephanie's eyes to the fact that she had a White identity:

It was one of those first times for me that I really realized ... how much my identity impacts the students around me because I was the only White female who went with the group to the White Privilege Conference, so I became very aware of my identity at that point.

Similar to Alexandria's internship in a large, racially and ethnically diverse city, Stephanie's time at the White Privilege Conference opened her eyes to being in the racial minority, which then made her aware of the racial identity she had rarely noticed before.

Also similar to Alexandria, Stephanie had another eye-opening experience through her summer internship in a large, racially diverse city, but in the Pacific region. Like the White Privilege Conference, living in the city made Stephanie "super aware of [her] identity," especially because the racial diversity of her higher education work environment mirrored that of the city itself and because of the high-profile, racially motivated shooting of a Man of Color by a law enforcement official one year earlier. Navigating the city, learning from her coworkers' experiences, and preparing to respond to potential race riots was a powerful combination for Stephanie and "made [her] much more aware of the injustices done and the privilege that is definitely in place. ...It definitely opened my eyes." Later, Stephanie's professional

development experiences would go beyond simply opening her eyes, but her conference and internship experiences laid the groundwork.

Rose, whose GA position was in a residence hall, had a different set of professional development opportunities that opened her eyes to privilege. For RA training, she and her colleagues joined the students in reading a popular book called *Thirty-Five Dumb Things Well-Intended People Say* (Cullen, 2008). This book helped Rose realize the role of privilege in her life:

Reading through that and talking with students about it, I have caught myself saying some of those things. It just made me more aware of my language and the subtle ways we change what we say depending on who we talk with.

Importantly, this book, the training for which Rose read it, and ensuing conversations with her colleagues and RA staff provided opportunities for reflection about race that were not occurring in other settings. In Rose's words:

We have these conversations in theory class...and our professional development. I think that's where we finally do get to start having those conversations. We have them with our staff members, but it's not built into the curriculum a lot of times.

RA training and ongoing staff development provided a compelling setting for Rose to open her eyes to racial privilege, a topic rarely explored even in her SA/HE graduate coursework.

Rose had a second professional development opportunity when she escorted ten students to Jamaica on a study abroad trip. While four of the students were African American, the remaining students were White, as was the professor who

accompanied the group. The group stayed in a small town, and when they walked down the street together, “people would yell, ‘Hey, whitey’ and that kind of thing.” Rose emphasized that while the attention did not upset her, “it upset some of our students who had never really had their race become a focal point of anything before.” Even though she was not upset, Rose admitted that “having their race called to the forefront of interactions with people was new and different” not just for her students, but for her too, “to an extent.”

Finally, to conclude this section of findings on opening one’s eyes, Michelle shared a professional development experience that mirrored Sally’s coursework-based experience with the Privilege Walk. In Michelle’s case, the activity was called “Beads of Privilege” and involved creating a bracelet that served as a visual indicator of the privileges others associated with her identities as a White woman working on a graduate degree. This experience “was a very visual activity...that helped [Michelle] connect to the idea of privilege.” In that sense, it opened her eyes. However, once her eyes were open, Michelle began the difficult journey of struggling to see – and feel – the difference that awareness of race, racism, whiteness, and privilege can make.

“Now I Really See, So Now What Do I Do?”:

Resisting, Engaging, and Transforming Racial Dissonance

The previous section presented “Opening My Eyes,” a theme associated with the core process of *changing one’s perspective*. As Michelle’s experience with “Beads of Privilege” illustrates, when participants opened their eyes to racism and White privilege, new information and new experiences collided with their prior

understanding of how race operated in their lives and the world around them. The result of this collision was *racial dissonance*: a state of discomfort and ambiguity about race and whiteness that stretched before participants like a great chasm. In analyzing interview data, the phenomenon of *racial dissonance* became a core category that disrupted the developmental process of *changing one's perspective*. Thus, the presentation of findings mirrors this disruption.

Accordingly, this section addresses how participants resolved racial dissonance after opening their eyes to racism and White privilege. Just as participants' perspectives continued to change after they had begun to resolve the dissonance, in this presentation of findings, the description of *changing one's perspective* resumes after the depiction of participants' responses to racial dissonance. Figure 4.5 illustrates the *emergence of racial dissonance*, the second core process that emerged as part of this grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs.

After opening their eyes to racism and White privilege, participants found themselves peering into an immense abyss. How would they bridge the gap of racial dissonance? In Stacy's words, once her eyes were opened to the complexities of racism and White privilege, she began to struggle with questions of agency: "now I really see, so now what do I do. Now that I know all of this, what do I do with it?" Indeed, when White women "really see" the realities of race and find themselves at the precipice of racial dissonance, what do they *do*?

Participants in this study responded through actions and behaviors that corresponded to three intersecting modes: *resisting*, *engaging*, and *transforming*

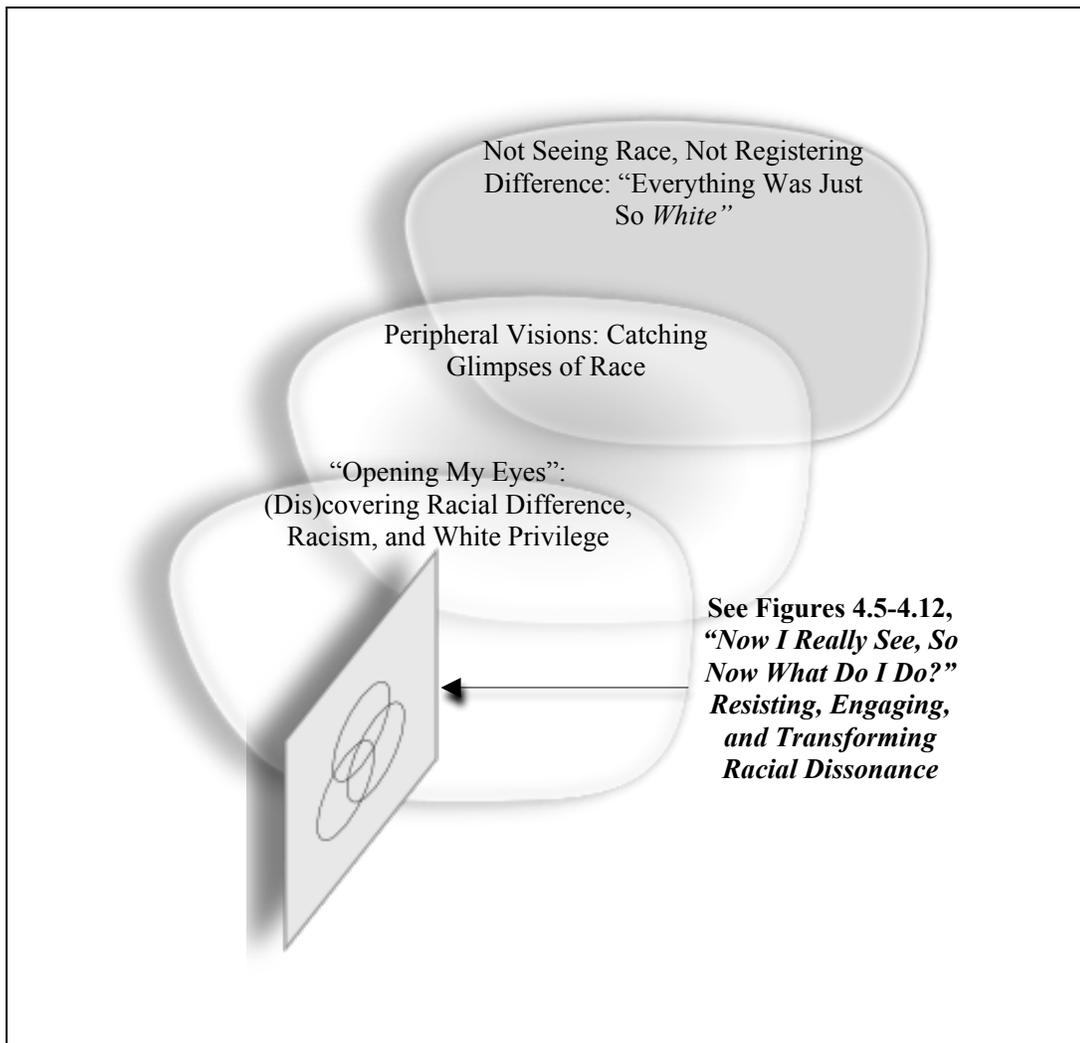


Figure 4.5. Conceptual Model of "Changing My Perspective" through Emergence of Racial Dissonance.

racial dissonance. Participants *resisted* racial dissonance by "putting up walls" that allowed them to deny the social importance of race and the role of White privilege in shaping their lives, and to "cop out" of taking responsibility for action. Participants also *engaged* racial dissonance through a powerful hunger for knowledge that allowed them to get "past the guilt" and seek learning opportunities in educational

and professional contexts. In addition, participants *transformed* dissonance by taking action once they knew “too much not to do anything.”

Beyond behaviors and actions that corresponded to *resisting, engaging, or transforming* racial dissonance, participants also chose strategies at the intersections between these three response modes. At the intersection of *resisting and engaging racial dissonance*, participants navigated feelings of shame and guilt: the shock and shame of realizing how much they had not known; the urge to “hide under a rock” in response to feeling ashamed for being White; the desire to distance themselves from other White people and surround themselves with People of Color; and the “double-edged sword” of examining how their White identities intersected with other social identities, such as gender, sexuality, and class.

In addition, participants *engaged and transformed* racial dissonance by contemplating whether and when to “call out” racially problematic behaviors. Finally, some participants *resisted and transformed* dissonance, as demonstrated by (1) misguided interactions with Peers of Color, and (2) problematic motivations behind their views of race-based affirmative action. As a reminder, the response modes of *resisting, engaging, and transforming racial dissonance*, along with their intersections, represent themes associated with the core process of *the emergence of racial dissonance*. To illustrate these themes, Figures 4.6-4.12 will present each theme as this section unfolds.

As participants discovered strategies for *resisting, engaging, and transforming racial dissonance*, their wide-eyed awareness of racism and White privilege allowed them to move closer to adopting a “conscious lens of whiteness” and, for some, a

“vision” for their lives that included a commitment to challenging racism and dismantling White privilege. For each participant, the incredibly complex process of *resisting, engaging, and transforming racial dissonance* occurred at various intersections of race, gender, class, and sexuality, with implications for how they saw themselves as learners, new professionals, daughters, friends, “helpers,” and change agents.

Resisting Racial Dissonance: “Putting Up Walls” to Block the View

Figure 4.6 illustrates “Resisting Racial Dissonance,” a theme associated with the core process of *the emergence of racial dissonance* and also one of the primary modes through which participants responded to dissonance. Through her work in a residence hall and with student organizations, Becky has had several opportunities to observe resistance to the concepts of male privilege and White privilege among White, male first-year college students. Reminded of her own resistance to White privilege when first encountering the concept, Becky described this resistance as “putting up walls.” Like Becky, several participants “put up walls” that allowed them to retreat or escape from the dissonance they experienced after opening their eyes to racism and White privilege. The walls created by participants blocked their vision, allowing them to shut out what they had seen and did not want to see again. These walls represented various forms of denial.

“Bigger fish to fry”: Denying the social importance of race. During our first interview conversation, Rose used the phrase “bigger fish to fry” on two occasions when describing the (ir)relevance of race in her life and the lives of others. First, Rose noted that her parents were too preoccupied with financial and marital

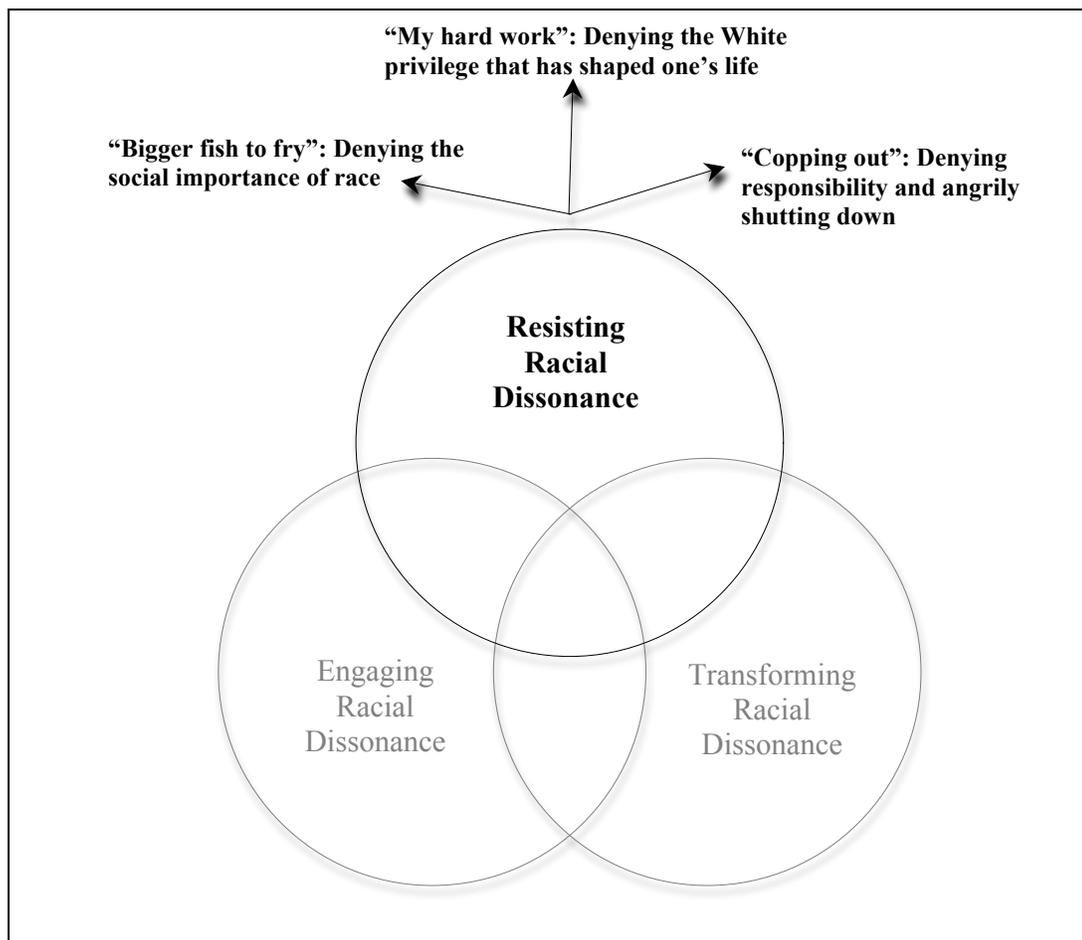


Figure 4.6. Resisting Racial Dissonance: “Putting Up Walls” to Block the View.

stress to discuss racial issues with their children; they “had bigger fish to fry.” Later in the interview, Rose considered my question about what it would take for her to spend more time thinking about and engaging with racial issues. After some initial comments about what schools, colleges, and universities might do, Rose concluded by talking about herself as a member of the millennial generation:

You know, from my generation and those coming up behind me, like, yes, there are still some tensions and that sort of thing, but we have other issues in our lives that we feel are more important and that race is a nonissue. For our

parents, it was a big issue. For your grandparents, it was a really big issue and that kind of thing. For this upcoming crop, we've got bigger fish to fry than race relations.

Rose went on to explain that for her and other members of her generational cohort, conversations about race should “be built into the structure” of everyday life “because if there’s no impetus to have the conversation independent of that, then the conversation will never happen.” As if to illustrate that point, Rose also remarked, “I guess for me race is a lot of times more of an intellectual thing.” For Rose, race was honestly not a salient part of life; indeed, she had “bigger fish to fry.” Thus, it was easier for her to deny the importance of race for her entire generation.

“My hard work”: Denying the White privilege that has shaped one’s life.

When faced with the idea that their lives had been shaped by the unearned advantages (McIntosh, 1988/2004) associated with White privilege, Stacy, Michelle, and Becky initially responded with denial. Stacy’s first formal encounter with the concept of White privilege occurred in graduate school during her student development theory class. She recalled struggling with the concept:

I think when I started to learn about White privilege, very typical, I struggled with the word privilege because I didn’t feel when I first started to learn about it that I came from a place of privilege and that I’ve really had to work hard, and I’ve struggled.... I was really like angry when I first started to learn about that.

At first, Stacy denied the idea of unearned advantages accrued through White privilege; her success in life was something she thought she had earned. Importantly,

when Stacy described this initial denial response in our first interview, it was in the past tense; she presented it as an early reaction that had been replaced by more complex thinking.

Michelle, however, was still unable to acknowledge the role of White privilege in her life. In our first interview conversation, she asserted emphatically, “it has not ever been my race that has gotten me things. It has been my hard work, my determination, my brains.” Although Michelle’s next interview revealed that she was trying to understand, part of her did not seem to believe that White privilege had really affected her in material ways. Perhaps because neither Stacy nor Michelle felt they had experienced economic privilege, the concept of White skin privilege struck them as irrelevant and insulting.

Similarly, when Becky first learned about White privilege in college, she denied the relevance of the concept to her life because of her Jewish identity: “I was one of those students that we encounter a lot, who is like I am White, but I have a Jewish background, and some of my people were, there was genocide against my people at one point, and I never owned slaves.” Later, Becky explained that she was “making excuses,” concluding, “I think that was kind of a cop-out, honestly.” Becky moved through her denial fairly quickly, but for another participant, the phenomenon of “copping out” was a much deeper and more lasting way of putting up walls.

“Copping out”: Denying responsibility and angrily shutting down. Zoey used the term “copping out” to describe the process of denying responsibility, becoming angry, and emotionally shutting down in response to the concept of White privilege. When Zoey was in college, a suitemate who was involved in multicultural

programming invited her to attend a screening and discussion of the movie *Crash* (Reimer et al., 2004). Not sure what to expect, she found the movie “very moving and very weighty,” reacting to the racist events at the center of the plot with the comment, “this is a movie, this can’t be real. Do people really do this?” Presented with the idea that her disbelief might be due to White privilege, Zoey recalled that she “just kind of rejected it. I was like, no, that’s not my fault.” Not only did Zoey “reject [the] premise” of White privilege; she was angry and insulted:

I was just kind of angry that people would assume that because of my skin color that I had contributed to the pain and suffering and discrimination that other people faced when I had been friends with people of other racial backgrounds all of my life and they meant a lot to me. ...People just automatically assigning me that guilt, that fault was very off putting and offensive.

After the *Crash* (Reimer et al., 2004) screening, Zoey stopped attending “diversity type programs” because she “just [didn’t] want to hear it.” Zoey connected her own college experience to her observation of White students in the residence hall where she currently works, explaining that when confronted with evidence of systemic racism, they “cop *out* and they don’t want to talk about it anymore.” She agreed that her reaction to *Crash* as a college student was also an example of *copping out*. After a powerful and eye-opening encounter with racism and White privilege, Zoey took the “cop *out*” response she would later identify in the students with whom she worked, effectively shutting racism out of her consciousness.

Engaging Racial Dissonance: “Hungry for Knowledge”

Figure 4.7 presents “Engaging Racial Dissonance,” another theme associated with the core process of *the emergence of racial dissonance* and a primary mode for responding to dissonance. Although the journey through racial dissonance was not easy, a powerful desire to learn motivated participants to fight resistance and seek engagement. Participants struggled to hold onto newfound awareness of their White identities and to seek greater consciousness of racism and White privilege. Recalling the predominantly White landscape of her childhood through the lens of the racial awareness she developed in college and graduate school, Stephanie made a comment in her first interview that became a salient theme of this study:

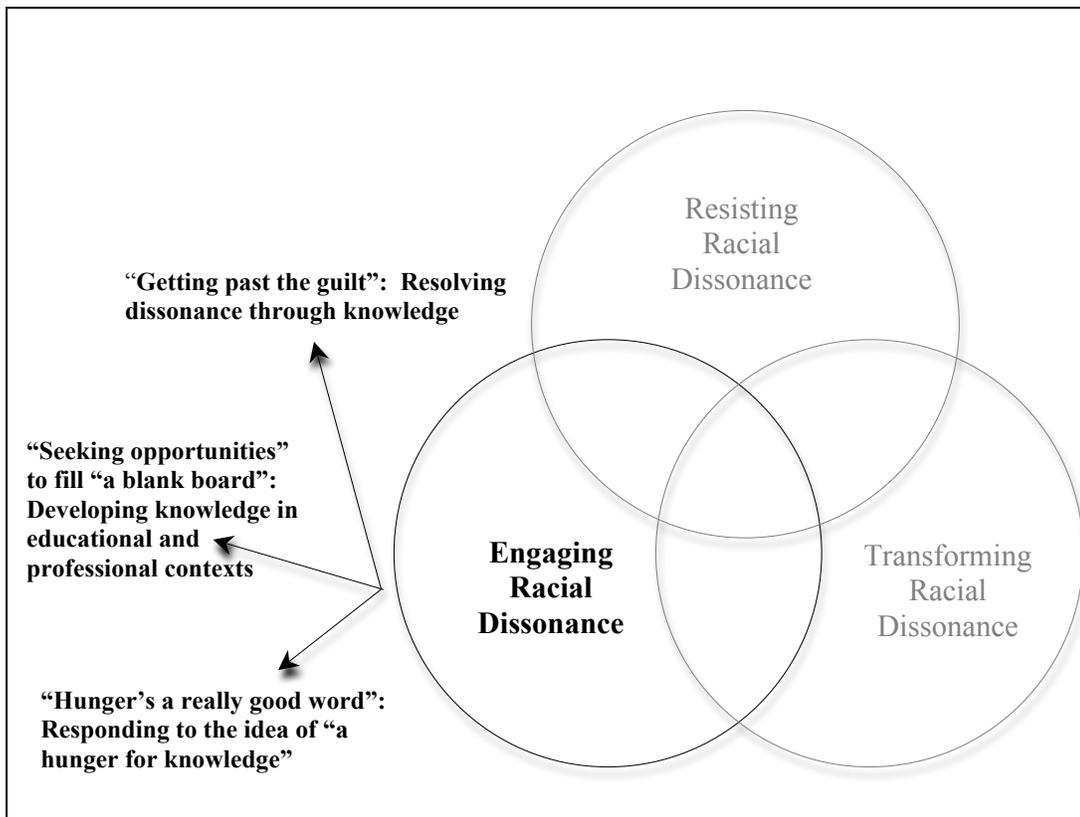


Figure 4.7. Engaging Racial Dissonance: “Hungry for Knowledge.”

I grew up in such a predominantly White background and a background that didn't encourage me to seek out more knowledge on an area like this [i.e., racial differences, racism, racial identity, and White privilege]. I guess it makes me even more hungry for knowledge now than I ever thought I would be and just knowing that I will go into working with a lot of students from different identities in terms of their race.

Once aware of being White and of some of the realities of racism and White privilege, participants viewed knowledge as a vehicle for transforming their newfound consciousness into a “24/7” level of awareness (in Alexandria’s words) and the ability to take meaningful action. The knowledge for which participants hungered was neither uniform nor canonical. Through a range of relationships and educational and professional contexts, participants overcame feelings of guilt, sought opportunities to learn as much as possible about race, and even reflected on the notion of “hunger for knowledge” and whether it resonated with their experiences. Above all, they gathered information and reflected deeply on what it meant to identify as a White woman and emerging student affairs professional who was aware of racism and White privilege.

“Getting past the guilt”: Resolving dissonance through knowledge.

Although participants struggled with guilt when encountering racial dissonance, Michaela and Becky provided examples of making their way through the struggle by seeking out knowledge. Through Michaela’s undergraduate coursework, she recognized her complicity in the history of racism and the enduring nature of White

privilege, and “it was a lot of heavy stuff.” However, her mentor, a student affairs professional who also identified as a White lesbian, was there to help:

My mentor who helped me come out was also really into White privilege and Tim Wise and so, together, I was really fortunate to have her that I could talk about some of these issues with and that she got it and was really into it.

For Michaela, it was not only knowledge that helped her make her way through the guilt; she also had a mentor who helped her get through it in a way that also honored her process of coming out as a lesbian. Having a mentor made an enormous difference in her ability to shoulder the heaviness of White guilt and move through it rather than letting it become an obstacle to further growth. Similarly, when reflecting on what had allowed her to move through the “guilt phase,” Rachel commented, “I don't think I did consciously. I just think going to more things that challenge you and allow for conversation help you grow out of that.”

Becky attributed her movement through the guilt phase to specific knowledge about the nature of structural inequality, racism, and White privilege. Asked how she got through the guilt, Becky responded:

I think it's when I started seeing patterns, in that I started realizing that a meritocracy is bullshit, that you can't always pull yourself up by the bootstraps, and sometimes there are things that are too big for people to overcome, and those things were like put into law. I think that's really what hit home for me.

Becky went on to explain that when she realized the social mobility that she had enjoyed because of her White skin privilege, and that the same mobility was not always available for People of Color:

...[that] was kind of a light bulb for me. This isn't their fault. This is a societal problem and my heritage is part of that problem, and I need to be aware that created problems for People [of Color] and that created privilege for me.

Michaela encountered similar concepts that helped her move past guilt, with the support of her mentor:

So introducing ideas of social justice and these systems that I never even recognized because I've been the beneficiary of all these systems so I've never had to recognize them. Those were the kind of realizations I was having in my sophomore year of college and all the way through.

Seeing the big picture of institutionalized racism and structural inequalities in education and other systems, including housing, helped participants see that White privilege was far more entrenched and complex than the unearned advantages (McIntosh, 1988/2004) that had influenced their lives.

“Seeking opportunities” to fill “a blank board”: Developing knowledge in **educational and professional contexts.** When asked which experiences and relationships in graduate school contributed to their racial identity development, participants offered a range of responses:

- Diversity and student development theory courses in general
- Class assignments requiring personal reflection about identity

- Class assignments focused on minority-serving institutions
- Diversity-related staff development activities in residence life
- Advising multicultural student organizations
- Mentoring relationships with professors, supervisors, and colleagues (in particular, Men of Color, and anti-racist, feminist White women)
- Assisting a professor with race-, identity-, or diversity-related research
- Conducting original research or assessment related to race, identity, or diversity
- Classroom-based diversity dialogues with peers in their cohorts (especially other White women and Peers of Color)
- Professional conferences, including the White Privilege Conference

Every participant in this study volunteered that she had had at least one of these experiences or relationships, with many participants having more than one. Indeed, many of these experiences and relationships led participants to open their eyes to racism and White privilege, leading to “pivotal moments” in their racial identity development.

However, as a way to engage racial dissonance, several participants went out of their way to seek opportunities from this list that were not immediately available through their formal graduate school curriculum or required pre-professional experiences. Others exhibited an extraordinary level of engagement in the experiences or relationships on this list. In one case, a participant and her cohort created an opportunity that was not available on this list (i.e., forming an intergroup

dialogue during their own time). Why did so many participants readily seek opportunities on this list or create other opportunities on their own time?

Zoey offered one explanation of the reason White women in SA/HE graduate programs might go out of their way to learn more about race: to fill what they perceived as a void not only in knowledge, but in personal experience. As Zoey poignantly explained in her first interview, when it comes to the social justice perspective, “I feel stupid.” According to Zoey, “White is like a blank board” – or, worse, whiteness is associated only with negative images, such as “White guilt” or “maybe you have money, power, or privilege in American society.” Sticking with the image of the “blank board,” Zoey continued:

I don't know. It's easy to feel, I think, dumb because if you haven't had experiences to talk from, what do you have to contribute to the conversation? Anything I have to say makes me look ignorant because I am like, “Oh, I never really thought about that or I have never really experienced that.”

For Zoey, being White meant she did not have any relevant experiences to bring to the conversation about race, which made her “feel stupid.” For many of her peers, seeking opportunities to learn more about race fed a hunger for knowledge, described by Zoey as “a blank board.”

Participants’ search for opportunities to learn more about race took several forms. Some participants discovered opportunities to learn by engaging very deeply in activities that were a formal part of their graduate school experiences. For example, in her first week as a graduate assistant in Residence Life, Lucy attended a staff training retreat that included discussion of a common reading about the

experiences of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. When time ran out for the discussion, a hall director invited colleagues to join him for further conversation after dinner. Lucy “was the only grad student that was there out of 10 of us.” The conversation turned to race, and to her surprise, Lucy found she had more experience talking about race than many of the full-time professionals in the conversation, including People of Color.

From this experience, Lucy learned not to assume “that people who are in a position above me would kind of already have the skills and have the experience to talk about their own identity.” She also learned that as someone who had had unusually rich opportunities as an undergraduate student to develop relevant knowledge and skills, she might need to reframe what it meant to seek knowledge.

As Lucy explained:

I think it’s going to take more intention on my part to seek out those relationships and kind of establish myself as somebody who, you know, like understands my own identity and recognizes privilege, and knows enough but is still wanting to learn more about what people of underrepresented identities are going through.

Thus, by seeking to engage deeply in a professional development opportunity, Lucy learned how much she already knew and was able to reframe her learning goals.

Stephanie discovered the opportunity to learn from conversations about race outside the classroom with her peers. In her first year of graduate school, Stephanie especially appreciated conversations with her roommate, a member of the cohort a year ahead of Stephanie’s who was also a White woman:

I could always count on her to have good conversations and be willing to listen to me and maybe even explain where some of the other people might have been coming from. . . .She was a White female, too. She was one of the few other people who could relate to me because she came from that same kind of farming rural background.

Stephanie found that she was able to extend and even make better sense of her classroom learning about identity through conversations with a slightly more experienced peer who had similar social identities and pre-graduate school experiences.

Stephanie also benefited from conversations with a graduate student in a different program who had been a colleague in her graduate assistantship setting. As a “middle class, White, heterosexual male,” this friend was a reliable partner for “really good conversations about what’s going on in the world.” Stephanie appreciated the opportunity to talk with this friend because “he really challenges himself. . . .he is very aware of his privilege. . . .so he is starting to see a lot more.” By listening to her friend talk about his struggle to understand and accept White privilege, Stephanie learned that “sometimes people just need someone to listen and then they’ll change their mind,” especially when exposed to “a few different ideas or perspectives,” which Stephanie provided. She also found that once her friend had been heard, he sometimes challenged her thinking in similar ways.

Other participants also sought learning opportunities outside the formal curriculum and pre-professional experiences in their graduate programs. With a smile, Michaela shared that her friends sometimes poked good-natured fun at her for

reading about race “for fun” during winter break. Indeed, during her free time in graduate school, Michaela read new works and re-read older works by her favorite whiteness scholars and anti-racist activists. She explained the reason for her book choices:

Race wasn't talked a lot before...college for me, so I feel like I'm almost kind of compensating. The more I can soak up right now, the more informed it makes me. So to me that's fun because I want to be able to integrate my passion into my work and into my life. So, the more I can do that now, I think the better off I will be in the future....

Michaela further explained that reading these books gave her “ammo” for difficult conversations about race:

[W]hen I have these conversations with people who have never thought about their race...they'll say something to me and sometimes I won't have a response right away. ...So, for me, the more knowledge and the more information I have the more control I have to have these conversations and the more informed I can be to be able to lead people I guess to understanding where I'm coming from and some of the experiences that I've had and some of the systems that I understand.

For Michaela, who was also a research assistant on a faculty member's study involving Critical Race Theory, a basic awareness of racism and White privilege – indeed, even the well-informed perspective she had gained through her undergraduate major in multicultural studies – was not enough. Michaela sought to “soak up” as much knowledge as she could as a way to integrate her passion into her work and life,

and to prepare her for and give her control over future conversations with individuals who resisted the notion of White privilege.

Finally, Stacy and her cohort peers – many of whom were White women and “high achievers” – were so hungry for more knowledge about race that they formed an intergroup dialogue group to provide a structure for ongoing conversations about race and other dimensions of identity. They created this opportunity because they realized the time they spent in class was not enough; “we all need kind of an outlet to have these conversations.” Stacy and her cohort peers created this program with the hope that future cohorts will start their own “because you just, you learn so much” about “who we are as professionals ... and as people.”

“Hunger’s a really good word”: Responding to the idea of “hungry for knowledge.” Because the poignant phrase “hungry for knowledge” came from Stephanie during our first interview conversation, I had the opportunity to share the phrase with most participants in our second interview conversations. Every participant who heard this phrase agreed – usually emphatically – that it resonated with her experience. Becky, Alexandria, and Michelle reflected on the phrase in ways that further underscored how participants engaged racial dissonance by seeking to feed their hunger for more knowledge about race.

When I shared the phrase “hungry for knowledge” with Becky, she was contemplative at first, then enthusiastic:

I honestly didn’t think about it in those terms, but I mean, I’m writing a whole integrative paper on students learning about diversity and how they can do it better and how we can do it better and I feel that way. I want to know more. I

want to know better and even about myself. Before in undergrad you always try to find yourself, right. And I think I've found myself. I was reading Baxter Magolda and I really think I've reached self-authorship with myself, but now it's like really knowing my identities and really knowing how they impact me, so I think hunger's a really good word.

For Becky, the idea of "hunger for knowledge" captured the topic of her integrative paper and the nature of her journey of self-understanding with regard to her multiple identities.

Alexandria responded enthusiastically to the idea of "hunger for knowledge."

As she explained:

I want to learn as much as I can so I'm not, so that I'm able to help a student in any way possible. I just love being that person that can make a difference and just hungering for that knowledge and doing things the right way and just wanting to learn more. Like I would like to learn something new every day.

Alexandria viewed knowledge as a vehicle for helping students and making a difference. Importantly, she also valued "doing things the right way," as well as lifelong learning. "Hungry for knowledge" captured each of these characteristics.

At first, Michelle was unsure whether the term "hungry for knowledge" applied to her, because she did not view herself as truly passionate about race. However, when she considered the term as applying to diversity more broadly, she made a meaningful connection:

[E]very person has their area of diversity that they're passionate about. ...For me it's about constantly challenging myself. ...I can tell you things about ...

Deaf culture that most people wouldn't learn from reading an article on the Internet. ...But I also have to challenge myself to think outside of that because ... it's really easy to stay inside that box. ...It would be easy for me to say I'm comfortable with diversity, I know sign language, and I appreciate this other culture; but that's not the only one out there. So, it is about pushing myself too.

For Michelle, "hunger for knowledge" captured her intention to challenge and push herself constantly to learn get outside "that box" of Deaf culture and sign language, an area of passion because of her brother's Deaf identity. Michelle viewed "being comfortable with diversity" as a qualification she did not yet possess, and she knew that to get there, she would need to seek out more knowledge about other cultures, since Deaf culture is "not the only one out there."

To summarize, participants hungered for new forms of knowledge that would expand their archive of ideas and experiences related to identity, racism and White privilege. Participants worked through difficult feelings, searched for supportive relationships and learning opportunities, and reflected on the meaning of racial identity, racism, and White privilege in their everyday lives as emerging student affairs professionals.

Transforming Racial Dissonance: "I Know Too Much Not to Do Anything"

Figure 4.8 illustrates "Transforming Racial Dissonance," another theme in the core process of *the emergence of racial dissonance* and another mode of response to racial dissonance. When the White women in this study encountered racial dissonance, they typically responded with strategies that represented a blend of

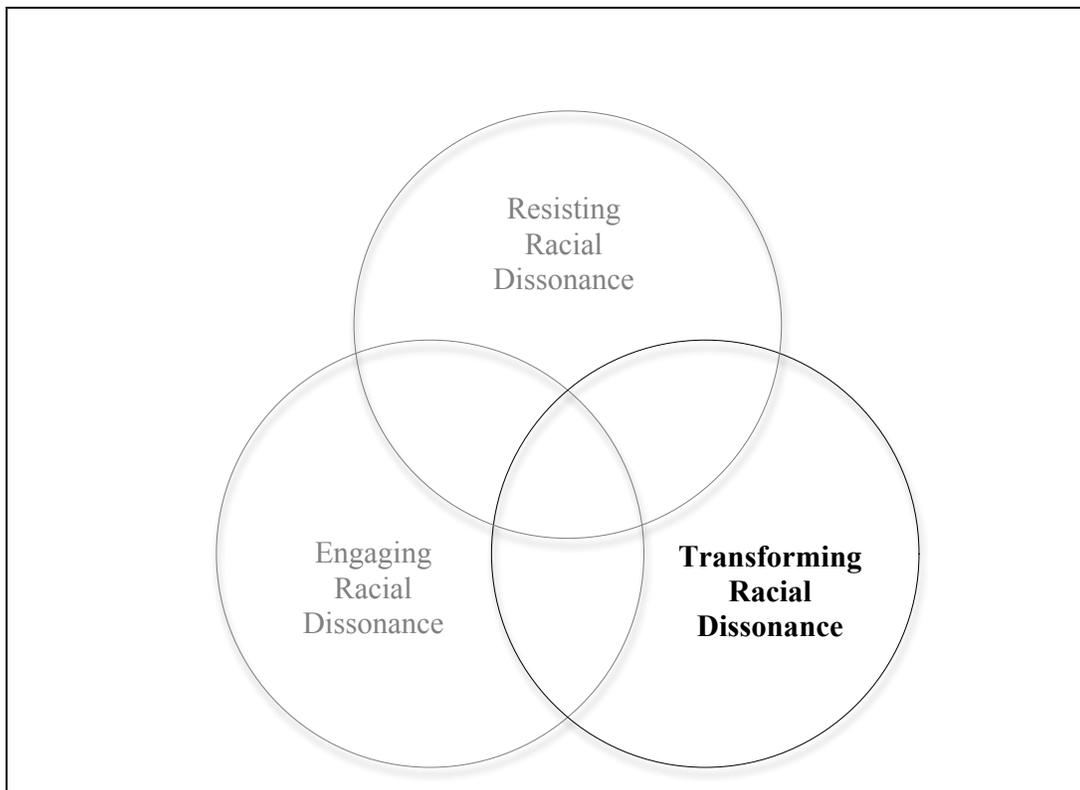


Figure 4.8. Transforming Racial Dissonance: “I Know Too Much Not to Do Anything.”

resistance, engagement, and transformation. In particular, most of the instances in which participants transformed racial dissonance were also instances of resisting or engaging dissonance. However, in several instances, participants took action with confidence, agency, and courage, and the results were transformative. As Stacy explained, one result of being a student affairs professional and “someone who has had the privilege to get a master’s degree” has been that “I know too much not to do anything.” Indeed, participants “did something” by discovering that they could take action on more systemic levels through engaging in activism, becoming a student affairs professional, and educating students.

Lucy had many eye-opening experiences in college that “got [her] thinking about stuff” and “got [her] interested” in race. Her subsequent actions resisted, engaged, and transformed racial dissonance in multiple ways. However, it took a hate crime in the residence hall where she worked as an RA to propel her to take transformative action. A friend and fellow RA “had posted a bulletin board in the stairwell saying, ‘Does racism still exist today?’” A pen and empty space allowed residents to write and respond to comments. Lucy recalled that “throughout the week there were positive comments on it and everything was fine.” When the weekend arrived, Lucy was on duty. On Sunday morning her boyfriend alerted her: “Did you see the bulletin board?” Lucy followed him downstairs and found that the bulletin board was covered with racial slurs and swastikas. What happened next was very memorable:

For whatever reason, that’s the moment in my college experience where I really finally felt compelled to act and to do something. ...Once I saw that and I saw one of my African American residents walk down the stairs past that I lost it. I was mad and frustrated and I couldn’t believe that something like that had happened in my hall, which was 120 students who were primarily White....

For the rest of the semester, Lucy was highly engaged in efforts to respond to this incident and other hate crime incidents that had occurred in residence halls. She helped coordinate a diversity rally, a diversity conference, and follow-up roundtable discussions about race, identity, and related topics. Her hall director connected her with the Director of Intercultural Affairs, a Latino man who became Lucy’s “first

mentor in student affairs.” Through her mentor, Lucy began to connect the transformative actions she had taken on campus to her previous experiences with service-learning, study abroad, and intercultural learning. She also began to connect these experiences with the idea of a career in student affairs. Looking back, Lucy summarized, “that was kind of the one experience that I always go back to that really made me want to do something and really kind of spurred my interest and my involvement.”

Other powerful examples of transforming dissonance emerged from participants’ pre-professional work with students while in graduate school. Michaela, who worked in a residence hall, described a student who was frustrated with having to learn about Mexican immigration because “she believes that people who immigrate from Mexico take jobs and they don’t pay taxes.” Seeing the dissonance in this student’s defensive posture, Michaela began “a series of conversations” with her “about why people choose to come to America and this idea of the American dream.” Over time, Michaela began “talking about the American dream in a more critical way because the American dream doesn’t work for everyone and especially not for People of Color.” In response, Michaela has seen the student “take that extra second before responding sometimes to think, ‘Huh, that’s interesting, I didn’t think about that,’ and then she’ll jump back into ... one of her arguments about why it’s not okay [for, in her view, Mexican immigrants to take jobs and not pay taxes]. But that second ... is really powerful.” Indeed, Michaela lived for the days when she could “spark that little bit of what I would call dissonance with students or peers or bring it to the forefront when other people may not be bringing it there.”

Similarly, Lucy facilitated a discussion group for RAs through her graduate assistantship. In that role, she “pretty much forced them to have the uncomfortable conversation that they probably wouldn’t have in any other setting.” She assigned readings that had had a powerful impact on her own development and challenged students to think critically about “the media bias that we have about issues relating to race” and “how race is often a very big part of where people are living.” Lucy further recalled:

I know that I had conversations with them [the RAs in my discussion group] that other discussion groups probably didn’t have. ... That, to me, is frustrating because I don’t think that we’re doing the students justice. ... A lot of the hall directors aren’t comfortable talking about these topics, and in turn they choose what I consider superficial lesson plans to use in their discussion questions, and so we’re not really engaging our students in the conversations that allow them to have that opportunity to understand their own identity development.

By resisting, engaging, and transforming racial dissonance in her own life, Lucy was able to create a learning environment in which a new generation of students had the opportunity to encounter and begin to work through dissonance. Although respectful of her colleagues and aware that her own undergraduate experiences with race and social justice constituted a form of privilege, Lucy was concerned that students in her discussion section were the only ones who had “difficult conversations.” It bothered Lucy that some of her student affairs colleagues “might not be giving that experience to students, and like college is one of the only times that they can have that

experience. And so if they're not getting it now, they may never have it.” Indeed, Lucy had opportunities to transform racial dissonance as an RA and then as an educator who taught the next generation of RAs. However, her full-circle experience as a student and educator created dissonance of a different sort as she became aware that not all of her colleagues were as well-prepared as she was.

To summarize, when racial dissonance emerged, participants responded by resisting, engaging, and transforming the dissonance. The examples shared above illustrate these three responses as discrete dimensions, yet in many cases participants responded with strategies that represented the intersection of two dimensions. Thus, the following sections present examples of resisting and engaging dissonance, engaging and transforming dissonance, and resisting and transforming dissonance, as illustrated by Figures 8 through 10.

Resisting and Engaging Racial Dissonance: Complex Emotions and Intersecting Identities

Figure 4.9 depicts “Resisting and Engaging Racial Dissonance,” one of the intersecting response modes and themes associated with the core process of *the emergence of racial dissonance*. Many participants exhibited both *resistance* and *engagement* as they struggled with the dissonance that emerged from opening their eyes to the enduring nature of racism and White privilege. In addition, many participants both *resisted* and *engaged* racial dissonance when contemplating the identity intersections of race, class, sexuality, and gender. The complex emotions warrant a more comprehensive introduction.

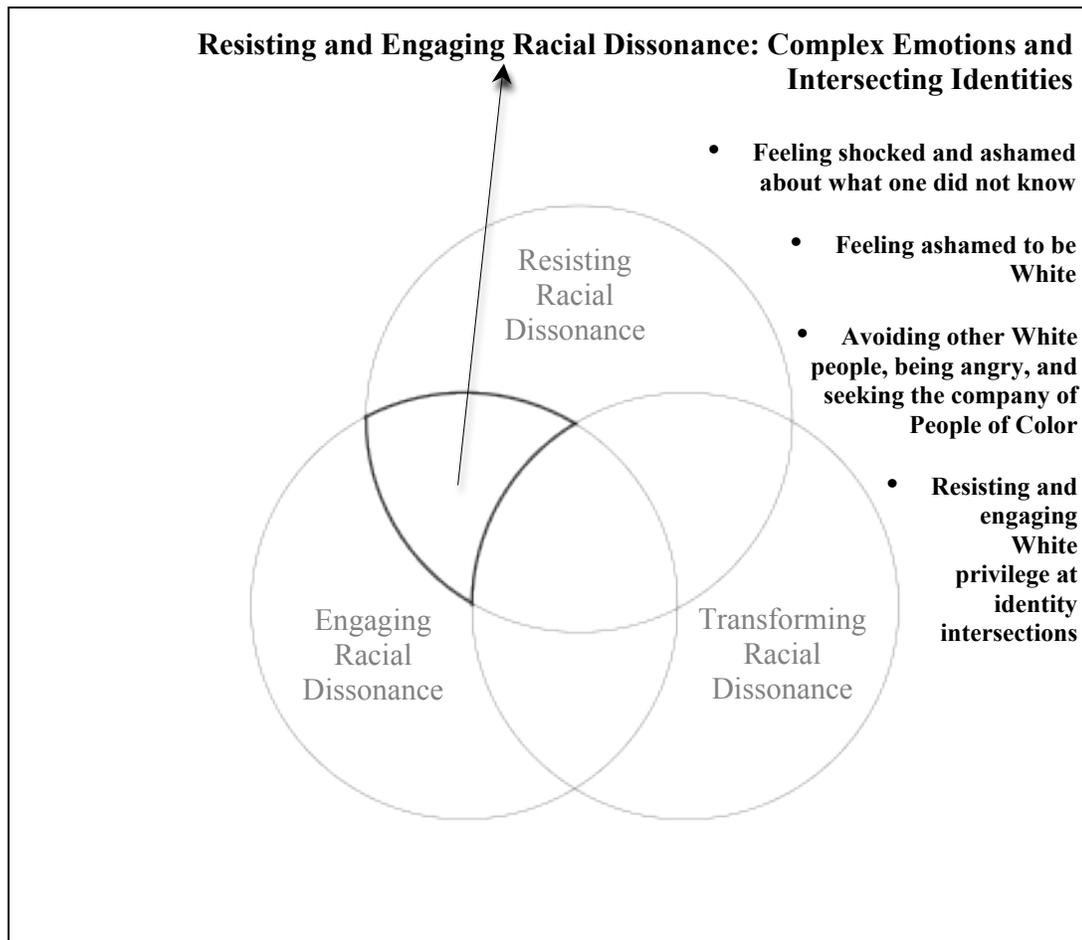


Figure 4.9. Resisting and Engaging Racial Dissonance: Complex Emotions and Intersecting Identities.

Participants wrestled with many forms and consequences of the emotions that emerged: embarrassment and shock about what they did not know; shame over their visible association with racist individuals and institutions; and the desire to distance oneself from White people (especially White women) and draw closer to Women and Men of Color. In some instances, participants' feelings suggested a greater degree of engagement with racial dissonance than denial. For example, exhibiting embarrassment about what one does not know, or shock about the many ways racism

has been shielded from one's view, suggests one is taking the issue personally – a precursor to seeking out more knowledge. However, embarrassment and shock can also distract one from taking responsibility to make a difference in one's sphere of influence, as evident in the desire to distance oneself from White people. Similarly, “the guilt phase” can bring about an appropriate sense of responsibility and complicity in racism and White privilege, but it can also cause a sense of paralysis and helplessness. Finally, although anger appeared as a component of “copping out” – a form of resistance to racial dissonance – anger can also reflect appropriate outrage about the injustice of racism and unexamined White privilege. Thus, this section presents examples of shock, shame, guilt, and anger that signify both resisting and engaging racial dissonance.

“I had no idea”: **Feeling shocked and ashamed about what one did not know.** Several participants were very shocked when they realized how much they did not know about race and racism. Rachel recalled this phase poignantly:

I remember those conversations were always very hard for me at first, and I usually ended up crying at some point. I was upset that I had never thought of this stuff before. I was 18 and no one had ever said anything, and I had never talked about it before. I was upset about that.

Rachel was upset about her lack of knowledge and indignant that no one had clued her in until college, where she first understood White privilege and systemic racism.

Differing slightly from Rachel, Michaela felt guilty about her complicity in the history of racial injustice when she first learned about White privilege in a multicultural studies course: “I think I first went through this, the White guilt of, ‘Oh

my God I had no idea and I feel so bad.’ I didn’t know what that meant.” Becky’s experience mirrored Michaela’s. When Becky first learned about White privilege through her sociology coursework, the readings focused on racial disparities in education. Aware that her religious minority status had influenced her educational experience in elementary school, Becky realized her discriminatory treatment was hardly noteworthy compared to the realities faced by Children of Color. She also realized that in the context of schooling that favored White children, her White skin was an unearned advantage (McIntosh, 1988/2004). Recalling her struggle to come to terms with her racial privilege, Becky remembered thinking, “How do, even me, even the non-Mormon kid, I got to go to school. I got to do all these things. How is this happening?” As she learned more about the role of White cultural and structural supremacy in maintaining racial inequities in education, Becky began to reflect on her own possible complicity: “Oh, my God, did I do this? Is this embedded in me? What does this mean to me? How did this happen?” Becky emphasized that although she had known about the Rwandan genocide and the Nazi Holocaust, those events were “still kind of far away and never really talked about in terms of race.” Thus, when Becky first learned about the ongoing history of racism in the United States, she “felt guilty at first.”

Finally, Stacy also went through a shock phase once she got through her initial response of denying that White privilege had influenced her life. Realizing that the phenomenon of White privilege resonated with what she had witnessed as a case manager for Youth of Color, Stacy moved from denial to shock: “I was really kind of taken back because I really viewed myself as an advocate, I really saw myself as an

ally, I thought I knew some things. [Now] I knew there was a whole lot that I didn't know."

“Wanting to hide under a rock”: Feeling ashamed to be White. Another response to racial dissonance was feeling ashamed to be White, and as a result, the desire to hide from racial realities. For Alexandria, this response emerged through her role as an advisor to a student organization for Women of Color. When racial slurs appeared on the walls of a residence hall, administrators notified only the “multicultural” students and residents of the vandalized building, rather than choosing to notify the whole campus. Students were outraged that “it wasn’t more of a campus priority” and organized a meeting with the chancellor, leading to “a good response.” However, Alexandria’s internal response was not as positive:

It made me feel, you know, as a White woman it just made me feel really bad that maybe someone from, you know, another White student wrote those. It just kind of made me feel, I don’t know, I don’t really know how to explain it. It just made me feel very bad and very, kind of almost like I wanted to hide under a rock.

Struck by this powerful image, I asked Alexandria, “What do you think you were hiding from?” In her response, she was tongue-tied:

I guess because of the words that were written and the discrimination, it just made me want to hide from either the just kind of who I am almost like being a White person. Just kind of, you want to ... I don’t know how to explain it. You just kind of want to fade in or fade out.

Alexandria's longing to "hide under a rock" and "fade in or fade out" expressed the shame she felt as a White person, embarrassed by the skin color she presumably shared with the perpetrators of a potential hate crime.

In Rachel's second interview, she also recalled a time when she felt like hiding because she was ashamed of her White identity:

For a long time in college ... I hated myself for being White. I was very uncomfortable with being White.... I just remember having those feelings for a long time. It took a long time to work through those and that defined me for a while.

Unlike Alexandria, Rachel's desire to hide from her whiteness went as far as self-loathing; she internalized her discomfort with what it meant to be White and "took a long time" to get through these feelings, which defined her "for a while."

Sally felt a similar form of shame when she and her cohort completed the Privilege Walk activity during a course in their first semester of graduate school. Sally recalled the Privilege Walk as "the first time that [my cohort] had all really thought about how different we all were." She went on to describe her shame:

I really felt so ashamed for where I stood in the Privilege Walk, or every time I took a step forward, and just seeing at the end of it where everybody was. It was so ... it felt like somebody had stabbed me with something. It was hurtful. I just didn't understand what was happening.

Sally's feelings of shame over her physical distance from her peers during the Privilege Walk, coupled with her cohort's high degree of conflict and lack of closure to the activity, was so painful that she did, in a manner of speaking, hide under a rock.

After that uncomfortable day, Sally “kind of compartmentalized it and put it away in a corner, in a sense.” Although she now recognizes her reaction as a form of resistance, at the time she simply sought to distance herself from her own racial identity. Indeed, distancing oneself was a strategy for many participants.

“Distancing myself”: Avoiding other White people, being angry, and seeking the company of People of Color. When feelings of shock, shame, guilt, or anger arose after opening their eyes to White privilege and racism, several participants responded by distancing themselves from other White people, seeking refuge instead with People of Color. For Lucy, after a series of service-learning, coursework, and co-curricular experiences opened her eyes, she decided to spend a winter term studying abroad and doing community service in Chile. Along with a group of 18 to 20 students, a Spanish professor, and a Chilean family, Lucy spent one of her weekends in Chile in the countryside, working together to build a new home. They stayed in an abandoned school with limited water, sleeping on dirty mattresses on the floor. To Lucy’s dismay, some of her peers were very unhappy with the situation:

Most of the people on that trip were White women. I remember being at that school and that whole group of girls was just complaining about how there was no hot water and how the toilets weren’t flushing and how they couldn’t believe how disgusting the place was that we were staying.

The “group of girls” continued to complain despite their reason for being in this rural Chilean village: to build a home for a family of 10 to 12 individuals who slept, ate, and lived together in a single room that Lucy described as “maybe a little bit bigger

than this room.” The room to which she referred, where we sat as Lucy recounted this story during our first interview conversation, was a typical U.S. university conference room that would accommodate 10-12 administrators around a table for a meeting.

The insensitivity of Lucy’s peers enraged Lucy, who remembered “pulling my Spanish professor aside and just bawling my eyes out in frustration because of what they were saying and how they were acting.” Extending the eye-opening moments she had experienced earlier in college, Lucy suddenly realized that McIntosh’s (1988/2004) description of White privilege was coming to life right in front of her: “I remember going on this trip and I was like this is what it means. I was like this is White privilege to a T.” Seeing her anger, Lucy’s Spanish professor advised, “You need to hang out with other people on this trip.” As soon as she had the chance, Lucy took action:

I took my bags out of the room that I was in with [the White girls] and I went into the other room that was mostly all of the girls on the trip that I didn’t know and most of them happened to be Latina. I remember bringing my bags into that room and setting them down on the bed and being mad and saying stuff about the other [White] girls. I just remember one of them [the Latina girls] going, “What took you so long? We were waiting for you to come over here and join us.”

At the urging of a professor, Lucy distanced herself from her White, female peers in favor of spending time with Latina students around whom Lucy did not have to feel ashamed. Lucy recalls that moment as a turning point; it was the first time she had a

“group of friends that were really outside of [her] own racial identity,” and she remains close friends with those three Latina women today.

After a positive experience with switching rooms in Chile, Lucy continued her strategy of distancing herself from White, female peers when engaging in race-related learning in college and graduate school. The next year, she participated in a Civil Rights history tour of the South with a group of students that included African American men in the Black Student Union and White women in an education class. During that trip, Lucy recalled:

I spent more time with the guys than I did with all of the women on the trip because I was frustrated with like where they were in their understanding of like White privilege and what it means, and like how it affects your interactions with others, and how you, you know, build relationships with other people.

As a graduate student, Lucy has continued to keep her distance from White women who lack White privilege awareness and an understanding of its effects on relationships with others: “I’ve always had a difficult time connecting with White women who haven’t really thought about like the privilege that comes with that racial identity. . . . I tend to like distance myself from people who haven’t really thought about that.” Similarly, she shared in her initial interest form, “Sometimes I feel more comfortable interacting with people of other races than I do with White people who do not have the same (or higher) level of cultural competence as I feel I possess.”

Like Lucy, Rachel has often kept her distance from White people while in graduate school, but for different reasons. After completing a class assignment in

which she got to know students in a historically Black sorority, Rachel “fell in love” with the students and “liked everything that [the sorority] stood for,” so she joined the organization. At that time, Rachel was “feeling less comfortable with White people,” a feeling that had first emerged in college and resurfaced in graduate school when some of her White peers did not display the desire to “be uncomfortable” that Rachel considers necessary for becoming conscious of racial privilege. As she explained in her initial interest form, “I have found that [I] identify less with White people because of the ignorance that I experience within some groups. It is still important for me to have conversations with White people, but at times I find it hard to meet some colleagues where they are at.”

Rachel is the only White woman in her sorority chapter. Although Rachel is aware of racial privilege and difference in everyday life and critical of “colorblind” attitudes in White culture, with her sorority sisters “race isn’t a major issue in our relationship.” Indeed, Rachel seemed proud of what she perceived as positive feedback from her sorority sisters about her behavior as a White woman. According to Rachel, her sorority sisters seem to feel that “we’ve gotten so close that our differences aren’t really there.” Most recently, Rachel has enjoyed spending time with her sorority sisters, but she also spends time with Women of Color in her cohort “because it’s nice to be around people who know what you’re thinking” and “it was just so much easier to hang out with her than some of the other women.”

To illustrate what made it harder to hang out with the “other women” – that is, White women – Rachel described a recent cohort dinner in which a White woman said to her “mixed” roommate, “You’re really Black when you watch TV.” Rachel’s

embarrassment was palpable as she related this story. In closing, for Lucy and Rachel, White women were “other” women who caused embarrassment and shame, while Women of Color provided comfort, understanding, and acceptance.

“A double-edged sword”: Resisting and engaging White privilege at identity intersections. When I asked Michelle what led her to participate in this study, she replied that the topic of White women’s racial identity intrigued her:

...Women have a double-edged sword. We are the majority. We are the White Caucasian and so in theory affirmative action does not apply to us, but then there is the gender issue and so for me my ethnicity is not something I have really considered. It is not something I can bring to the table in terms of diversity because that would be the other parts of my identity and not that one.

In this response Michelle gave voice to much of the ambivalence she and other participants displayed when trying to reconcile White privilege with the marginalization they experienced in other dimensions of their identities. Michelle’s ambivalence was apparent in her conflating “women” with “White Caucasian,” without recognizing Women of Color. She also leapt from the concept of being in “the majority” to the notion of affirmative action, and then challenged that concept by reminding herself – and me, as the listener – of “the gender issue,” meaning sexism and gender discrimination. Next, she conceded that because of gender oppression, she had not really considered “ethnicity,” by which she meant the fact that she was White. Finally, she landed on the concept of whiteness as something she could not “bring to the table in terms of diversity” because it was not an area in which she had

experienced privilege. Thus, “oppression” and “diversity” were associated, if not interchangeable, for Michelle.

Among many complexities revealed in these few phrases, the “double-edged sword,” or complex intersection between whiteness and womanhood, emerged as a site for resisting and engaging racial dissonance. Contemplating whether there were gender differences in initial responses to the concept of White privilege among White people, Alexandria concluded that women may have an easier time opening up to this possibility because of sexism and gender discrimination:

The White men that I’ve encountered ... really seem to ... believe that it’s an individual person and not a collective group and that the stereotypes are really true.... I just feel like women tend to be more open and open-minded and willing to..., get to learn or get to know people from other cultures.

Like Alexandria, although wary of stereotyping, several participants shared examples of White women being “more open and open-minded” than their White male peers.

However, from Michaela’s perspective, many White women did *not* identify with the concept of racial privilege at first, because they had been so thoroughly taught to see gender oppression that it was difficult to see anything else. As Michaela explained:

...whereas race may come second because they see their female identity as something that they don’t have the privilege in, so they’re far more focused on that versus something like race, where they’ve never thought about that because they’re, White women are in the privileged status in that category.

Thus, in Michaela's experience, many White women resisted the concept of racial privilege because it conflicted with their experiences of gender oppression.

Sally underscored this complexity even more when she recounted her perspective on the intersection of White privilege and gender oppression, combined with the perspectives of a Woman of Color in one of her classes. According to Sally:

At that intersectionality of White and female, there's privilege and oppression. And at that intersectionality of White and male, there's privilege and privilege. So I think it does make a difference because I think it was easier maybe for me to understand oppression than it was for me to understand privilege, because I do feel oppressed as a woman. But a man would not understand what that feels like.

When I asked Sally if she thought her Peers of Color would agree with her perspective, she paused and then replied:

Maybe. I think if we're strictly talking about the intersectionality of race and gender, they would probably say no because I know we had conversations about what it means to be a Black woman and what it means to be a White woman and ... somebody brought up how we're both women and we both experience some things but I know they all, not retaliated in like a strong negative way, but they all responded to that comment saying, "no, it's different." ... One girl made a specific comment about how we may both be women but people don't change sides of the street when you walk down.

Considering Sally's perspective alongside the perspective of her classmate who was a Woman of Color, it becomes clear that for some White women, it is easier to identify

with gender oppression instead of racial privilege. However, as Sally's classmate pointed out, White privilege protects White women from racialized forms of gender oppression that target Black women as people to be feared when walking down the street.

Michaela offered a different perspective on the intersection of race and gender. For Michaela, gender has not been as salient recently because, in connection with her sexual identity, she has begun to identify with a masculine expression of gender identity. As a result, Michaela contends, "I think that's why I focus more on race, because I see myself as more masculine." Michaela went on to explain that she believes her masculine gender performance has protected her from some of the gender discrimination that her feminine peers have experienced, and accordingly, from the resistance to seeing herself as privileged. Importantly, though, Michaela *had* experienced oppression related to her lesbian identity. In fact, she viewed the privilege she has experienced as a White person and the oppression she has experienced as a lesbian as two sides of the same coin. In her words, when she came out as a lesbian, "one night I went to bed and I was in the majority and the next day I woke up and I was in the minority." Thus, for Michaela, her gender did not generate dissonance. Her lesbian identity did generate dissonance, but she did not respond with resistance.

In addition to gender and sexual orientation, Lucy and Michelle identified social class as an identity through which they experienced both resistance to and engagement with racial dissonance. To restate an earlier finding, as a college student, Lucy sometimes distanced herself from White peers, especially White women, who

did not have her level of cultural competence. However, she also distanced herself from White people who did not share her social class background:

Racial identity is intersecting with social class a lot. And so, I think despite personally identifying as White, I didn't always identify with some of the social class standings that other White women have had, and so I didn't necessarily get along with them on that level, and I would tend toward people of different races who are maybe closer to the same social class as my own.

Although strongly aware of her White identity, Lucy was equally aware of the complex intersections between race and class. As a result, she did not always identify with privileged behavior among her higher social class White peers. Distancing herself from those peers and connecting with Students of Color with a similar class identity made Lucy feel better, yet it also removed her from a White peer group who, as a result of Lucy's absence, had no one to point out the importance of learning to recognize racial privilege.

Michelle also struggled to engage with the concept of White privilege because of her social class identity. In her first interview, Michelle shared a great deal about her family background and experience of surviving childhood sexual abuse, an alcoholic parent, and poverty. As noted above, toward the end of that interview, Michelle mentioned that while she was aware of White privilege now that she was a graduate student, being White was not something she associated with privilege in her earlier life because at that time, she did not feel privileged at all. Michelle's explanation was an example of "putting up walls" when faced with the concept of White privilege.

However, in our second interview, Michelle shared her experience with “Beads of Privilege,” which revealed her tenuous struggle to make sense of White privilege in a way that resonated with the less visible parts of her identity. For Michelle, the “Beads of Privilege” activity quickly turned from an eye-opening experience into a struggle to see and feel White privilege as something relevant to her life. Although she was able to “connect to the idea of privilege” by seeing the beads on her bracelet that represented her racial and educational privilege, the dissonance she experienced was profound:

It was really weird to do [that activity] with my peers because the pieces where I lack privilege are not visible pieces. ...[W]hat my colleagues know about me, like what they have seen of me, what I show of myself, is this happy, bubbly, White personality that loves college, loves learning, and they don't see, [pause], like it's not something that I really share with people.

Michelle went on to explain that from her point of view, the lack of beads representing identities other than race and education made visible the pieces of her past that she typically does not share, and thus made her feel like she was “wearing part of [her] history on [her] arm.” The bracelet “gave people something to question” about her, which made her feel vulnerable and guarded. However, the group ran out of time “to go in depth” in discussion, leaving her with more questions than answers about how to make meaning of White privilege in her life.

In summary, participants sometimes responded to racial dissonance with strategies that both engaged and resisted the dissonance. Through complex emotions of embarrassment, shock, shame, anger, and a desire to distance themselves from

other White people, the White women in this study both resisted and engaged the overwhelming nature of White privilege and racism. Participants also resisted and engaged dissonance when contemplating the intersections between their racial and other social identities that were salient to them, especially gender, sexuality, and social class.

Engaging and Transforming Racial Dissonance: Contemplating the “Call-Out”

Figure 4.10 presents another intersecting response mode, “Engaging and Transforming Racial Dissonance,” which is a theme associated with the core process of *the emergence of racial dissonance*. Once the White women in this study opened

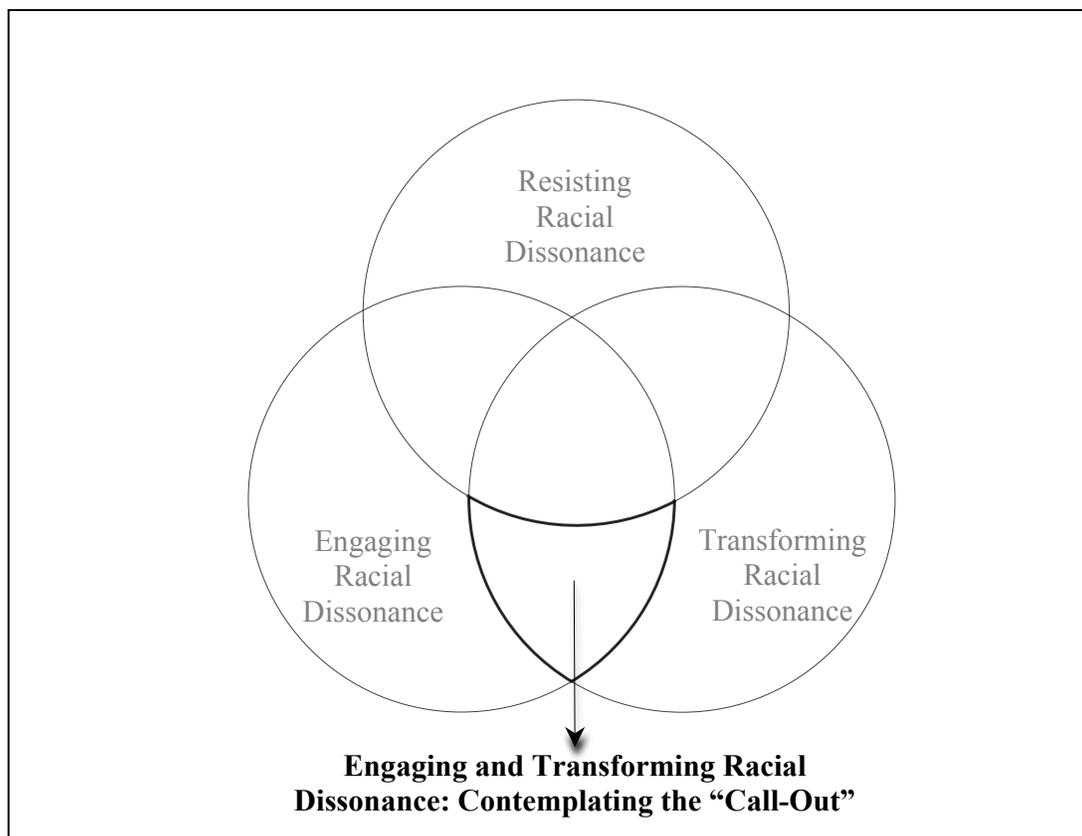


Figure 4.10. Engaging and Transforming Racial Dissonance: Contemplating the “Call-Out.”

their eyes to racism and White privilege, many found themselves in situations where they had the opportunity to “call out” a problematic statement, action, or practice. Sometimes these situations involved a single statement by a single individual, whether a friend, colleague, or family member. Other times, the situations involved the actions of a group, or an institutional policy or practice. Across many circumstances, participants found themselves facing significant racial dissonance when considering whether or not to “call out” the problem. As they engaged the dissonance and contemplated whether a “call-out” would transform the situation, participants struggled with questions of morality, agency, efficacy, and possible repercussions.

Perhaps not surprisingly, participants demonstrated the least dissonance when protesting the use of the N-word among their grandparents, siblings, and high school friends. Becky volunteered for the 2008 Obama campaign, and after he won the election, she made plans to attend the inauguration. In response, her nana replied, “now all those N-words are just going to take over.” Becky recalled this moment vividly:

I remember being like, “*Excuse me?*” That was the first time on a large scale that I intervened on a comment I knew was wrong. There I definitely did. My little brother used to say, “That’s so gay.” I’d be like, “Really? What’s gay about it? Let’s talk about it.” But that was definitely the first time I confronted an elder about their language. I was so mad about it. I worked to get this guy elected. You don’t get to say that about him.

Similarly, Rachel had high school peers who sometimes used the N-word. She remembered “coming to the point where in college, when I could go home and they would say it, I would be like, ‘Can you not say that because it offends me.’ They were always like, ‘why?’ ... ‘It just does.’” Finally, Michelle shared that when she goes home, she will “get onto [her] brothers” for using the N-word (which she chose to say aloud). When they resist her protests, she “usually respond[s] with questioning their assumptions.” Challenging friends and family members who used the N-word was significant for participants; indeed, not all participants who still occasionally heard the N-word from a grandparent had protested. Still, asking family members not to use the N-word represented the low-hanging fruit of “call-outs”; most of the situations participants confronted were more complex.

Stephanie provided an apt summary of the dilemmas she faced when thinking about whether or not it was “safe” to call out the behavior of someone she knew:

I don't know if it is safety per se but how is that going to implicate our relations in the future? Is that going to end a friendship? ... So I guess how much are you going to put yourself out on a limb in a situation like this where someone has said something that is completely inappropriate? Are you willing to take, I guess, that risk to confront them about it?

Stephanie’s questions emphasized the high value she placed on relationships and the moral dilemma raised by the possibility of choosing a relationship over allowing someone to get away with a racially “inappropriate” statement. Thinking it over, she conceded, “I guess the worst thing that could happen is you lose that friendship or that supervisor ignores you in the future if you decide to voice your opinion.”

Weighing those consequences, Stephanie rationalized, “In all reality do you really want to be a friend with someone who is saying something like that?” However, she ultimately could not dismiss the value of relationships: “I have had really good friends who have said stuff that I have refused to confront them on it because I am just super afraid that our relationship is going to change.”

Sally faced a similar dilemma when hearing a family member’s comment over winter break between our first and second interviews. Although she could not recall who made the comment or what it was, she remembered her internal response: ““Yeah, but you don’t understand White privilege.”” Asked what went through her mind at that moment and in similar moments, Sally replied:

In my head, like I kind of cringe a little bit and go, “That was not exactly the right thing that you should have said,” kind of stuff. But I wouldn’t correct it necessarily, especially not with my parents. I feel like they’re just at this stage in life where they’re older and don’t really ... they wouldn’t really get it and they’d think that I had just been liberally educated or something.

From Sally’s point of view, correcting her parents would be a wasted effort because they would not “get it” and would dismiss Sally’s correction as a product of her liberal education even though they, too, had college educations.

Becky also shared that she had struggled with what to do when her parents’ views had troubled her. Although Becky is not a first-generation college student, she emphasized that her parents did not have the opportunity to learn about race, sexuality, and other dimensions of diversity:

I also try to educate them as much as I can, but without making them feel like I don't respect them and their opinions. My parents just don't understand sexual identity. They don't understand racial identity. This is something they don't have the education I have about it, so I don't think that they're prepared for really in depth conversations.

Becky pointed out that there would probably always be “people like that” in her life. From her perspective, “You just have to learn how you can still respect them, and if you respect them, then they'll give you respect back.” In our second interview, Becky described a recent conversation with her mother about White privilege. When her mom expressed views that “definitely stemmed from guilt,” such as “we don't discriminate anymore,” Becky responded, “Listen, Mom, a lot of people think like that and here's the truth. Here's where People of Color are at a disadvantage today because of what happened yesteryear,’ and it was kind of cool because she never thought of that.” Although in this example Becky was able to challenge her mother's views in a way that felt respectful, Becky still questioned whether her mother was “that open to” what Becky had said.

Michaela also struggled with how and when to challenge her parents' racial perspectives:

I think the baby boomer generation, which were my parents, are very much under the, “I've earned everything I've gotten and I've made my way,” so to speak, with this whole idea of meritocracy. And so when I try to talk to them about what I'm passionate about, ...systems of oppression and race and things

like that, it's really hard because I feel like I'm saying, "No, you didn't earn it," and I don't really want to say that.

This conversation was particularly difficult for Michaela to have with her parents and stepparents, who had also been extraordinarily accepting when Michaela came out as a lesbian; as she emphasized when recounting her coming out story to me, "I'm so lucky that they're all so supportive."

Indeed, Michaela's family was complex; thus, so was her experience of engaging and seeking to transform racial dissonance. Michaela often thinks about a recent conversation in which her stepmom referred to Black men as "scary and you couldn't trust them and they were uneducated and they always left." As passionate as Michaela was and "still is" about that conversation, after she "tried really hard" to get her stepmother to see a different perspective, she has come to see it as a lost cause: "It was just a battle that I knew I wasn't really going to win because she wasn't willing to meet me halfway." Adding another layer of complexity, Michaela's other parents, her mom and stepdad, recently adopted a baby boy. When contemplating adoption, they took courses about "what it would be like ... as a White family, to raise a child of a different race." After class, Michaela's mom often called her to "say, 'you'll never guess what I just read.'" Recalling her own eye-opening experiences, Michaela commented, "I thought that was funny, that everything kind of came full circle."

As a final layer of complexity, Michaela recently decided that with family members other than her parents, challenging the myth of the meritocracy is, like the conversation with her stepmother, a lost cause. Michaela explained that this approach is "a much safer option just because they are my family and I don't want to risk

ruining relationships that I really care about.” Furthermore, Michaela, who is an only child and first-generation college student, does not want her family “to think I’m sitting on my master’s degree high horse, which they’ve actually said a few times.” Overall, Michaela found it challenging “to have the conversations that I think are really going to drive me forward with the people that are closest to me.”

Stephanie also shared that she hesitated to correct her parents, but for slightly different reasons. As a first-generation college student, Stephanie worried that challenging her parents’ views would be disrespectful:

If I say this to them are they going to hate me for it? Not that my parents would ever hate me but are they going to be like, “Oh, you have lost touch with your family or you have put yourself above us because you are more educated?”

Both Sally and her brother, a college student, struggled with how to bring home what they had learned in a respectful and loving manner.

Notably, although Alexandria – also a first-generation college student – also showed immense respect and love for her family, she found it fairly easy to challenge them on “diversity issues” but struggled to call out her graduate school peers and professional colleagues. Having fought with her father about his “racist comments” during her childhood, Alexandria shared that “in the recent years we don’t have many arguments about race anymore because ever since he began working with a larger diverse population he’s more open.” However, a recent argument with her sister about a comment that was “demeaning” to women served as an example of Alexandria’s willingness to challenge her family members: “When I’m with ... my

brother and sister and my mom and dad, I'm very much more ready and willing to start talking about different diversity topics especially if one of them makes a comment." What Alexandria found more challenging was to speak up in diversity-related conversations "with people who have much more experience surrounding diversity, like in class or just kind of with different professionals." In those settings, Alexandria hesitated to talk because she doubted she had anything to add to the "really good insight" of experts in the room.

When describing how they made decisions about whether or not to call out words, behaviors, or practices that stemmed from White privilege or racism, most participants recalled examples of conversations with friends or family members. However, Stacy described two powerful, closely linked examples from her graduate assistantship in student activities. The first example concerned her role as an advisor to several student organizations whose members were primarily Students of Color. The student code of conduct required large events like dance parties to implement very strict security procedures. Through advising the Caribbean students organization, Stacy observed the disproportionate number of dance parties hosted by Students of Color, and she became profoundly unsettled by the experience of participating in security procedures for these events. Stacy struggled to find words for her discomfort:

It's, it's crazy. They get patted down. They have to have a ticket. They have to have a ... student ID [from this school] or another, another school ID if you're a guest. Your purses get, they look through their purses. You have to take your hat off. They pat you down. There's two lines. It's kind of intense.

There's security at this dance party, which the term dance party sounds like a good thing to me but the first two minutes when you get there are awful.

For Stacy these intrusive procedures were “awful” not just because they were “kind of intense,” but because they reproduced a long history of racial profiling in the U.S. Through racial profiling, law enforcement practices disproportionately target People of Color and thus contribute to racist stereotypes and inequitable rates of arrest, incarceration, and prison-related violence and death.

After processing her discomfort with the security procedures with two Men of Color on campus – a police officer and her supervisor – Stacy decided to “do something” about the situation:

My goal is to if I can't change it, which I might not be able to, is to leave something in writing to the appropriate person just with that information, even if it's just making them listen, even if they ignore it, because I just feel like I have to do something.

Stacy's determination to “do something” about this institutional policy and its inequitable effects on Students of Color was tempered by her awareness that she “might not be able to” do anything beyond “making them listen,” and even then, she knew they might “ignore it.”

Stacy's awareness of the possible limits of her actions stemmed from a second example from her graduate assistantship. At the beginning of a retreat for student leaders, a Student of Color made a series of disturbing remarks about her own racial identity. Stacy saw this as an opportunity for a developmental conversation with the student and perhaps with her peers. However, when she contemplated whether to

have the conversation, she thought of the climate in her office, which she has experienced as a place dominated by White male cultural norms, where diversity is “not our responsibility” and difficult conversations are avoided. Sensing that she would be on her own and possibly experience repercussions, Stacy chose not to have the conversation with this student. As a result, in her words:

I was just kicking myself because I could have just had this conversation very natural with her and I chose not to because, and maybe that’s me, maybe that’s me seeing where I think I stand in terms of the hierarchy and being really low on the ground. ...I don’t have a lot of support from the top up, so I think that keeps me from having those conversations.

For Stacy, the culture of White male privilege in her office was part of the equation that led her not to speak up, as was being a graduate assistant with little positional power. She struggled to find a way to translate her knowledge about racism and White privilege into action because her work environment was dominated by the very norms she sought to challenge. In her words, “part of that battle is dealing with that power. And I think it is an issue for women...I hate saying that out loud, but it’s an issue.” Becky and Lucy both raised similar concerns as they contemplated their career paths. Becky felt “an end to her tenure” as a graduate assistant at her undergraduate institution because she cannot “make a large scale impact” on diversity issues in that role. Similarly, Lucy shared that gender has become much more salient to her while “working in a hierarchy,” because “having ... a privileged White male at the top of the chain is really difficult to ... fight against when you’re a woman of I think any race in the lower ranks of the system.”

Overall, as participants contemplated whether and how to confront individuals and situations that manifested racism and White privilege, they both engaged and transformed racial dissonance. Participants often worried that taking action would have a price. Beyond the relational and professional risks that deeply worried participants, several individuals expressed discomfort with labels like “the fun police,” which Michaela’s father and stepmother called her in reference to her frequent tendency to bring up racism and White privilege. Similarly, Stacy remarked, “I don’t want to be the person that’s like, ‘Oh, don’t talk in front of [her] because she’s going to tell you you’re wrong,’ or whatever.” Rachel had similar concerns. Reflecting on both the more substantive concerns as well as the lesser discomfort with being labeled, Stephanie reasoned that making the decision to act involves “weighing those risks”:

I think as you grow and as you realize how important this sort of area becomes I think you are more willing to take those risks. I think you are better at confronting them. I think you remove a lot of that chance that you will lose that friend or that supervisor because you know how to confront it appropriately in a good way that will help that person learn and understand from what they have said versus just calling them out.

Indeed, as participants became more adept at responding to racial dissonance, they grew toward helping other individuals “learn and understand.” However, not all of them fully appreciated that the choice to “weigh the risks” of challenging other White individuals was itself a reflection of White privilege.

Resisting and Transforming Racial Dissonance: Walking through the Cookout Crowd

Figure 4.11 depicts “Resisting and Transforming Racial Dissonance,” the final intersecting response mode and theme associated with the core process of *the emergence of racial dissonance*. In some instances, participants resisted racial dissonance even as they sought to transform it. Rose exemplified this strategy with her story of walking through a crowd of African American students at a cookout on her graduate school campus. Located in the South Atlantic region, the university Rose has attended for graduate school is known for the prominence of Greek organizations. Over time, Rose has learned that social events coordinated by Greek organizations are highly racially segregated. Further, unlike historically White Greek organizations, the historically Black Greek organizations lack private space for hosting large social events. Thus, they often host cookouts on the patio behind the student union, and these events draw an enormous crowd of mostly African American students. Tellingly, when there is a cookout, White students – and professors – go out of their way to cut around the patio area rather than walking through the crowd.

One day, there was a cookout on the patio, and Rose found herself facing a dilemma. She spotted her African American male friend from graduate school in the crowd. At previous cookouts, she had decided not to approach him because she would have been the only White person in the crowd; she related her hesitation to her tendency to be a “people-pleaser,” a habit she was trying to break. This time, she decided to walk through the crowd. In her words:

I used to be that person that would walk around instead of walking through.
...If I want to see my friend and I am not inconveniencing anyone else greatly, there's no reason for me to not walk through a crowd of Black people just because they're Black. ...Maybe I'm totally Millennial on this, but...I am also not going to slink around on the outside and pretend that I'm just walking past instead of going directly.

Rose's willingness to be the only White person in "a crowd of Black people" was a promising sign that, like other participants who learned from being in the racial minority in social settings, she might be open to learning more about race. However, it also raised questions about what had motivated her to move through the crowd.

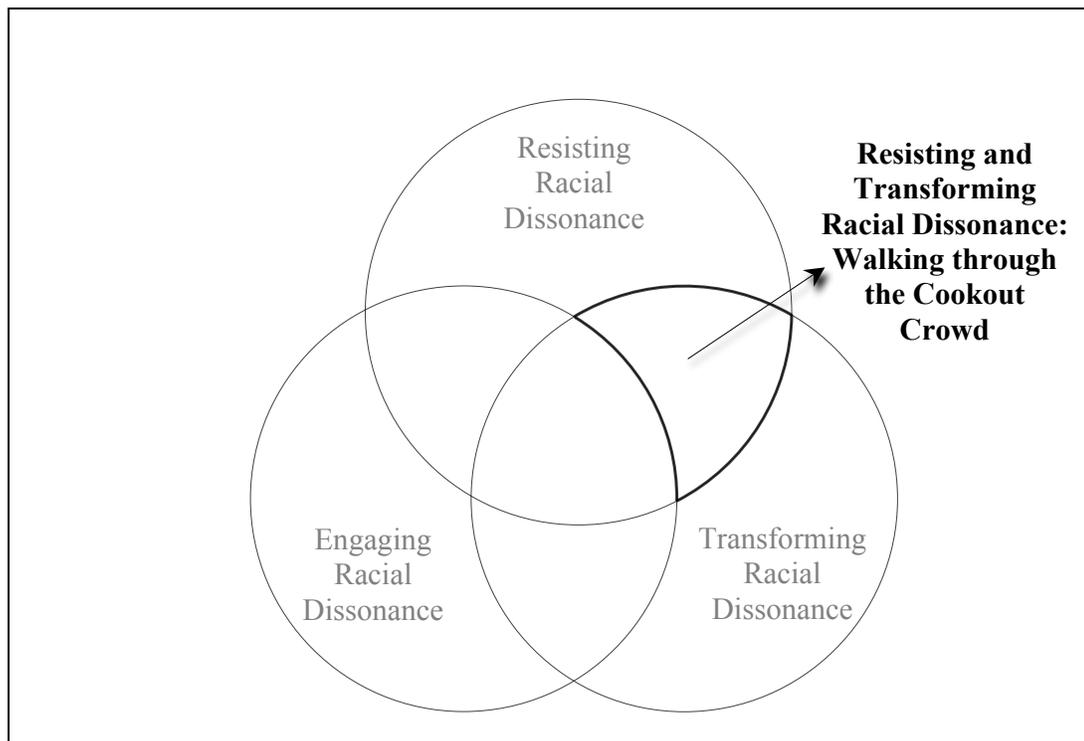


Figure 4.11. Resisting and Transforming Racial Dissonance: Walking through the Cookout Crowd.

Indeed, the question of motivation was what united the modes of *resisting* and *transforming* racial dissonance in this example from Rose's experience. Having just described the Millennial generation as having "bigger fish to fry" than race relations, Rose likely saw walking through the cookout as a way to cut through an obstacle to something she wanted to do: say hello to a friend, bravely challenge the norms of White culture – or, perhaps, perform the public identity of a "good" White woman who was comfortable enough not only to spend time with an African American man in the South, but to walk through "a crowd of Black people" in order to do so. Not having provided any examples of *engaging* racial dissonance, Rose offered this story as an example of *transforming* racial dissonance, yet it also exemplified her unwillingness to confront the deeply entrenched racism and White privilege on her campus. Her action might have appeared noble on the surface, but it seemed to be motivated by denial and did not seem to lead to meaningful learning. Eager to see a friend, Rose was impatient with the idea of walking around the crowd, so she walked through it because she had "bigger fish to fry." Meanwhile, the Black students all around her – also members of the Millennial generation – were gathered on the student union patio for a social event that a White Greek organization could have sponsored literally in their own home.

Michelle and Zoey also resisted racial dissonance while seeking to transform it, in ways that were different from Rose but quite similar to each other. They both struggled mightily with aspects of White privilege and their own racial identity development. They both knew it was important to be knowledgeable about race in order to be effective practitioners, and while they did not question their ability to

support individual Students of Color, they both worried about their discomfort in facilitating racial dialogues with resistant White students when they were still hesitant to engage in such dialogues themselves. In their second interviews, Michelle and Zoey also both confided that they were opposed to race-based affirmative action. However, the two women differed in one important way: Michelle grew up in poverty, while Zoey grew up in wealth.

When describing her struggle to accept White privilege, Michelle related the example of the “Beads of Privilege” staff development activity in which she had participated. Although aware she was supposed to learn particular lessons about White privilege from this activity, Michelle was not sure she had learned them. Recently, when White RAs approached her about their own racial dissonance, Michelle was able to offer empathy and listening skills. However, she has not yet felt comfortable facilitating discussions or other activities that would help her student staff members begin to work through racial dissonance as a group. In Michelle’s words, “I don’t know what to say to my students. I don’t know how I’m supposed to facilitate an activity that even as a 24-year-old student about to finish my seventh year of school I still haven’t figured out myself.” Similarly, as described earlier, Zoey sought to find a way to have racial dialogue with her students that involved “less emotional distress” than her own experiences – including the tears she shed during our interview. From her perspective, White students “cop out” when faced with the concept of White privilege because they think they are being blamed for “everything.”

As another example of resisting and transforming racial dissonance, both

Michelle and Zoey confided that they were opposed to race-based affirmative action, but neither of them – particularly Zoey – felt comfortable sharing their views in class. In sharing her opinion, Michelle began by saying “I don’t really care for affirmative action,” reasoning that “in higher education, we are at a point where affirmative action is not necessary.” She then described the hiring process in her department, in which Human Resources could reject a set of top-tier candidates if none of them was a Person of Color. To Michelle, “that’s bullshit, because to me, race is not the only diverse status that matters.” She pointed out that marital status, “child status” (whether or not they were parents), sexual orientation, and ability were all important dimensions of difference on her campus, emphasizing gay students as well as large populations of visually impaired and hearing impaired students.

Interestingly, after sharing this perspective, Michelle observed: “I guess maybe what I’ve talked myself through here is that affirmative action does frustrate me, but maybe it frustrates me because it’s solely interpreted as based on color and that is not the only diversity that matters.” Thus, Michelle either realized that her previous reaction was not appropriate or that her opinion was not quite as extreme as she had thought. Although she expressed a desire to change hiring practices on her campus to be inclusive of more forms of diversity (a *transformative* response to racial dissonance), her views appeared to come from a place of opposition to the concept of racial equity in hiring practices (a *resistant* response).

For Zoey, affirmative action came up in her diversity class. Although she did not often talk in class because she “just really didn’t know what to say,” Zoey observed that there seemed to be appropriate and inappropriate opinions:

In student affairs, the acceptable, the “correct” position would be we need affirmative action. Because if you’re really an advocate for students, you’re going to make sure they get the opportunity they need regardless of what structures have been set in place that work against them. So, I think that when people disagree with that, it’s almost like, “Are you really a student affairs professional, do you really care about students?” ... “Okay, so maybe you do care about students, but you just don’t care about diversity.” And it’s like, “No.” Even if I, for example, would disagree with affirmative action, I would still consider myself an advocate for diverse populations and I would want to help them and empower them and help them achieve within the structures that are in place.

After Zoey shared this keen observation of what it meant to be “correct” about affirmative action as a student affairs professional, I followed up to ask whether her affirmative action example was hypothetical, or whether it reflected her own views.

Zoey explained:

I think that it needs to be a more holistic conversation, but a lot of times it just gets solely focused on race and that for me is kind of discouraging.

...Colleges and universities aren’t set up to just mirror what is reflected in the national population. They’re set up to provide education to people who are prepared for it.

Zoey then emphasized that institutions should not admit underprepared students without a commitment to helping them prepare; to do so would be setting students up to fail. She also expressed that as an “idealist,” she saw college readiness as part of a

“bigger picture” that included “dropout factories” (i.e., underperforming high schools) and academic programs that prepare Students of Color for college.

As Zoey talked, her language slipped easily from “not prepared” to “minority” to “Students of Color,” and from “dropout factories” to “quality.” Wrapping up her opinion, she remarked, “I’m a very quality-oriented person. ... I think it’s much better to focus on ... the quality of students that you’re admitting and the quality of education they’re receiving.” I then asked Zoey whether, in light of what she thought it meant to be a “correct” student affairs professional, she would have shared her opinion in class. Her response: “Hell, no.” She then explained that since she had now articulated it to me in person, she might be comfortable talking about it with others, but ideally in a one-on-one setting. Zoey knew that if she shared this opinion in a group, “some people would just say, ‘Well, it’s because you’re privileged.’” She agreed: “I admit that’s a flaw of mine. ... Maybe if I had struggled more to gain the education that I have today then maybe I wouldn’t be so idealistic.” At the same time, Zoey really valued her idealism because it had made it possible for her to envision the big-picture reform she believed was necessary for progress in higher education. Overall, she emphasized that “of course” she wanted “more Students of Color admitted” to college (a *transformative* response), but that she did not think it was “as simple as some people might think it is,” implying that she did not fully agree with the statement, “It’s because you’re privileged” (a *resistant* response).

Like Michelle, then, Zoey had ideas for change related to diversifying the student and employee populations in colleges and universities, yet her desire to transform racial dissonance was undermined by her own resistance. Her reasoning

associated People of Color with “low-quality,” “dropout factories,” and “not prepared,” and affirmative action policies with a lack of idealism and a decision to compromise quality. At the same time, she abdicated responsibility for taking action toward the structural changes she had envisioned: “Even if I ... would disagree with affirmative action, I would still consider myself an advocate for diverse populations, and I would want to help them and empower them and help them achieve within the structures that are in place.” Like Michelle, Zoey was more comfortable at the individual level, yet resisted existing structural change efforts.

Alexandria made a statement that captured the essence of resisting and transforming racial dissonance. When listening to Students of Color share their experiences with racism at the White Privilege Conference, she recalled thinking:

Sitting there listening to all of the negative things that have occurred, it almost makes me feel bad and like it’s my fault. At the same time, I know it’s not my fault for things that happened in the past. I’m only accountable for my own actions.

Taking responsibility for one’s actions was of course an admirable impulse, and drowning in guilt and shame forever would not have helped Alexandria learn to engage racism and White privilege. However, statements like “it’s not my fault” and limiting one’s responsibility to one’s own actions are problematic. They imply resistance to the idea that dismantling racism and White privilege will require collective accountability and action. Thus, framing transformation in solely individual terms was a form of resistance.

Summary of “Now I Really See, So Now What Do I Do?”: Resisting, Engaging, and Transforming Racial Dissonance”

To summarize the core process of *the emergence of racial dissonance*, Figure 4.12 illustrates the intersecting modes participants used to respond to racial dissonance. After opening their eyes to racism and White privilege, participants found themselves face to face with racial dissonance and an accompanying array of emotions to manage and decisions to make. Participants *resisted* racial dissonance through denial and anger, *engaged* racial dissonance through a hunger for knowledge, and *transformed* racial dissonance when discovering that they knew “too much not to

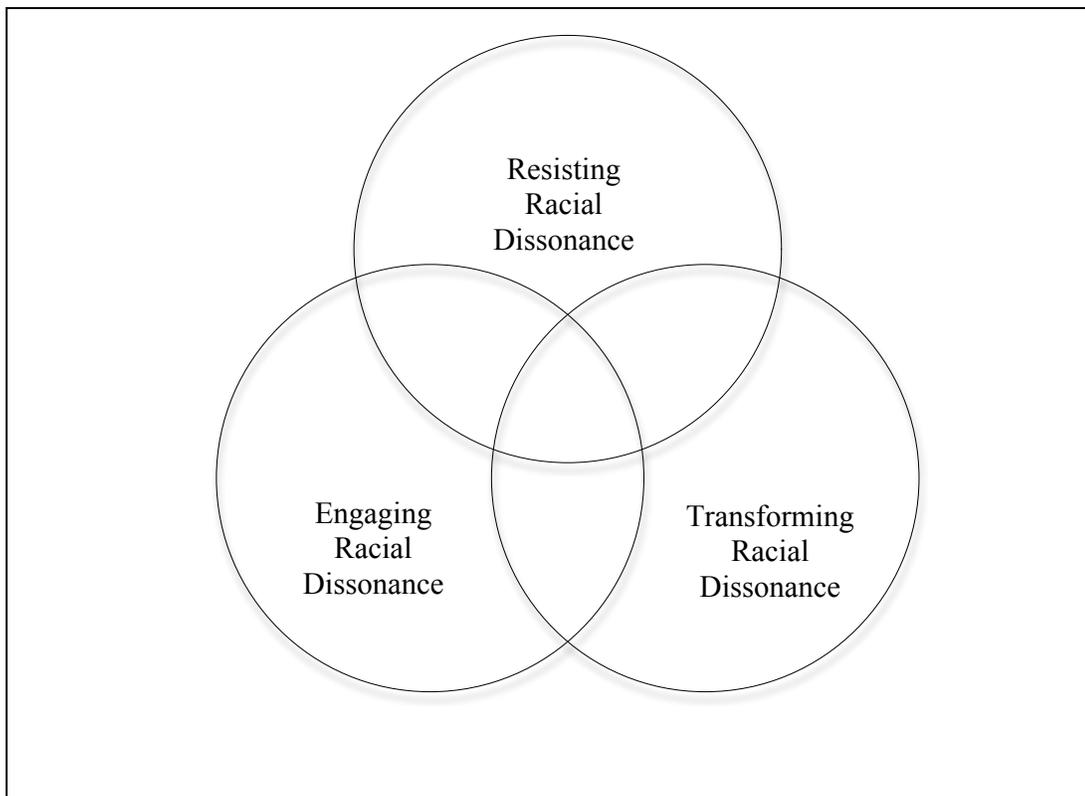


Figure 4.12. “Now I Really See, So Now What Do I Do?”: Resisting, Engaging, and Transforming Racial Dissonance.

do anything.” The White women in this study also responded with strategies that integrated resistance, engagement, and transformation, illustrating the complexities of integrating racial consciousness, identity, and the awareness of White privilege and racism into multiple parts of their lives.

To conclude this cross-sectional representation of the grounded theory that emerged from this study, Rachel offered a reflection that aptly illustrated how challenging it was to stay engaged in the face of racial dissonance. In her words, “conversations can get really intense. I think if you’re new to the idea it can be very overwhelming and hard to handle. Now I can handle it, but it took me four years to be able to.” Importantly, despite having an undergraduate mentor in student affairs and learning about racism from a hall director and peers, Rachel did not feel supported when dealing with racial dissonance in college:

I didn’t feel like I got supported through that journey by any of the Student Affairs people...there just weren’t enough Student Affairs people [available at my college], but there again, no one just asked me, “How are you doing? I noticed that you were crying in this conversation. Are you okay?”

Rachel acknowledged that for student affairs educators, “there’s no right way to do it” with regard to supporting both White students and Students of Color in interracial conversations about race. She emphasized that Students of Color also need support and should not have to bear the cost of White students’ emotional baggage.

Nevertheless, Rachel felt alone during the “journey” of coming to terms with White guilt, despite being an engaged student leader who was well-connected on campus. Although the journey was challenging, Rachel found her way, guided by a deep

desire to learn as much as she could: “At no point did I ever not want to learn anymore.” Beyond her own learning, Rachel also articulated the skills and the desire to transform racial dissonance by educating others.

As Rachel’s experience suggests, for those participants who successfully used transformative strategies in multiple contexts, negotiating racial dissonance made it possible for them to make a developmental shift beyond simply opening their eyes. More so than their peers, these White women were able to adopt a “*conscious lens of Whiteness*” (in Michaela’s words) and articulate a *vision for their lives* (in Becky’s words). This vision integrated consciousness of racism and White privilege, acceptance of racial identity, and willingness to confront racial dissonance in the future. Together, the “*conscious lens of Whiteness*” and “*vision for my life*” constitute the ability to see “*the whole spectrum of things*” (in Rachel’s words), allowing participants to reflect on the past and envision the future from a changed perspective. Thus, “Seeing the Whole Spectrum of Things” is the final component of the emergent grounded theory, “Changing My Perspective.”

Seeing “The Whole Spectrum of Things”: Looking Back and Looking Forward from a Changed Perspective

By working through racial dissonance – through a combination of resistance, engagement, and transformation – participants went beyond “opening their eyes” and continued to change their perspectives in powerful ways. Some participants discovered a “conscious lens of whiteness,” in Michaela’s words, which allowed them to maintain a complex awareness of racism and White privilege in multiple contexts. This lens was double-sided, allowing participants to examine how racism

and White privilege had shaped earlier parts of their lives as well as to consider the present and future. As part of their “conscious lens of whiteness,” some participants articulated “a vision” for their lives that incorporated acceptance of their racial identities, an awareness of their White privilege and its intersections with their other identities, and a commitment to dismantling racism and seeking social justice in their personal and professional lives.

Figure 4.13 illustrates “A Conscious Lens of Whiteness” and “A Vision for My Life.” Together, these two sub-themes comprise the theme of “Seeing ‘the Whole Spectrum of Things,’” part of the core process of “Changing One’s Perspective.” “Seeing ‘the Whole Spectrum of Things’” is presented as a lens that becomes available to participants when they continuously work through racial dissonance. Consistent with participants’ frequent visual metaphors and the core process of *changing my perspective* in this grounded theory of racial identity, the final lens in the illustration represents the conscious lens of whiteness, a progressive lens that, for some participants, also made it possible to see a vision for their lives. Importantly, not all participants had discovered a conscious lens of whiteness, nor had all participants articulated racially conscious visions for their lives. In addition, not every participant made a smooth series of developmental transitions from opening her eyes to wearing a conscious lens of whiteness to having a vision for her life. What the findings suggest is that by working through the racial dissonance that emerged from opening their eyes to racism and White privilege, participants gained access to new and more complex ways of seeing themselves as racial beings, and of viewing the world as a place where change was possible.

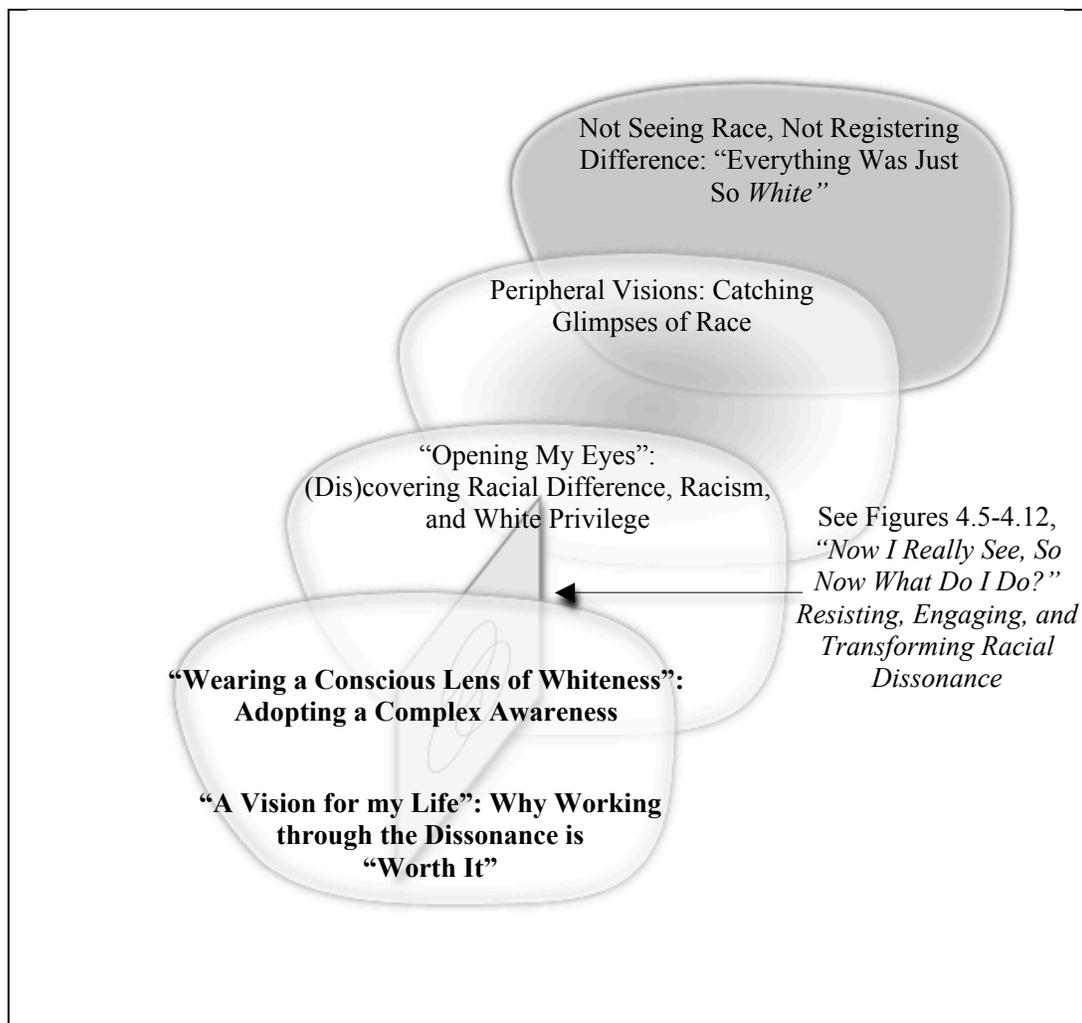


Figure 4.13. Seeing “The Whole Spectrum of Things”: Looking Back and Looking Forward from a Changed Perspective.

“Wearing a Conscious Lens of Whiteness” and “A Vision for My Life”: Why Working through the Dissonance is “Worth It”

Michaela introduced the idea of a “lens of whiteness” when I asked her how her racial identity development had unfolded during graduate school:

I wear my lens of whiteness and I know I wear my lens of whiteness. So what I mean by that is, obviously, I cannot change my race but the way I see things

around me. And the way that I have experienced my graduate program has consciously been with this lens of whiteness that, I see the things around me happening through this lens of racial identity and whiteness and I'm quick to critique and call attention to issues of race.... I'm very quick to talk about that because it's the lens that I see things through. So I'd say I've worn my lens of White awareness throughout my graduate program and that's allowed me to really understand what different contexts mean and what my work with students and my interactions with peers really means.

Michaela's "conscious lens of whiteness" represented an intentional decision to filter "the things around [her]" through her awareness of "racial identity and whiteness" because she valued what that lens could make visible in her work and her life. This conscious lens emerged after spending her college years working through racial dissonance and coming out as a lesbian. By working through the dissonance, Michaela developed a new perspective informed by the intentional decision to "see" whiteness.

Becky introduced a related concept when I asked her what she wished she could tell the 18-year-old White male students at her institution who are highly frustrated by affirmative action. Viewing their frustration as an example of resistance to White privilege, Becky explained that she would encourage the students to "get into it" and engage the dissonance because "it's totally worth it." She went on to articulate why the "roller coaster of guilt and bitterness and forgiveness and self-reflection" has been worth it to her:

Because now I have this really cool vision for what I want to do with my life, and it's about more than me, and it's about more than money. I feel like a lot of people plan their life for themselves and to make money. These are two things that a lot of people do, and those are the two furthest things from my mind. Partly for me, because I've had this powerful journey, but also I want to make things better for everybody, especially people who have had it really rough.

For Becky, the “powerful journey” of working through racial dissonance, paired with awareness of her pansexual identity, led her to the realization that her life could be bigger than herself and bigger than financial success. Her wish for resistant White male college students was that they understand why the “roller coaster” ride was “worth it” – because on the other side was an expansive vision of what they could accomplish beyond themselves and their own pockets.

Importantly, Becky's vision extended beyond student affairs; she planned to join Teach for America to teach in a Latina/o community and work toward a career in “making policy change” in K-12 education. In her words:

I want students who are living below the poverty line to come to school and be excited to learn because they know that can make their lives better. I think education really can do that, and I think that any child is capable of that. I think it takes really strong and caring and passionate people to help them do that, and I want to be one of those people.

College access was an important part of Becky's vision, as was the hope of returning to her undergraduate institution to make change on an administrative level. However,

her own educational path – through student affairs – taught her to see beyond not only her own life, but beyond the student affairs profession and college environment. This vision and her “confidence in her identity” as an anti-racist White woman made her “a more whole individual.”

Other participants shared examples that connected with the idea of a “conscious lens of whiteness” or a vision for one’s life. For several participants, the lens of whiteness formed when they developed a more complex understanding of whiteness in relation to other identities. Stacy’s lens began to form when she completed the final assignment for the student development theory course in which, earlier in the semester, she had read McIntosh’s (1988/2004) “invisible knapsack” article for the first time. In addition to learning to recognize White privilege, Stacy began to reflect on her other identities through this course:

I never really thought about ... how I identify female first. I never even thought about my sexual orientation. There’s my heterosexual privilege. So I think college student development really changed that for me and gave me a language to talk about, gave me a platform to talk about it. And so it was a really interactive process, and then in the final assignment for that course was to place myself in different areas of my identity in terms of the theories, and so in what stages or wherever I was, and so that was when I was able to really tie it all together and say, “Here’s where I am in terms of my race, in terms of my gender.”

As a result of these reflections, Stacy and other members of her cohort became “hyperaware” of privilege and oppression – so much so, that “we can’t turn it off”

even though “sometimes it would be nice to just watch a movie” without the critique. Similarly, Michaela shared that sometimes she wants “to take a day off from it” because it becomes emotionally exhausting to “fight the good fight” every day. However, she does not take breaks because “once you see racism...and once it makes sense to you, you can’t not see it and you can’t go back.”

At the end of our second interview, Sally exclaimed, “I can’t believe I went my whole life not realizing I was so privileged.” She learned in college about what she called “race relations.” In fact, because of a history course, every time she drove on the interstate loop circling the South Atlantic city where she grew up and went to college, Sally thought, “I am driving on a road that was built because of White flight and because of the fear of Black people.” However, until graduate school, she did not make the connection to the role of her own White privilege in that phenomenon – even though she was usually driving on that loop to get to her White family’s home in a White suburb. Now that she was aware of her own privilege and forming a “conscious lens of whiteness,” Sally began to connect the historical structures of racism to her own life and practices:

I’ve always felt a sense of volunteering, you know like giving back to the community and helping those who are less fortunate and things. And there’s a variety of ways obviously to do that. But I think I always wanted to volunteer because it was the right thing to do, like that was just what I knew. But ... I can’t volunteer in serving soup in a soup kitchen now without thinking of privilege and oppression and the social change perspective, whereas before I would have just done it because I thought it was a good thing.

Importantly, Sally emphasized that from the outside, “nobody else would know the difference” between volunteering because “it was the right thing to do” and volunteering out of a desire to create social change. As she explained, “it’s a cognitive structural thing.” However, the “why” did make a difference to Sally in terms of her vision for her life: “I hope I raise kids who like to volunteer and like to volunteer for the social change reason and not just because it feels good or they think it’s right.”

Similarly, Lucy thought about her changed perspective on race would influence her future:

Knowing where I was in high school and then how transformative my four years in college were has certainly made me, one, choose the career path that I have chosen but, two, also think a lot about my own future and raising my own kids and thinking about my upbringing versus what I want to provide them someday.

What made this contemplation possible was having worked through the racial dissonance that emerged during her undergraduate years. By forming mentoring relationships with Professionals of Color at a pre-professional conference and becoming “integrated into some groups,” Lucy found a space for “speaking out against” behavior like the bias incident in her residence hall. She was able to stay engaged in the dissonance even when “not knowing...what to do.” Now, Lucy can see the difference this engagement and those relationships have made:

Now in my grad program and moving towards like being a professional, I think, you know, to be involved with this kind of work and to be passionate

about social justice, there's always going to be that initial emotional response to something. But, that's not like where it ends for me anymore. I think, you know, I've learned like how to be proactive after something like that happens. And so I think ... yes, I think for me now it's more about like educating other people when things like that do occur.

Indeed, educating others was a priority for many participants who had developed a "conscious lens of whiteness" or a vision for their lives.

Finally, another benefit of the "conscious lens of whiteness" and vision for one's life was the ability to reflect on the past while simultaneously imagining the future. In Michaela's words, her "powerful journey" through racial dissonance had led her to a place of being "White but aware and active in continuing to understand my race and what that means for my future, my past, my present, whatever it may be." Similarly, Lucy found that understanding herself as a White woman with privilege allowed her to imagine what her sphere of influence might be: "how I can use my position as a White woman who has a certain amount of privilege to speak out against ...injustice?"

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, I have presented the grounded theory that emerged from this study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master's degree programs. Two core processes – *changing one's perspective* and *navigating racial dissonance* – and their associated themes illustrated a series of developmental shifts in racial consciousness and identity, including the recognition of White privilege and racism.

While *changing one's perspective* is a developmental representation of the grounded theory, *negotiating racial dissonance* is a cross-sectional snapshot of the difficult terrain participants navigated after opening their eyes to racism and White privilege. Incorporating this newfound awareness into their lives was a developmental challenge with emotional, moral, and relational dimensions, as reflected by the complexity of the themes associated with *resisting*, *engaging*, and *transforming* racial dissonance. By working through the dissonance, participants made another developmental shift in the process of *changing their perspective* on race. They were able to see “the whole spectrum of things” by adopting a “conscious lens of whiteness” and forming a *vision for their lives*. The White women in this study who developed the ability to see “the whole spectrum” could both reflect on the past and envision the future. Developing racial consciousness, negotiating racial dissonance, and forming a racial identity – coupled with an understanding of racism and White privilege – helped participants understand themselves as racial beings, daughters, partners, future parents, and college educators who sought to make a difference in students’ lives. Figure 4.14 presents a visual summary of these findings.

Postscript: “Glad I Could Help”

When designing participant recruitment procedures for this study, my goal was to recruit 30 to 50 individuals to complete an initial interest form via Google, which would allow me to select an initial sample of at least 10 but fewer than 15 participants. At my dissertation proposal meeting, committee members offered differing predictions about the likelihood of generating 30 to 50 participants. Although some were optimistic, one committee member cautioned, “This [race] is

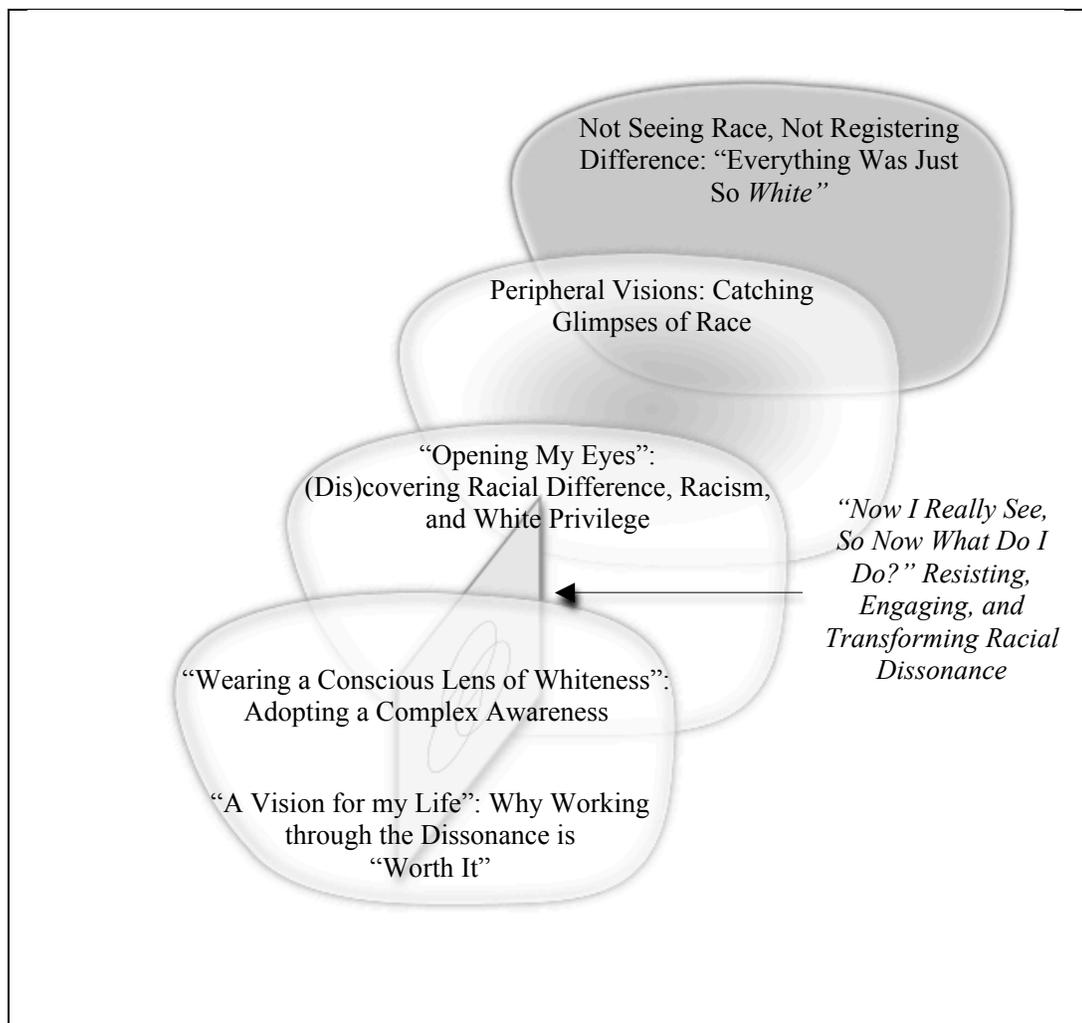


Figure 4.14. "Changing My Perspective": Racial Identity among White Women in Higher Education & Student Affairs Master's Degree Programs.

such a taboo topic [among White people]. How on earth are you going to get anyone to talk to you?"

Taking these words to heart, I was very uncertain about what to expect in late August when I e-mailed my call for participation to CSP-TALK, a listserv for SA/HE graduate preparation program faculty. Four days later, 135 individuals had completed my initial interest form. This response exceeded my wildest expectations. I changed the status of the Google form to "not accepting responses," and even then I received

several emails from prospective participants who were so interested that when they found the instrument disabled, they assumed the link in the email was broken and asked me to send them the URL again so they could enter the pool. I was, to put it mildly, astonished.

In late September, I packed up my car and drove over 3,000 miles in ten days, conducting initial interviews with six of the 11 women whom I had invited to become participants in this study. By November, I had completed initial interviews with all 11 women, conducting all but one in person. I began each interview (Appendix C) by asking the participant about her personal reasons for participating, while the second question was: Why was there such an overwhelming response to the call for participation in this study? Was this response surprising to participants? Was race indeed a “taboo topic”? What might the enthusiasm of prospective participants say about the development and performance of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master’s degree programs?

Participants’ responses to these questions, coupled with the response rate about which I was so curious, revealed much about the ways in which White women in SA/HE master’s degrees programs develop and perform racial identities. Asking these questions launched me “through the Looking-glass” (Carroll, 1903, p. 23) into the worldviews of the 11 White women who participated in this study. Participants’ worldviews offered an illustration not only of what it means to be a White woman preparing to become a student affairs professional, but also how participants performed their racial identities by the very act of choosing to participate in this study. In the words of a participant, “I would love to help.”

One of the primary motivations for participation in this study was “giving back to the field in some way,” as Lucy noted. Zoey asserted that student affairs professionals often sign up for every available opportunity, a primary symptom of what she called the “‘yes’ syndrome.” She described student affairs professionals as “people pleasers” who “are very much helpers and want to help people.” Sally demonstrated this attitude when explaining why she responded to the call for participants: “I would love to help if I can, like help somebody further information for the field and learn more about a topic they’re very interested in.” Sally went on to explain that her desire to help went beyond assisting a doctoral student in her field:

I feel like it’s almost like donating blood, like if I am a match I’d like to do it. ... It’s just one of those things I feel like is really beneficial for lots of people. I mean, I read theories and gain a lot from them and if this turns into something ... and this is what we know about White women’s racial identity and Student Affairs programs, and how we can better inform that and how that better helps Master’s Programs think about that group of students, I think any way I could help ... is why I really wanted to do it.

For Sally, giving her time to this study was like “donating blood” to the entire field. Similarly, Alexandria attributed the large response rate to what she saw as an important characteristic of student affairs professionals: “we care” and value “just being able to give back.”

For several participants, the desire to “give back” to the field specifically had to do with research. Sally noted that faculty members in her graduate program had encouraged her cohort to “get really involved with the field,” and that one way to get

involved was “to do research and to participate in research.” Participating in research was a motivation for several participants not only so that they could help others and contribute to the field, but as a way to gain professional and scholarly experience. Lucy shared that she was “very interested in assessment and research within higher ed” and hopes to pursue her Ph.D. one day. Participating in this study “was a good opportunity for me to be, instead of on the research end, be on the interviewee end and see how it goes.” Similarly, Michelle wanted to participate because “at some point I would hope to be in your shoes, and so to me being able to participate with research is a pay it forward...karma kind of thing. If you help out, then people will do so for you.”

Some participants were motivated because of the topic of racial identity, White identity, or White women. Zoey shared that she was excited to see an opportunity to be part of a study that “fit” her identity: “I just thought it sounded very interesting, especially targeting White women. I was like, ‘Oh, I fit that!’” Similarly, Stephanie knew that very little research had been conducted on White women’s racial identity development and thought it “would be really great to have some research to look back on this in the future.” Stephanie further explained that her interest stemmed from a recent experience:

I am interested in participating in this study because I attended the White Privilege Conference in [large city] this past spring and have really been interested in my role as a White female following my participation in that conference.

Similarly, Lucy wanted to participate “because the topic is something that I am generally passionate about exploring and discussing as well.” She concurred with Stephanie’s observation about the lack of attention to this topic: “[T]here are not too many studies out there about White identity, students in general and their racial identity development ... [or] about professionals discussing their personal racial identity, specifically White women.” Likewise, Michelle volunteered because the call for participants “sparked a lot of curiosity” about the topic of White women’s identity, which she felt was “not really something that [was] ever explored.”

Also related to gender, Rose offered some unique comments about the high response rate for this study, which she attributed not only to gender, but to the Millennial generational cohort. Regarding gender, Rose opined, “[t]o be relatively stereotypical, I think most women would be willing to help out another woman” when it came to “answering questions and that kind of thing.” Rose surmised that had the study focused on male students, the response rate would not have been the same because White men “typically...haven’t been challenged enough in their lives to discuss it and be comfortable discussing it.” As for the role of generational cohort, Rose offered the following explanation:

I think the Millennial generation, however you define that, is a lot more willing to speak and that kind of thing, regardless of the topic. Like topics that we don't consider sensitive anymore, but were historically sensitive.

From Rose’s perspective, large numbers of White women might have volunteered to participate in the study because race was no longer a “sensitive” topic and because they were eager to help another woman.

Whether as a motivation for or unintended outcome of participating in the study, several participants valued the opportunity to reflect on themselves and their identities. Becky noted in her initial interest form that reflection had been an important part of her identity development as an undergraduate student. Similarly, participating in the study was “really neat and it’s definitely helped me to reflect even more.” Michelle made a similar comment when I told her how much I had learned from her story: “I’ve learned a lot too. It’s been very self-reflective. I kind of have talked myself through some of my thoughts.” Zoey and Alexandria shared that they tend to keep fairly quiet in diversity-related conversations, and Stephanie said of herself generally that she tended “to be quiet in class.” However, in this study participants were anything but quiet as they shared their race-related experiences.

Indeed, the opportunity to talk about race in a one-on-one interview conversation or “on a survey” (the initial interest form) was appealing to several participants because it offered a relatively comfortable environment for exploring racial issues. Zoey explained that although “diversity issues and social justice” are important topics in SA/HE master’s degree courses, White women may not feel comfortable discussing those topics:

the discussion, the materials we read, and the different identity development theories that we study kind of makes diversity a hot-button issue and one that a lot of White women want to understand more about, but maybe depending on what their background was maybe they haven't been exposed to it as much or maybe it's not something they have talked about as much.

Thus, participating in this study may have offered an “in” for some White women who were eager to join the conversation but were not sure how to begin.

On a slightly different note, Stephanie valued the opportunity to participate in the study because she *had* been exposed to White privilege but had limited opportunities to talk about it in the context of her work as an emerging professional:

I know I want to talk about my experiences I have had and really not had the opportunity to talk about them, especially face to face beyond what we have done in classes so far in discussions, which has been rather, I guess, limited. Especially if we talk about White privilege, I think there is only a chapter. I can actually remember it specifically. It was like chapter 13 in Evans’ book [Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010] and we talked about it. I think there is a paragraph, a couple of paragraphs on it.

Stephanie’s comments suggest that White women who have experience with the concept of White privilege have limited opportunities to talk about it in graduate school. Meanwhile, Zoey’s comments suggest that White women who have limited experience talking about White privilege and related issues may want to understand more about race, diversity, and social justice but fear talking about these issues openly when given the opportunity to do so. This dichotomy echoes a suggestion from Lucy about White women’s motivations for participating in this study:

I think for a lot of women it could be that a lot of people have either had a lot of experience talking about race and racial identity or that a lot of them haven’t had the opportunity or haven’t thought about a lot of that and this was

kind of a difference experience for them or a way to challenge their thought process.

Indeed, Stephanie's and Zoey's dichotomous perspectives aptly illustrate Lucy's idea.

Consistent with this dichotomy, many participants attributed their own participation and the high overall response rate to an interest in learning about diversity and social justice, regardless of the amount of experience they had with these topics. For example, Alexandria commented, "With student affairs in general, I feel like we're more aware of diversity and inequalities." Indeed, in her own initial interest form, Alexandria wrote, "I love diversity!" Michaela indicated in her initial interest form that she hoped to participate because she was passionate about relevant topics:

I love learning, education, and have a strong passion for critical theories, including critical race theory. I have done extensive reading and engagement regarding racial identity, and would love to participate in a study surrounding such an important topic.

Similarly, Rachel wrote in her initial interest form that she actively sought to engage with issues related to White privilege: "I constantly seek opportunities that challenge me in this topic." Likewise, Zoey, who had not been exposed to "the social justice perspective" before graduate school, linked her participation to learning more:

It's just something that I have been thinking about recently and trying to figure out more about the social justice perspective and how I can use my understanding of race and my experience with people from different racial backgrounds to help them in the college setting.

Thus, Zoey saw this study as an opportunity to develop as an educator who would work with students whose racial identities differed from her own.

* * *

Overall, participants' reasons for participating in this study, along with the explanations they provided for the high rate of response to the call for participation, illustrate the very racial identities this study sought to explore. Findings in this concluding section of the chapter suggest the White women in SA/HE master's degree programs may be eager to give back to the student affairs profession, help others by contributing to research, and gain professionally valuable research experience. Participants in this study showed an interest in the racial identity of White women as a research topic because they instantly recognized themselves in this topic, were curious about what might motivate a researcher to investigate "their" population, and in some cases, perceived a gap in student development theory relevant to the experience of being a White woman. One participant attributed the high response rate to gendered dimensions of "helping" another (White) woman, along with the tendency of the Millennial generation to talk about anything, even topics deemed "sensitive" in earlier times.

Findings also suggested that White women in SA/HE programs developed and learned about White identity through reflection, and they appreciated the opportunity to reflect through individual writing or in a one-on-one setting with an avid listener. White women who had never talked about race, diversity, and social justice did not dare take advantage of discussion-based opportunities to do so, while those who had experienced such conversations found that graduate school did not provide enough

opportunities to continue the dialogue. Finally, regardless of prior experiences, White women in SA/HE master's degree programs appeared to be open to learning about diversity and social justice.

Examining participants' motivations generated powerful illustrations of several aspects of the grounded theory presented in this study. These aspects included participants' deep desire to help students and colleagues; their hunger for knowledge about race, privilege, oppression, and the experiences of Students of Color; and their relative inexperience in talking about race, diversity, and social justice among their professional colleagues. These findings hint at some of the implications of this study for faculty and practitioners who work with graduate students and new professionals in student affairs. However, Chapter 5 will present a comprehensive discussion of findings from and implications of this grounded theory study of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master's degree programs.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The previous chapter presented an emerging grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE master's degree programs. This chapter discusses the emerging theory as it relates to the research questions guiding this study, relevant literature, and implications for SA/HE graduate preparation programs, theory development, and future research. Next, the chapter presents an analysis of limitations and strengths of this study. I conclude the chapter by sharing how my own perspective has changed while conducting this study.

Discussion of Emerging Grounded Theory in Relation to Research Questions

This section explores the emergent grounded theory in relation to the four research questions framing this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this grounded theory study was to investigate racial identity among White women enrolled in SA/HE master's degree programs. Specific research questions included:

1. How does racial identity develop over time among White women?
2. How do White women construct racial identities?
3. In what ways do educational and professional experiences, including those that occur in SA/HE master's degree programs, influence White women's racial identities?
4. In what ways do multiple layers of social context, including power and privilege, influence White women's racial identities?

In what follows, I discuss the emergent theory in relation to these research questions.

How Does Racial Identity Develop Over Time among White Women?

The emerging theory suggests that for White women in SA/HE master's degree programs, the formation of racial identity is a complex developmental process that is intertwined with racial consciousness and racial dissonance, unfolds throughout the lifespan, and involves action, reflection, and foresight. Findings also strongly suggest that racial identity intersects with other dimensions of identity and domains of development. I discuss each of these characteristics in turn.

Participants articulated a developmental process, *changing my perspective*, through which they became racially conscious, learned to recognize racism and White privilege, navigated racial dissonance, and formed a racial identity characterized by a “conscious lens of Whiteness” and vision for their lives. At first, participants were not conscious of race. Then, through interactions and relationships with male and female family members and Peers of Color, participants became peripherally conscious of racial difference and racism. Through college, the working world, and graduate school, the White women in this study had eye-opening experiences through which they became conscious of racism and White privilege. Then, participants’ newly-found racial consciousness led to racial dissonance, and participants responded with strategies of resisting, engaging, and transforming the dissonance. Responding to dissonance was an active process spanning multiple relationships and educational and professional contexts. By navigating dissonance, the White women in this study became more deeply conscious of racism and White privilege, adopting a “conscious lens of Whiteness” that allowed them to identify with whiteness, articulate a desire to make a difference, and envision a racially conscious life. Importantly, participants’

conscious lenses of whiteness and visions for their lives looked very different depending on their modes of response to racial dissonance – i.e., resisting, engaging, transforming, or an intersection of two modes. Resistant responses made it more difficult to gain access to a conscious lens, or perhaps made that lens cloudier, whereas transformative responses made it easier to see “the whole spectrum of things” through a conscious lens of whiteness or forming a vision for one’s life. Thus, racial consciousness, dissonance, and identity were intertwined in the process of changing one’s perspective.

In addition, when articulating the process of changing their perspectives, participants used visual metaphors to describe a series of developmental shifts in the awakening of racial consciousness, negotiation of dissonance, and formation of racial identity. I illustrated each of these shifts as a new, transparent “lens” through which participants saw themselves and the world around them, and through which they understood themselves to be perceived by others. The White women in this study accumulated new lenses as they made developmental shifts. As they acquired each new lens, they saw how race, White privilege, and racism influenced the world around them with increasing depth and clarity. In addition, as they came to understand themselves more fully as racial beings, participants hoped to be seen as more racially aware by others. They also sought to educate family members, students, and colleagues, wanting to facilitate the kinds of powerful realizations that had led to their own development. Identifying as a White person became a less dissonant experience for participants once they had begun to come to terms with White privilege and understand racism.

Findings suggested that the process of changing one's perspective had unfolded throughout participants' lives. For the most part, race was not a salient part of participants' childhoods. However, from childhood through high school and, in some cases, parts of college, there were instances in which race filtered through participants' fields of vision and into their consciousness through relationships with male and female family members, as well as Peers of Color. At the time of the study, participants' most recent and salient developmental shifts involved "Opening My Eyes," "Now I Really See, So Now What Do I Do?," and "Seeing the Whole Spectrum of Things." By working through the dissonance that emerged after opening their eyes, participants gained access to a "conscious lens of Whiteness," which allowed them to see in retrospect that they had been forming White racial identities throughout their lifetimes, even while not conscious of doing so. They also became able to envision their future lives as educators, daughters, friends, and mothers who would embody an understanding of racial identity and a desire both to acknowledge and to dismantle White privilege and racism throughout their lives.

For the White women in this study, the processes of becoming racially conscious, negotiating racial dissonance, and forming a racial identity intersected with developing other dimensions of social identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Social class identity was particularly salient for participants who identified as lower class and upper class, while sexual identity was prominent for participants who identified as lesbian, pansexual, and "sexual" (with an openness to relationships with people of multiple genders). In addition, identifying as an aspiring social justice ally and an ally to LGBTQQIA communities was salient to

some participants. Having siblings and other family members with disabilities was also an important part of some participants' lives, as was acknowledging the influence of a learning disability.

Finally, the process of forming a White racial identity was inextricably tied to other domains of development, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and epistemological domains (Baxter Magolda, 2009). Participants in this study developed racial identities in the context of psychosocial development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) and other dimensions of social identity (Abes et al., 2007; Jones & McEwen, 2000). They also formed more racially conscious relationships with family and friends, and they identified and connected with mentors who challenged and supported their thinking about race. In addition, participants developed more complex approaches to knowledge about race and difference as they encountered racism and White privilege, navigated racial dissonance, and formed racial identities and visions for their lives as racially conscious educators and professionals. Importantly, the process of developing racial consciousness, negotiating racial dissonance, and forming a racial identity also seemed to facilitate the development of what Reason, Scales, and Millar (2005) described as "moral courage" (p. 62). Reason et al. (2005) described moral courage as necessary in order "to act differently from friends and family who may harbor feelings of racism" (p. 62) or even to be a "race traitor" (p. 62). Moral courage emerged in this study among participants who *engaged and transformed* racial dissonance (i.e., "Contemplating the Call-Out"), as well as those who *transformed* racial dissonance (e.g., "I Know Too Much Not to Do Something"). These participants exhibited courage when making moral decisions

related to race. In the face of opportunities to challenge racism and White privilege, they contemplated and took action because they believed it was the right thing to do.

How Do White Women Construct Racial Identities?

The emerging grounded theory suggests that for the White women in this study, racial identity is not merely a developmental process; White women also actively construct racial identities. The process of changing one's perspective included active developmental shifts, the negotiation of dissonance, and decisions about when to take action, dovetailing with the notion that "identity is a constructed and open-ended process" (Yon, 2000, p. 13). In particular, the negotiation of racial dissonance produced actions of resistance, engagement, and transformation. These productive actions in turn constituted individual *performances* of White racial identity.

The conceptual genealogy of performativity has roots in feminist theory. Describing Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity, Wilchins (2004) explained that "what we see as gender is performatively produced" (p. 134). More specifically, Butler (1999) argued that gender "operates as an interior essence that might be disclosed, an expectation that ends up producing the very phenomenon that it anticipates" (p. xiv) through repetitive and ritualistic performances. Without delving into Butler's (1990, 1999) problematization of identity, findings from this study suggested that for participants in this study, White racial identity was not an interior essence but rather a carefully orchestrated performance, especially in response to racial dissonance. Together, participants' individual performances constituted a collective performance of racial identity among the White women in this

study. Through this collective performance, the emerging grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE programs illustrates Yon's (2000) argument that "[i]dentity categories are...claimed and resisted at the same time" (p. 56). Each White woman in this study attended to educational and professional influences, as well as other layers of social context, when choreographing the performance of racial identity.

How Do Educational and Professional Experiences Influence White Women's Racial Identities?

For the White women in this study, college, work experiences outside of student affairs, and graduate school were influential in the process of becoming racially conscious, navigating racial dissonance, and developing and constructing racial identity. College coursework, particularly in the social sciences (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), made a difference to participants through exposure to concepts like structural inequality and White privilege, the history of racism in the U.S., and social identity. These concepts came to life through service-learning (Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorski, 2005), and participants' college coursework also provided opportunities to form relationships with faculty members (Quaye, Tambascia, & Talesh, 2009) who were passionate about race and social justice. Study abroad experiences opened participants' eyes to the diversity of the human experience around the globe (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011), an appreciation they brought back to the U.S. and their college experiences.

Participants also opened their eyes to racism and White privilege in college through co-curricular and pre-professional experiences. Through student

government, multicultural student organizations, resident assistant (RA) roles, and participation in diversity-related residential programming (Sallee, Logan, Sims, & Harrington, 2009), the White women in this study encountered new ideas, individuals, and identities that challenged their worldviews and created racial dissonance. Co-curricular experiences also introduced participants to the field of student affairs (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008) through relationships with mentors and students, work experience, and pre-professional conferences. Many of these relationships and pre-professional experiences opened participants' eyes to racism and White privilege, often by complementing lessons learned in their classes.

Work experience between college and graduate school led to eye-opening experiences for two participants. Through full-time work in low-income communities and Communities of Color, these two White women came to understand the complex relationship between race and class. This understanding led them to reflect on their own social identities and educational experiences, discover the realities of racism, and recognize what they would later – in graduate school – learn to describe as White privilege.

Finally, graduate school influenced the process of changing one's perspective by providing eye-opening experiences, environments for navigating racial dissonance, and the opportunity to adopt a conscious lens of whiteness and form a vision for one's life. Through coursework, participants read about racial privilege, completed assignments through which they reflected on their racial and other social identities, participated in difficult dialogues with and learned from the experiences of their cohort members, and found role models in their faculty members and supervisors.

Through graduate assistantships, some participants had powerful professional development experiences such as joining colleagues and students in difficult dialogues about privilege and oppression, leading international short-term immersion trips that brought them face to face with their racial identities, and teaching RAs about race and identity as RA course instructors and supervisors. Some participants also advised Students of Color, attended the White Privilege Conference, and two participants completed summer internships in racially diverse urban environments that differed greatly from the predominantly White, rural environments in which they had grown up, had attended college, and were attending graduate school. Although these experiences varied greatly among the 11 participants and thus, the graduate programs in which they were enrolled, graduate experiences offered many opportunities to open one's eyes to the realities of White privilege and racism.

How Do Multiple Layers of Social Context Influence White Women's Racial Identities?

For the White women in this study, many nested layers of social context (Renn, 2003) influenced racial consciousness and racial identity. The regions of the country in which participants were raised illustrated the geographic specificity of race relations and racial and ethnic diversity in the United States. Participants came to appreciate this specificity when they moved to other regions with their families or for graduate school, and when they traveled within and beyond the United States. Social geography was also important, particularly in participants' early recollections, when they learned about race and difference in rural, suburban, and urban contexts that sent

different messages about who should live where, and especially about what and who was considered “safe.”

The grounded theory from this study also points to the influence of social, political, and generational contexts on the formation of racial consciousness and racial identity. Participants learned about race and racism through family members’ work environments. Male and female family members worked in construction, mining, public schools, and group homes, and they served in the military. These family members transmitted, reinforced, and in some cases challenged and unlearned a range of attitudes toward People of Color. The complexities of immigration policy became real for Stephanie through the farm and factory work she did while growing up and in the summers in college. Becky began to take her grandmother’s occasional use of the N-word personally after working for the 2008 Obama campaign and voting for him in her first presidential election. Finally, Rose identified with the Millennial generational cohort and what she saw as a generational focus on issues “bigger” than race relations, such as climate change. Together, these contexts influenced the development and construction of racial consciousness and identity among participants, emphasizing the inextricability of identity and context (Jones, 1997; Jones & McEwen, 2000).

Finally, although not always easy to detect, privilege and power emerged as social contexts that influenced racial consciousness and identity. Consistent with the discussion of surveillance (Brookfield, 2005; Foucault, 1978/1990) in Chapter 2, in this study, power revealed itself in ways that were often masked or only partially visible to participants, but more visible to me. Guided by Charmaz's (2005) questions

about resources, hierarchies, and policy and practice, I relied on the methodological foundations of grounded theory for social justice and discovered that when power emerged, White privilege – in the form of “unearned advantage” and “conferred dominance” (McIntosh, 1988/2004, p. 107) – also was present. Stacy offered an example that illustrated the interwoven nature of power and White privilege as influences on racial identity among the White women in this study. While in her assistantship setting, Stacy felt like “kicking herself” after not speaking up when a Student of Color made troubling comments about her own racial identity during a retreat for student leaders. Stacy’s choice not to intervene was in part a reflection of her perception of her workplace as hierarchical and male dominated, and where she felt she was under surveillance as a woman and new professional who was “really low on the ground.” However, Stacy also “could have just had this conversation” with the student fairly easily. Although her experience of power as working *against* her led Stacy not to speak up, the result was a missed opportunity that in turn reinforced the power associated with White skin privilege – namely, not to speak up about racism when it is inconvenient to the speaker.

Discussion of Emerging Grounded Theory in Relation to Existing Literature

This section of the chapter discusses the emerging grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs in the context of the theoretical and empirical literature presented in Chapter 2, in which I presented a review of literature related to racial identity among White women in SA/HE master’s degree programs. As readers will recall, in Chapter 2, consistent with grounded theory methodology, I approached the literature with the intention of identifying

“sensitizing concepts” (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 2006; Kearney, 2007) that informed my process of designing the study. I envisioned relevant literature as a series of nested layers of social context (Renn, 2003) surrounding racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs. These layers included power, White privilege, and Whiteness; educational and professional influences; foundational theories of student identity development; identity development theories that address women and gender; and racial identity development. Within racial identity theory, I introduced influential approaches to White identity development as well as related theories, including White racial consciousness, racial justice ally development, and privileged identity exploration. I concluded the chapter with a review of literature about whiteness among women.

With these areas of literature in mind, I have structured this discussion in the following way. First, I discuss the findings from this study in light of literature on women and Whiteness. Next, I explore literature that examines educational and professional influences on White identity. Then, I focus in some depth on the literature on White racial identity and related constructs. Finally, I discuss participants’ eagerness to “help” by joining this study and what that eagerness suggests about the complex intersections of race and gender identities among White women.

Women and Whiteness

In *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, Frankenberg (1993) conducted a life history study with 30 White women, seeking to examine women’s lived experiences of whiteness through an intersectional and

structural critique. Several findings are noteworthy in relation to this study. First, Frankenberg (1993) did *not* find that “that one experience of marginality...led white women automatically toward empathy with other oppressed communities” (p. 20). Second, White women occupied a unique standpoint characterized by racial privilege, and from this standpoint “racism [was] made structurally visible” (p. 201). Third, the culture of whiteness was a slippery phenomenon that shifted “from ‘no culture’ to ‘normal culture’ to ‘bad culture’ and back again” (p. 202). In particular, the White women in Frankenberg’s (2003) study longed for “a bounded, nameable culture” (p. 230) with which to affiliate as a way to de-emphasize the dominance conferred on them by White skin privilege. Finally, related to this desire to de-emphasize dominance, Frankenberg (2003) found that discussing whiteness with participants “generate[d] areas of memory lapse, silence, shame, and evasion” (p. 23) for participants as they sought to avoid confronting racial privilege.

The emerging grounded theory in this study both affirms and challenges Frankenberg’s (2003) findings. At first, some White women who identified with experiences of oppression had trouble recognizing how racial privilege had shaped their lives. Michelle, in particular, struggled with dissonance around the idea of privilege as she reflected on childhood experiences of poverty, abuse, and having an alcoholic parent. For Michaela, however, grappling with the concept of White privilege through her multicultural studies coursework in college *resolved* some of the dissonance she was experiencing related to her emerging lesbian identity. The intersection of privilege and marginalization helped Michaela understand and come to terms with how she related to the world around her: “one night I went to bed and I

was in the majority and the next day I woke up and I was in the minority.” For the women in this study, having a marginalized identity did not necessarily result in empathy for People of Color, yet it also may have helped some participants to come to terms with intersecting identities through which they experienced both privilege and oppression.

In addition, the grounded theory that emerged in this study provided a notable counterexample to Frankenberg’s (2003) finding that White women with marginalized identities could not necessarily empathize with People of Color. In my study, several participants appeared to *over*-empathize with People of Color or find other ways to minimize racial difference. Participants who proudly shared that race was “not an issue” in their friendships with People of Color, and who avoided White peers in favor of spending time with Peers of Color, demonstrated a “colorblind” attitude that mirrored Frankenberg’s (2003) findings. Failing to see racial difference, the White women in my study overlooked the racial privilege embedded in their interactions and experiences. In addition, Rose’s decision to walk through the cookout crowd minimized the White skin privilege that allowed her to make decisions about when and where to interact with her Peers of Color. Similarly, Sally’s classmate pointed out fundamental racial differences between White women and Women of Color in the lived experience of sexism, causing Sally to realize she had taken her racial privilege for granted when considering how sexism influenced women’s lives. Participants’ inability to recognize how racial privilege intersected with their experiences of marginalization illustrated “infantile judgment” (Lugones, 1990, p. 53), or “a dulling of the ability to read...texts and situations in which race and

ethnicity are salient” (p. 53), which is a quality often displayed by White women in regard to race.

However, the White women in this study also had eye-opening experiences that shattered their naïveté and, after negotiating significant dissonance, often led to more mature judgments (Lugones, 1990). As children, participants did not see race, which was reminiscent of Frankenberg’s (1993) concept of “no culture” (p. 202). Through peripheral visions of race, participants came to understand whiteness as “normal culture” (p. 202). Then, in college and beyond, participants opened their eyes and recognized that they embodied particular social standpoints characterized by racial privilege, which in turn made racism more visible (Frankenberg, 1993). The sudden visibility of racism and White privilege constituted a shift from “normal culture” to “bad culture” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 202) as participants recognized their complicity in a system of unearned advantage (McIntosh, 1988/2004). In response to the dissonance that emerged from recognizing whiteness as “bad culture,” participants used strategies of denial and avoidance to distance themselves from the culture they no longer saw as “normal.” Related to the concepts of “no culture” and “bad culture,” Zoey, Alexandria, and Rachel all expressed feelings of wistfulness with regard to being White and the perception that they did not have an ethnic or cultural identity. Describing whiteness as “a blank board” and a “stark white room,” Zoey in particular gave voice to Alexandria’s admission of having always felt “a bit lost” when it came to cultural identity.

Despite the resonance with many of Frankenberg’s (1993) findings, the grounded theory that emerged from this study introduced a different dimension to the

concepts of “no culture,” “normal culture,” and “bad culture” (p. 202). Namely, by navigating racial dissonance, participants made developmental shifts that reflected an understanding of racial privilege, leading them to recognize whiteness as what could be called “privileged culture.” For many participants, that recognition facilitated the acquisition of a “conscious lens of whiteness” and the formation of a vision for one’s life. Participants’ perceptions of “no culture,” “normal culture,” and “bad culture” corresponded to the discursive “moments” Frankenberg (1993) described as “essentialist racism” and “color-blindness” (a combination of “color evasiveness” and “power evasiveness”) (p. 14). Through these discourses, Frankenberg (1993) argued that White women’s understanding of race shifted “from ‘difference’ to ‘similarity,’ and then ‘back’ to difference radically redefined” (p. 14).

The notion of “difference radically redefined” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 14) is similar to the “conscious lens of whiteness” that emerged in this study. In Frankenberg’s (1993) study, some participants embodied “race cognizance,” a discursive repertoire in which they were “more conscious of their perspectives” (p. 159), than those who embodied discourses of essentialist racism and color- and power-evasiveness. Similarly, the White women in this study who formed a “conscious lens of Whiteness” were more aware of their perspectives and how those perspectives changed through eye-opening encounters and the negotiation of dissonance. However, unlike Frankenberg’s (1993) study, the grounded theory that emerged in this study was less an illustration of discursive locations than of developmental shifts. What emerged in this study was not so much a schema that assigned individuals to locations on a developmental continuum; rather, findings from

this study illustrated individuals' developmental shifts as they became conscious of race, formed racial identities, and developed the meaning-making capacity (Abes et al., 2007) to recognize White privilege.

Finally, echoes of “memory lapse, silence, shame, and evasion” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 23) resounded in the grounded theory that emerged from this study. Sally offered a poignant example of a memory lapse when she literally forgot to mention an African American peer who had been part of her life every day in high school. She tried to evade her discomfort and shame by laughing over an anecdote about a minor car accident, illustrating the racial dissonance that emerged through the process of reminiscing about race relations in her high school. In addition, participants manifested shame and evasion through resisting, engaging, and transforming the racial dissonance that emerged in response to opening their eyes to White privilege and racism. Sensitized to the concepts (Charmaz, 2006) of “memory lapse, silence, shame, and evasion” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 23), I found each one to be salient in the grounded theory that emerged in this study.

In summary, with some nuances, findings from this study generally resonated with Frankenberg's (1993) study of the social construction of race among White women. However, the grounded theory that emerged from this study also reflected educational and professional influences on racial identity due to the unique context of SA/HE graduate programs and the experiences of White women seeking to become SA/HE professionals.

Educational and Professional Influences on White Identity

For the White women in this study, college provided many curricular and co-curricular experiences that facilitated the development of racial identity and racial dissonance. This finding resonates with prior research on White undergraduate students' participation in classroom dialogues about race (Hunter & Nettles, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Sallee et al., 2009), anti-racist discussion groups (Case, 2003) and racial and ethnic organizations (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Sallee et al., 2009), and service-learning (Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorski, 2005; Jones, LePeau, & Robbins, in press; Jones, Robbins, & LePeau, 2011).

In addition, scholars (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) have also found a range of curricular and co-curricular environments to contribute positively to growth in positive racial and ethnic attitudes. Majoring in the humanities or social sciences, living in a residence intentionally designed to facilitate intercultural engagement, making friends and interacting with peers whose racial or ethnic backgrounds differ from one's own, taking diversity- and multiculturalism-related courses, participating in cultural awareness workshops, and studying abroad have all been identified as contributors to positive growth in racial and ethnic attitudes. Each of these experiences emerged as salient influences on the awakening of racial consciousness among the White women in this study, demonstrating Rowe et al.'s (1994) emphasis on attitudes as a critical component of racial consciousness.

However, beyond opening their eyes to White privilege and racism, college experiences also presented participants with racial dissonance, which they negotiated through resistance, engagement, and transformation. Jones (2008) wrote about how

college educators can work with students to engage “the resistance that inevitably surfaces – particularly among White students – to the challenges encountered in learning environments that emphasize diversity and social justice” (p. 68). Indeed, for the White women in this study, experiences and relationships in college – along with time spent in the post-college world of full-time work, and graduate experiences in SA/HE – made it possible to move through resistance toward the more constructive strategies of engagement and transformation.

For the two participants who worked full-time before graduate school, the “real world” offered lessons about race that had not been learned in college. Zoey was a substitute teacher in a low-income African American neighborhood where she “learned a lot about race in society” and how it dovetailed with social class. She also learned about the privileges she held as an upper-class White woman with a college degree who was preparing to enter graduate school. Stacy’s work experience as a case manager opened her eyes to the connection between race and class, especially through her relationship with an African American female coworker.

Finally, graduate school offered many opportunities for participants to open their eyes to racism and White privilege and confront the dissonance that emerged. Through course assignments and dialogue, professional training and development in their assistantships, conferences, and relationships with cohort members, faculty members, supervisors, and colleagues, the White women in this study began to learn who they were as racial beings. Many of them actively explored other salient identities, including gender, class, and sexuality. They considered how to work effectively across difference, debriefed difficult dialogues with cohort members, and

struggled to put newfound multicultural competencies into practice, not always knowing how to proceed. Classroom conversations about privilege and oppression were particularly important in setting a tone for respectful dialogue – or not. Some participants reported that race and social justice conversations occurred in most classes and professional settings, while others saw these conversations as confined to one or more specific courses, including “diversity” courses and student development theory.

The Development and Construction of White Racial Consciousness and Identity

As I collected and analyzed data, I often considered how the emerging grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE programs resonated with or departed from theories of White racial identity and related constructs. In this section, I examine findings from this study through the lens of previous theories, including White racial consciousness (Rowe et al., 1994); White racial identity development (Hardiman, 2001; Helms, 1995, 2008); racial justice ally development (Reason, Millar, & Scales, 2005; Reason, Scales, & Millar, 2005); and Privileged Identity Exploration (PIE) (Watt, 2007). In this discussion, I emphasize previous theories of racial identity development given that these theories are often taught in SA/HE graduate preparation programs.

Beyond the nuances of any particular theory, the findings from this study generally echoed previous theoretical work related to White identity development. However, this emergent grounded theory of racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs contributes new perspectives to the conversation begun by other theorists. Specifically, findings from this study: (1) illustrate how gender, and

other dimensions of social identity, influence racial identity development and construction among White women; and (2) suggest that recognizing White privilege brings about racial dissonance, to which White women respond through complex performances of identity. I have woven these two contributions into the discussion that follows.

Theorizing White racial consciousness. Although I sought to generate a theory of racial identity, findings suggest that for the White women in this study, racial identity and racial consciousness are inextricably tied to each other. Previous theorists have described the development of White racial consciousness in terms of the content of (Rowe et al., 1994) and commitment to (LaFleur, Rowe, & Leach, 2002) racial attitudes toward People of Color. In my study, the concept of consciousness emerged in a different way. Most participants rarely encountered People of Color as children, and when they did, racial difference hardly entered their consciousness, as suggested by *Not Seeing Race, Not Registering Difference: "Everything Was Just So White"* and *Peripheral Visions: Catching Glimpses of Race*. In their early lives, White privilege prevented participants from getting to know People of Color and from learning to recognize race as a significant social issue. Most often, recognizing White privilege made participants conscious of race, which in turn caused epiphanies about how White privilege had impeded the formation of racial consciousness earlier in their lives. Reflected in *Opening My Eyes: (Dis)covering Racial Difference, Racism, and White Privilege*, these epiphanies then generated racial dissonance, and participants had to respond. When they navigated this dissonance successfully, they acquired a "conscious lens of whiteness" and a

vision for their lives that, for many, involved a commitment to anti-racist attitudes and the self-efficacy to turn those attitudes into actions. Thus, in this study the notion of racial consciousness was not solely about attitudes toward People of Color, but also about attitudes toward the nature of racism and White privilege.

Importantly, the notion of (dis)covering racism and White privilege suggests that participants were previously conscious of these issues but had repressed them. In addition to repression, however, in many cases participants indicated that they simply had not seen the social structural realities of race until it was pointed out to them – indeed, until they *opened their eyes*. Stacy’s comment, “now I really see,” illustrates the difference between peripheral and central consciousness of racism and White privilege. However, what about the formation of a personal racial identity? Helms (2008) argued that “one generally has...a race...whether or not one is consciously aware” (p. 19) of it. Upon *opening their eyes*, participants became aware of having a race and began to question what it meant to their sense of self. This shift in consciousness also constituted a shift in identity salience (Jones & McEwen, 2000), bringing White racial identity to the forefront.

Theorizing White racial identity development. Hardiman’s (2001) revised model of White identity development included five stages: *No Social Consciousness of Race or Naïveté, Acceptance, Resistance, Redefinition, and Internalization*. Although never empirically validated and more prescriptive (i.e., what White people *should* do) than descriptive (i.e., what White people *actually* do), Hardiman’s (2001) model has been influential among social justice educators and racial identity development theorists. Meanwhile, Helms’ revised model of White racial identity

development (1995) has been empirically validated and involves Marcia's (1966) notion of racial identity statuses rather than Erikson's (1959/1994) concept of stages. The Helms model (1995) also emphasizes how White individuals are appraised by others. Statuses of the Helms model include *Contact*, *Disintegration*, *Pseudoindependence*, *Immersion/Emersion*, and *Autonomy*. Critiques of the Helms (1995) model include its hierarchical nature, failure to account for power and privilege, and more appropriate use as a theoretical model than a developmental one (Mercer & Cunningham, 2003).

The grounded theory that emerged from this study is in part a conceptual model of White racial identity development that both echoes and challenges the Hardiman (2001) and Helms (1995) models. As part of a process of *changing one's perspective*, the series of lenses that characterized participants' racial worldviews are analogous, but *not* identical, to the notion of a stage or status. These lenses are similar to the notion of statuses in that they represent "increasingly more complex management of racial material" (Helms, 1995, p. 184) and once acquired, can be used in any combination. In addition, the lenses in this theory are analogous to the stages and statuses in Hardiman's (2001) and Helms' (1995) models in that they reflect development from obliviousness and avoidance to the internalization of racial awareness and a commitment to challenging racism. Readers familiar with the Helms (1995) model, in particular, may see parallels between *opening one's eyes* and *resisting, engaging, and transforming racial dissonance* in this study and aspects of *Disintegration*, *Reintegration*, *Pseudoindependence* and *Immersion/Immersion* statuses in the Helms model. However, it is important to note several key differences

between findings from this study and both the Hardiman (2001) and Helms (1995) models.

First, unlike the Hardiman (2001) model, *changing one's perspective* is indeed grounded in data and is, thus, descriptive rather than prescriptive. The Helms (1995) model is perhaps more analogous to *changing one's perspective* given the common focus on defense mechanisms and dissonance. In addition, the lens concept incorporates the idea of appraisal by others. Lenses both influence how the wearer sees the world and how others view the wearer, but because lenses are transparent, individuals other than the wearer cannot visually determine how the lenses influence the wearer's perspective. As several participants noted, White individuals who are aware of White privilege and committed to dismantling it must find ways to communicate this commitment to others.

Beyond the mechanism through which development occurs, several characteristics of *changing one's perspective* distinguish it from the Helms (1995) and Hardiman (2001) models. First, *changing one's perspective* illustrates how White racial identity development theory looks different when grounded in the experiences of White women in SA/HE programs. Participants in this study conveyed the importance of relationships with family members, peers, and mentors as influences on racial consciousness and identity throughout their lives, illustrating an intersection between the concept of women as connected knowers (Belenky et al., 1986) and White racial identity development. In addition, the White women in this study had other salient identities that influenced how they experienced race and White privilege. Michaela's example of going to bed one day in the majority (e.g., as a

White person) and waking up as a minority (e.g., as a lesbian in the process of coming out) illustrated how identity intersections complicated the process of White racial identity development for participants. Indeed, findings from this study echoed the work of Abes, Jones, and McEwen (2007), which conveys the complex nature of social identity development given the multiplicity and intersectionality of social identities and the issue of identity salience. Related to salience, the grounded theory that emerged from this study also highlighted educational and professional influences that made racial identity salient to the White women in this study. Many of these influences were unique to their roles as aspiring SA/HE professionals, bringing forth layers of social context (Renn, 2003) that are not reflected in the Helms (1995) and Hardiman (2001) models.

In addition, the grounded theory that emerged in this study both echoes and differs from the Helms (1995, 2008) model in how individuals negotiated processes of abandoning racism, responding to racial dissonance, and seeking a non-racist identity. In *A Race Is a Nice Thing to Have*, Helms (2008) suggested that the *Disintegration* status characterizes how White individuals respond to the “internal tension” (p. 31) that results from heightened awareness of racism. Similarly, in *changing one’s perspective*, dissonance (analogous to “internal tension”) arose for participants when their eyes were opened to racism and White privilege. In both theories, participants are confronted with dissonance, and their responses include denial, shame, and guilt. Moreover, in both theories, individuals confront what Helms (2008) referred to as “racial moral dilemmas,” which “pit possible loss of the advantages of White privilege against one’s sense of shared humanity” (p. 51).

Helms (2008) argued that White people adopt the *Disintegration* schema when faced with such dilemmas. Through this schema, White individuals use self-protective strategies to deny the immoral nature of racism and White privilege and, thus, avoid confronting racial moral dilemmas.

In my study, participants' strategies of *resisting racial dissonance* constituted their responses to racial moral dilemmas. For example, Michelle opined that White skin privilege had not "gotten [her] things" and that it had instead been her "hard work," "determination," and "brains." I would not dispute that this response characterizes the *Disintegration* schema; Michelle's statement was in fact "a declaration of [her] own oppressed status" (p. 49). However, the Helms model (1995, 2008) does not provide a complete picture of Michelle's response to racial dissonance because it does not capture the source of the dissonance: the poverty and abuse she experienced as a child. In Chapter 4, I argued that Michelle's "Beads of Privilege" experience was an example of *resisting and engaging racial dissonance*. She felt vulnerable when wearing a beaded bracelet that, to her, made her childhood experiences visible, or at least in danger of being seen. In her words, "the places where I lack privilege are not visible pieces."

Kivel (2002) wrote about the reactions of poor and working class White individuals to the concept of White privilege, an inequitable system in which all White people are complicit, even those who have not reaped all of the economic benefits. In Kivel's words, "although we share the benefits of being white, we don't share the economic privileges of being middle class and so we are more likely to feel angry and less likely to feel guilty than our middle-class counterparts" (p. 8). Kivel

further argued that “[w]e must notice when we try to slip into another identity and escape being white” (p. 9). However, what if slipping into another identity is simultaneously a form of *resisting* and *engaging* the notion of White privilege?

Additionally, what harm might educators do by denying identity intersections (Jones, 2009) and the simultaneity of privileged and oppressed identities (Johnson, 2006)? Gorski (2011) recently observed that in the anti-racist educator community or “white privilege brigade” (para. 8) there is a taboo associated with acknowledging oppression due to identities other than race:

The most heavy-handedly enforced rule, and the one we, in the white privilege brigade, still seem determined to protect with the greatest earnestness, dictates that *Nobody shall, during a conversation about white privilege, mention any identity that is not a racial identity or any oppression that is not racism.* (para. 8)

Gorski went on to argue that such thinking does harm by pitting race and class against each other and limiting “the extent to which we succeed at fostering a movement to which working class and poor White people feel connected” (para. 25).

When I read this statement by Gorski (2011), I first thought of Michelle because she grew up in poverty, but I also thought of the other participants who were the first in their families to earn a college degree or who grew up less than middle class. Together, these women reflect a total of seven out of 11 participants. In addition, *all* of the participants are women. The class dimensions addressed by Kivel (2002) and Goodman’s (2011) phenomenon of unacknowledged pain are both visible to me in Michelle’s simultaneous resistance to and engagement with racial

dissonance. By dismissing identities other than race, I would do harm to participants by reinforcing the oppression they have experienced associated with their gender, class, and sexual orientation identities. Indeed, Goodman (2011) observed that “in some cases, it is unacknowledged pain that becomes the source for resistance” (p. 58), and working through the development of oppressed identities had indeed caused pain for several participants.

Thus, in contradistinction to other theorists of White racial identity, I contend that participants’ struggle to integrate their racial and other social identities is not solely a form of resistance; rather, it is also a form of engagement. To dismiss this struggle would be to contribute to a discourse of whiteness that leaves other identities unmarked and thus reinforces compulsory masculinity, heterosexuality, and economic privilege – which, in turn, reinforce White supremacy (Collins, 2009/2000). Further, acknowledging the struggle to integrate multiple identities need not be counterproductive to the struggle to dismantle racism, nor is it intended as a rationalization (Watt, 2007) that fails to hold White people accountable. Rather, honoring identity at the intersections (Jones, 2009) reflects my desire to foreground White privilege without excluding those who experience oppression associated with other identities.

Theorizing the development of racial justice allies. Reason, Scales, and Millar (2005) described the process of becoming a racial justice ally in three broad phases. First, individuals must understand privilege and racism on an affective and intellectual level. Next, they must embrace “both the positive and negative attributes” associated with whiteness (p. 61) and develop “moral courage” (p. 62) to challenge

other White individuals' actions. Finally, they must take actions of their own. I saw elements of these phases in the experiences of participants in this study. The process of *opening one's eyes* was in some cases solely an intellectual process; indeed, in Rose's words, for her "race is an intellectual thing." The affective dimension emerged for many participants as part of the dissonance they experienced when opening their eyes. Importantly, the guilt and shame participants experienced, while affective, did not necessarily reflect understanding; instead, these emotions were forms of *resisting racial dissonance*. These responses differed from, for example, Lucy's anger and frustration while on an alternative break trip to Chile; these emotions arose when she saw White privilege manifested in the behavior of her White female peers who complained about living conditions on the trip, when the very purpose of the trip was to improve living conditions for community members. Lucy's reaction was an example of *resisting and engaging* racial dissonance, rather than solely *resisting* it. Thus, findings from this study reflect Reason et al.'s assertion that to become racial justice allies, individuals need to understand racism and White privilege on both intellectual and affective levels.

The notion of accepting positive and negative dimensions of whiteness also emerged in this study. Several participants learned to incorporate an acceptance of White culture *and* an understanding of White privilege into their sense of self. For example, Michaela's "conscious lens of whiteness" allowed her to become "White but aware and active in continuing to understand my race," and Lucy learned to ask, "how can I use my position as a White woman who has a certain amount of privilege to speak out against...injustice?" Findings from this study were also consistent with

ideas of “moral courage” (Reason et al., 2005, p. 62) and the need to take action in order to become a racial justice ally. Examples of searching for moral courage were abundant in participants’ experiences of *engaging and transforming racial dissonance*, particularly when contemplating whether and how to “call out” racism and White privilege in their everyday lives. The White women in this study especially struggled to find courage when considering whether to call out their friends and parents. Stephanie, in particular, struggled with the “risk” of confronting friends, as well as the question of how to challenge her parents’ perspectives in a respectful manner given that they did not share her privilege of having a college education.

Beyond contemplation, examining instances of *transforming racial dissonance* revealed that many participants found the moral courage to challenge their peers and family members and take other actions consistent with being an ally for racial justice (Reason et al., 2005). To continue with Lucy as an example, seeing racist epithets on a bulletin board in her residence hall was “[f]or whatever reason...the moment in [her] college experience where [she] really finally felt compelled to act and do something.” That moment catalyzed Lucy’s efforts to help organize a diversity rally, conference, and series of roundtable discussions about race and identity. She also developed a mentoring relationship with the Director of Intercultural Affairs and later got involved in other racial justice efforts on campus. Thus, findings from this study resonate with Reason et al.’s (2005) assertion that becoming a racial justice ally requires both the moral courage to challenge others and to take action oneself.

However, findings from this study add to the work of Reason et al. (2005) by exploring the nuanced ways in which participants *resisted, engaged, and transformed* racial dissonance. In particular, this study offers concrete examples that illustrate dimensions of Reason et al.'s (2005) model. Importantly, this study also affirms Reason et al.'s (2005) critical assertion that “a strong connection exists between the process of white racial identity development and the process of cognitive and sociomoral development” (p. 61). Increasingly, student development theorists have struggled to reconcile the holistic nature of student development; students do not experience the world in discrete domains of cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal development (Baxter Magolda, 2009). However, a holistic view also threatens to silence the unique nature of social identities and their intersections. The work of Reason et al. (2005) is a strong example of theoretical work that acknowledges integrated domains of development without sacrificing a concrete focus on race. Helms' explication of racial moral dilemmas in *A Race is a Nice Thing to Have* (2008) is another strong example. Findings from this study also indicate the need to acknowledge integrated domains of development while foregrounding race and whiteness.

Theorizing the exploration of privileged identities. As a final component of this discussion of theories of White racial identity and related constructs, findings from this study resonate deeply with Watt's (2007) Privileged Identity Exploration (PIE) model. This empirical model asserts that individuals with privileged identities employ a variety of defense mechanisms when experiencing cognitive dissonance while participating in classroom dialogues about diversity. Watt (2007) identified

stimuli that provoked dissonance for participants in her study, including “New Awareness about Self or Other” and “Social Justice Action based on New Awareness” (p. 126). The exploration of privileged identities began with *Recognizing Privileged Identity*, which included defense mechanisms of denial, deflection, and rationalization; *Contemplating Privileged Identity*, which connected with the defense mechanisms of intellectualization, principium (the use of principles), and false envy; and *Addressing Privileged Identity*, which included benevolence and minimization.

Perhaps more than any other theoretical or empirical model, findings from this study echoed many components of the PIE model (Watt, 2007). In particular, participants’ strategies for *resisting*, *engaging*, and *transforming* racial dissonance resonated with the defense mechanisms identified by Watt (2007). For example, denial, deflection, and rationalization were visible in *resisting racial dissonance* and in its intersections with other responses: *resisting and engaging racial dissonance* and *resisting and transforming racial dissonance*. However, Watt’s (2007) model also pointed to the defense mechanisms employed by individuals in the process of *Addressing Privileged Identity*, such as minimization. I heard echoes of minimization in Alexandria’s description of cross-cultural interactions while studying abroad in Germany and completing a summer internship in a racially and ethnically diverse city. In Watt’s (2007) words, responses of this nature shift “the focus away from wrestling with the magnitude of social injustice and toward sharing a recipe for cross-cultural interaction” (p. 122). Thus, Watt’s (2007) model challenged me to identify

defensiveness and dissonance as ongoing currents, rather than a tide that receded at a particular developmental moment.

When examining the grounded theory that emerged from this study alongside the PIE model (Watt, 2007), I recalled the importance of envisioning racial identity as not only developed, but constructed. Willie (2003) described race as “a characteristic that can be manipulated, played with, or performed” (p. 130). Likewise, Yon (2000) framed identity as “a process of making identifications, a process that is continuous and incomplete” (p. 13). Findings from this study reflect both of these definitions. Participants’ strategies of *resisting*, *engaging*, and *performing* racial dissonance constituted attempts to modify what race meant to them and to make new identifications through their thoughts and actions. Rose’s example of walking through a crowd of African American students to meet a friend was a particularly striking example of a racial identity performance that both resisted and transformed racial dissonance. She minimized (Watt, 2007) the social significance of race as a social phenomenon that had structured the landscape before her and her interactions within it, but at the same time she manipulated the dissonance, questioning the assumptions of those around her; in her words, “there’s no reason for me to not walk through a crowd of Black people just because they’re Black.” In addition, Rose had an audience in this situation, and thus her actions were likely motivated by thoughts about how she would be appraised by others (Helms, 1995). Indeed, she contrasted this incident with previous situations in which she would have walked around the crowd to be a “people-pleaser.” This complex incident suggests the complicated nature of race and identity as carefully orchestrated performances.

Overall, the PIE model affirmed the dissonance and related defense mechanisms that emerged in my study, yet Watt's (2007) work also challenged me to examine defense mechanisms of my own that might have led me to miss instances of dissonance and defensiveness among participants. I address this issue in more detail later in this chapter in "Limitations of the Study."

White Women in SA/HE Programs as "Helpers": Identity at the Intersections

As a final area of discussion, participants' comments about their motivations for joining the study revealed the gendered nature of racial identity development and construction among White women in SA/HE graduate programs. The White women in this study saw themselves as helpers, and they wanted to participate in order to help me, to help the student affairs profession, to help students, and to help themselves. Participants' conceptualizations of "helping" in these various contexts communicated a great deal about their constructions of race, gender, privilege, and oppression.

Many participants were interested in this study because they cared about diversity, social justice, theory, or research. Others emphasized their love of learning, were honored to have been selected to participate (especially given the large response rate), and expressed admiration for the idea of writing a dissertation that would contribute to the theoretical base of our shared professional field. Some were pleased to see an opportunity for participation in a project that was related to diversity *and* applied to their particular identities; in Zoey's words, "Oh, I fit that!" Finally, some participants expressed a strong desire, if not a craving, for opportunities to talk about issues of race and social justice one on one with another White woman. When

presented with such an opportunity in our interview conversations, several participants confided opinions and perspectives they dared not share with faculty members or peers in their cohorts because of a fear of appearing racist.

This latter point about the fear of appearing racist highlights the intersection of race and gender, along with privilege and oppression, in the identities of the White women in SA/HE who were so eager to “help” by participating in this study. In a study of anti-racist feminist identity development among White women, Linder (2011) also found that the fear of appearing racist was a salient feature of participants’ experiences as they struggled to integrate an understanding of White privilege and racism into their consciousness and actions. In the words of one of Linder’s participants, Miriam, “as women we’re super hard on ourselves and as white people we have to be the best, those together, it’s a recipe for disaster” (Linder, 2011, p. 248).

Miriam’s insight (Linder, 2011) prompted me to recall the experience of a participant in my study, Sally, who felt great shame for “where [she] stood in the Privilege Walk” due to her combination of racial and socioeconomic privilege relative to her peers. In this moment, Sally’s shame was an emotional form of being “hard on herself” in response to one of her worst fears: not being the best. Ironically, being at the front of the line in the Privilege Walk did not constitute “winning,” but rather a failure to be a “good” White woman who saw everyone as equal and wanted to help others. Thus, Sally’s gender, race, and class identities came together in a painful way in her graduate school classroom, leading her to an “appreciation for the complexity of the process when privileged and oppressed identities are considered”

(Jones, 2009, p, 302). In Sally's classroom, there was no meaningful follow-up conversation to allow students to reflect on the Privilege Walk and what it meant to their cohort, leading to many difficulties for the group and missed opportunities for learning. For SA/HE graduate program educators, the question becomes: How might we transform a "recipe for disaster" into a possibility for transformative learning (Jones, 2008)?

Implications for SA/HE Graduate Preparation Programs

Findings from this study offer a number of implications for SA/HE graduate preparation programs. First, participants emphasized the importance of professional role modeling, mentoring, and sustained dialogue in facilitating *changes in perspective* associated with racial identity. Participants' role models and mentors included faculty members (including doctoral students who served as instructors), graduate assistantship supervisors, and other professionals whom they met through their assistantships, internships, and practica. For Michaela, working with a faculty member who incorporated her identity into her work was an essential feature of the graduate program she chose. Importantly, participants also referred to undergraduate mentors – including faculty members and student affairs professionals – with whom they still kept in touch, and to whom they turned when contemplating big decisions or important issues.

It is important for graduate preparation program faculty and administrators to encourage White women students to have intentional conversations about race with their role models and mentors. For the White women in this study, graduate school was universally a time of opening their eyes and negotiating racial dissonance.

Several participants noted how alone they had felt at this time. Indeed, Rachel, who had eye-opening experiences during college, explicitly stated that she wished she had had role models and mentors with whom to discuss her feelings and experiences at that time. Given the central value of relationships and the complexity of navigating racial dissonance, intentional conversations with role models and mentors may help White women “to not feel alone,” as Sally noted when responding to the findings of this study. Mentors and role models can offer “good company” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. xv) on the challenging journey of racial identity development – for those who are eager for the journey and “hungry for knowledge.” Others may be less eager to travel. For White women and all students who resist when confronted with the challenging concepts of race, racism, privilege, and oppression, educators face a different task. To work through resistance with students, educators must remember that “the transformative potential of resistance comes in the opportunity to help students shift from resisting challenges to *their positions* of power and privilege to resisting the very structures that produce systems of oppression and privilege” (Jones, 2008, p. 78). Educators must learn to “hang in there” with students as they resist and engage dissonance so that transformation begins to seem like a possibility.

In addition, SA/HE graduate preparation program faculty and administrators should ensure that students have opportunities for sustained dialogue about race and other dimensions of difference. Finding room within a two-year master’s degree program to address all of the competencies and skills required of student affairs educators (ACPA & NASPA, 2010; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2009) is a daunting task. However, several participants in this

study noted that racial dialogues were all too rare in their graduate experiences. In fact, Stacy's cohort was so eager for more knowledge that they organized an intergroup dialogue series on their own time during their final semester of graduate school. For other White women in this study, intergroup dialogue was not always the right setting for them to explore their identities and worldviews. Indeed, several participants commented that the opportunity to talk with me one on one provided a venue for finding their voices about issues related to race. In the racially diverse, larger group settings of their cohorts and classmates, some of the White women in this study were afraid of appearing racist and of admitting what they did not know.

Overall, findings from this study confirmed that the emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism is inconsistent among SA/HE graduate programs (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). Graduate preparation faculty and administrators who neglect these values risk doing a great disservice to SA/HE graduate students and the undergraduates with whom they will work for years to come. Educators who share these values must work to ensure they are reflected in students' graduate experiences. Graduate preparation program faculty should examine course syllabi collectively to assess the degree to which students engage in diversity-related dialogue in class, and they should also work closely with colleagues in divisions of student and academic affairs to assess how frequently students engage in diversity-related dialogues in their assistantship settings. Faculty and administrators should then work together to find ways for SA/HE master's students to engage in dialogue consistently throughout their graduate experiences. Such consistency will help reinforce the importance of cross-cultural learning as lifelong work (Jones, 2008) and help prepare future professionals by

modeling the educational environments college educators seek to provide for undergraduates. Further, educators should pair dialogue with one-on-one reflection opportunities, which will be particularly beneficial for White students who may fear speaking up in racially diverse environments and, thus, miss opportunities for learning. Such reflection opportunities may also help White students to work through some of the dissonance they experience in dialogue settings without doing harm to People of Color in those settings (Accapadi, 2007).

In addition to working collaboratively to promote ongoing opportunities for diversity-related dialogue and reflection, SA/HE graduate preparation faculty should redouble efforts to build strong learning partnerships (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004) with student and academic affairs colleagues. Several participants in this study emphasized the eye-opening learning about racism and White privilege that had taken place for them in the context of professional development in their assistantships, yet our interview conversations appeared to be the first time many of them had intentionally reflected on this learning. If graduate preparation program faculty and assistantship supervisors are aware of the learning opportunities students have in both settings, then educators can more effectively work together to reinforce the learning that occurs. Concretely, assistantship supervisors should frequently ask students what they are learning in their classes in a given semester (indeed, this question could be part of regular supervisory meetings) and encourage students to reflect on how they see these concepts emerging in their professional work. Likewise, faculty members should provide consistent opportunities for students to reflect on connections between coursework and professional work.

Fortunately, connecting student learning across these contexts is already a strength of many graduate preparation programs (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). However, findings from this study suggest that educators associated with these programs can improve their collaborative efforts in regard to the lessons White women learn about racism and White privilege. Without diminishing their attention to Students of Color, educators who provide White women with opportunities for reflection may facilitate the emergence of racial consciousness, and thus, increased multicultural competence (Mueller & Pope, 2001) among an overrepresented demographic in the SA/HE graduate student population.

In addition to stronger partnerships, findings from this study pointed to several specific educational experiences that helped White women *change their perspectives* about racial identity, White privilege, and racism. Participants especially valued the learning that came from papers in which they applied theories of social identity development to their own lives. Regular current events conversations helped participants see the relevance of race and other dimensions of identity to contemporary social and political contexts. In addition, two participants talked about collaborating with faculty members on research projects, which helped them to deepen role model and mentoring relationships as well as, in the case of one participant, to see the importance of race to research and theory development.

A number of the White women in this study found the White Privilege Conference to be a particularly powerful learning experience that was quite different from what they learned at professional conferences like ACPA and NASPA. Leading an international alternative break trip in a predominantly Black community was an

eye-opening experience for one participant, while others emphasized the learning that came from advising cultural student organizations whose members were Students of Color. Finally, participants who supervised, trained, and taught courses for RAs provided opportunities to facilitate student learning about race and other social identities, which in turn advanced participants' own processes of *changing their perspectives* about racism and White privilege. To advance racial consciousness and identity development among White women in SA/HE programs, faculty and administrators should take note of these eye-opening experiences and, where appropriate, seek to replicate those that do not already exist.

Finally, educators affiliated with SA/HE graduate preparation programs should take note of two critical concepts that emerged in this study. First, for the White women in this study, racial dissonance was universal and thus normative. What varied was the repertoire of strategies participants used to respond to this dissonance. Participants' repertoires generally grew larger with increased opportunities to think, to feel, and to discuss what it meant to be a White woman – with other salient identities – preparing to be a SA/HE professional and coming to terms with White privilege and racial identity. Second, many of the participants in this study had had exposure to coursework, professional development, and other learning experiences that were intentionally designed to facilitate multicultural competence through the development of relevant awareness, knowledge, and skills (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2004). However, the experiences of White women in this study clearly demonstrated that, consistent with the work of Reason et al. (2005), having these skills is not helpful without the moral courage and self-efficacy to put

them into practice. SA/HE graduate program educators should maximize opportunities for White women to engage with racial dissonance as a normative response to learning about racism and White privilege. Further, educators should focus not only on knowledge and skill development, but frequent experiential opportunities to put those skills into practice – and reflection about the challenges of doing so. Indeed, if emerging professionals are to learn how to summon the moral courage necessary to take action consistently (Reason et al., 2005), they will need practice.

Implications for Theory Development and Future Research

In addition to implications for graduate preparation programs, findings from this study have implications for theory development and future research. First, through the methodology of grounded theory for social justice (Charmaz, 2005), this study generated an emergent theory of racial identity that echoed the contributions of previous theories but offered several findings through placing White *women* in a *particular educational and professional context* at the center of the analysis. The value of this methodological decision was evident in the emergent theory, which incorporated a more comprehensive understanding of identity intersections, addressed identity construction as well as development, and revealed the complexity of navigating racial dissonance. Thus, the theory that emerged from this theory reaffirmed the value of grounded theory not only for studying phenomena that have not been investigated, but for exploring processes for which “theories may be present, but they are incomplete” (Creswell, 2007, p. 66). Given the dynamic nature of identity and of the social and political contexts in which higher education is situated,

student development theorists must frequently reexamine existing theories and models and consider the value of (re)grounding them.

In addition, findings from this study point to the intersectional nature of social identities and how they develop (Jones, 2009), as well as intersections between racial identity development and other domains of development, including the development of courage to resolve racial moral dilemmas (Helms, 2008; Reason et al., 2005). The grounded theory that emerged from this study also reflected the influences of multiple epistemological and theoretical influences, responding to a recent call for more attention to scholarly work outside the realms of student affairs and higher education (Abes, 2009; Baxter Magolda, 2009). Student development theorists should continue to draw on diverse scholarship, and theorists should also continue to acknowledge the complex intersections between social identities and domains of development (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Baxter Magolda, 2009).

Findings from this study also have implications for future research. The purpose of this study was to investigate racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs in order to contribute to greater racial consciousness and multicultural competence (Mueller & Pope, 2001) among this over-represented population in student affairs (Taub & McEwen, 2006). To that end, researchers should consider how the process of *changing one's perspective* continues to unfold after White women complete graduate school and become new professionals. Further, a longitudinal study would help illustrate how White women's perspectives continue to change as their lives and careers progress. The process of changing one's perspective may well look different for White women who are mid-level managers,

senior student affairs officers, and faculty members, as well as for those who leave the profession.

Additionally, the purpose of shifting the gaze (Fine, 1997) to whiteness in student affairs and higher education research is to contribute to more inclusive environments for an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse student population. Thus, scholars should conduct quantitative research that reexamines Mueller and Pope's (2001) finding that White professionals with greater levels of racial consciousness made gains in multicultural competence. It would also behoove professionals to know what specific interventions, both within and beyond SA/HE master's degree programs, are associated with or predict gains in multicultural competence. Qualitatively, scholars should explore how Students of Color perceive the multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills of White women in the profession. Indeed, the voices of Students of Color would reveal much about whether *changes in perspective* truly result in changes in practice. Finally, scholars should explore the experiences of Students of Color in SA/HE graduate preparation programs to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of White women's "eye-opening" experiences on their Peers of Color. Such research would extend the work of Accapadi (2007), whose case study of a difficult dialogue among student affairs professionals revealed that White women's responses to racism caused harm to the Women of Color participating in the dialogue. Educators seeking to promote racial consciousness among White students must ensure that their efforts do not further marginalize Students of Color.

Limitations of the Study

Readers must acknowledge several limitations when interpreting and applying findings from this study. First, however, it is important to note the study's *delimitations*. Representativeness and generalizability are not the goal of qualitative research (Jones et al., 2006). I did not intend for this study to represent all White women, or even all White women in SA/HE graduate programs. Thus, findings from this emergent grounded theory should not be considered universal or generalizable. Rather, these findings should be considered a trustworthy (Charmaz, 2006; Jones et al., 2006) account of the experiences of 11 particular White women in SA/HE graduate programs at a particular point in time. I have outlined some implications of this study for teaching, practice, and research, but readers are encouraged to consider other implications as they reflect on the findings and consider their applicability to various settings, groups, and individuals.

Growing evidence suggests that social identities are not experienced in isolation from each other, but intersectionally (Abes et al., 2007; Collins, 2000/2009; Jones, 2009; Jones & McEwen, 2000). Findings from this study add to that evidence by illustrating how White women experience racial identity at the intersections of other social identities. However, by the very act of investigating White identity, I foregrounded White identity and, thus, may have understated the intersectional nature of multiple social identities in the design and execution of this study. However, a Critical Whiteness framework necessitates the foregrounding of White privilege and thus, White identity (Owen, 2007). This dynamic tension will be familiar to intersectionality scholars who have long struggled with what intersectionality means

methodologically (Dill & Zambrana, 2009) but is nevertheless a limitation of this study.

Another limitation concerned the focus on “White women” as participants. Although I was open to including transgender individuals and multiracial women who resonated with the identity “White woman,” no out transgender individuals completed the initial interest form, and I did not select the lone prospective participant who identified as multiracial. By naming “White women” as the focus of my study, I reified racialized and gendered binaries (Person of Color/White person, man/woman) and thus may have contributed to the marginalization of those whose identities resist dichotomization. I regret these consequences immensely, yet I accept them as part of the “cost of admission” for this project. I maintain my belief that the specificity and ubiquity of the “White woman” identity in the student affairs profession (Olson, 2010; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Taub & McEwen, 2006; Tull, 2006; Turrentine & Conley, 2001; Wilkinson & Rund, 2000) demands attention in keeping with a social justice epistemology (Charmaz, 2005). Frankenberg (1993) captured the need for this research eloquently:

As white feminists participate alongside women of color in developing new theoretical articulations of “difference” and the “multiplicity” of women’s experiences, there is, I fear, a danger that while increasingly theorists of color speak from concrete conceptualizations of what that multiplicity means to them, for white women visions of “difference” and “multiplicity” may remain abstract. (p. 10)

Although this study has the potential to render these notions of difference and multiplicity more concrete for White women, I regret any way in which this study contributes to the reification of harmful race and gender binaries.

Another limitation of this study was that despite the retrospective nature of interviews and the collection of data at two points in time, ultimately it reflects engagement with participants within a single academic year. This limitation is significant given that identity unquestionably unfolds throughout the lifespan (Erikson, 1959/1994; Marcia, 2002). Jones' dissertation study of multiple dimensions of social identity had a similar limitation (Abes et al., 2007; Jones, 1997; Jones & McEwen, 2000) as have other recent studies of identity in student development literature (Abes & Jones, 2004; Edwards & Jones, 2009). However, each of these projects has nonetheless influenced the student development literature by providing an in-depth investigation of how identities are developed, constructed, and negotiated at one point in time. I designed this study in that spirit and am hopeful that the emphasis on childhood and "a vision for one's life" gets at a longer segment of the lifespan than graduate school.

Another limitation of this study was the methodological decision to conduct interviews without the use of other data sources. First, interviews are themselves imperfect; indeed, "[a]n interview is not, in any simple sense, the telling of the life so much as it is an incomplete story angled toward my questions and each woman's ever-changing sense of self and of how the world works" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 41). Multiple sources of data are important for triangulation (Jones et al., 2006) and theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006). The use of observation, in particular, might

have enhanced the ability to demonstrate whether what participants said in interviews reflected their behavior in everyday life (Olson, 2010; Watt, 2007). In other words, were participants “walking the walk,” or simply “talking the talk” when it came to acknowledging White privilege (C. North, personal communication, September 14, 2010)? However, ultimately it was my decision that observations were simply beyond the scope of this study. The methodological tools of grounded theory for social justice (Charmaz, 2005) allowed me to ask critical questions of the data that revealed much about participants’ behavior in everyday life. Nonetheless, the absence of data sources other than interviews was a limitation in the design of this study.

Finally, my identity as a White woman, however central to my interest in this topic and conducive to rapport with participants, was in some ways a limitation of the study. Jones et al. (2006) have emphasized that in addition to the power issues associated with studying individuals who do not share one’s social identities, it is also the case that “issues can emerge for researchers from the same social identity” (p. 111). Indeed, issues emerged for Frankenberg (1993), who found that her “own ‘caughtness’ in the relations of racism limited [her] speech and [her] abilities as an interviewer” (p. 39). Frankenberg (1993) recounted an incident in which she remained silent after a participant tearfully admitted to a reaction of fear when encountering a Black man in her home (who, she then learned, was a good friend of her son). Frankenberg’s (1993) reaction to this story was not to interrogate the woman, but to reassure her. Looking back, Frankenberg (1993) realized the incident had triggered her own shame about the “‘racial unconscious’” (p. 40) and thus:

As another white woman, I felt, or perhaps projected that shame, and therefore colluded in keeping it repressed by not asking Margaret any further questions about the incident. Instead, I followed her lead when she shifted the ground away from the incident. Reading this transcript, removed from the interview, I can see myself working from within the discourse I am seeking to challenge, maintaining one of the silences I am setting out to break. (pp. 40-41)

I experienced similar admissions of guilt (Arminio, 2001) among participants in this study – overlooking memories of People of Color from high school, being fearful of Black men, and “copping out” of difficult conversations about race, among others. Moreover, there were several instances in which I saw the influence of White privilege in participants’ comments, yet they did not give any indication of seeing it themselves.

Despite efforts to maintain my critical stance (Brookfield, 2005; Owen, 2007), in the interview moment I sometimes chose to maintain rapport rather than challenge a participant and risk bringing about resistance (Jones, 2008). On one hand, providing opportunities for participants to “open up” in the interview setting was probably essential for building a grounded theory that reflected student resistance. On the other, I regularly praised participants for their wisdom and thanked them for their time, yet I rarely challenged them on their thinking in the moment. Thus, I may have reinforced White privilege even as I sought to challenge it, and I almost certainly reinforced their desire to “help.” Further, by raising the argument that I needed to establish rapport, I am engaging in a form of resistance of my own: rationalization, a frequent response to dissonance among those with privileged

identities (Watt, 2007). In a sense, then, I have colluded in “maintaining one of the silences I am setting out to break” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 41). Consistent with the nature of power and privilege, awareness does not prevent researchers “from lapsing into culturally biased patterns of research” (Merchant, 2001, p. 15). Thus, in the moment, my “good” intentions may not have been enough to maintain my critical stance. Importantly, the same shortcoming applies to my analysis and discussion of data; my racial privilege surely prevented me from seeing privilege in participants’ stories and lives. I am grateful to the individuals – mostly Colleagues and Scholars of Color – who have pointed out missed opportunities to probe a participant’s response further or deepen an analytical point. In my future work as a faculty member, I will share and deconstruct these moments as illustrations of the real complexities of White identity, resistance, and qualitative research.

Finally, my White identity may have limited not only my positionality with respect to participants, but their positionalities with respect to me. Overwhelmingly, participants displayed enthusiasm and eagerness, and they appeared to like me and to want to provide helpful information. As such, participants may have said what they thought I wanted to hear and avoided sharing memories they found painful or embarrassing (e.g., recollections of racist thoughts or actions). Thus, the grounded theory may not reflect the full complexity of White identity and its relationship to racism.

Strengths of the Study

In addition to limitations, this study reflects a number of strengths. In Chapter 1 I identified the need for multiculturally competent student affairs professionals

(Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009), the inconsistent emphasis on diversity and multiculturalism in SA/HE programs (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). I also noted the critical role of racial consciousness in fostering multicultural competence among White student affairs professionals (Mueller & Pope, 2001) and the significant number of White women in the profession (Taub & McEwen, 2006). This study responded to these issues by generating a grounded theory of how racial consciousness and identity unfold among White women preparing to become student affairs and higher education professionals.

In addition, this study illustrated the intersections of gender and race with other dimensions of identity while also foregrounding Whiteness, which was a challenging but important balance to strike. Whiteness, White privilege, and White identity too often go unchallenged in higher education contexts (Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000), yet existing theories of White identity do not attend to gender and the complexities of a “one up/one down identity” (Accapadi, 2007, p. 210). This study generated an emergent grounded theory that foregrounded White identity while recognizing its intersections with gender, class, and sexuality. A related strength of this study is the multidisciplinary nature of the theoretical, empirical, epistemological, and methodological influences on the researcher. Abes (2009) and Baxter Magolda (2009) have emphasized the need for multiple theoretical lenses and academic disciplines to strengthen the student development theory literature. This study makes a modest contribution to that goal by incorporating literature from women’s studies, sociology, teacher education, and social work in addition to student affairs and higher education. Those influences allowed me to examine race, gender, and identity from

multiple perspectives, honoring the complexity of richness of these concepts beyond the limited contexts of student affairs and higher education.

Similarly, another strength of this study was the attentiveness to parts of the life span prior to and beyond graduate school. All too often, college student development theorists attend only to the college years (Fox, 2011). The theory that emerged from this study illustrates that racial consciousness and identity unfolded over time. Reflecting on earlier parts of their lives allowed participants to examine their own development and acknowledge how far they had come, and their present focus on graduate school completion and the upcoming job search helped them imagine the future. This life span approach acknowledges the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2003; Renn, 2003) surrounding human development, and examining White identity across the lifespan also echoes Jones' (2008) observation that the personal reflection necessary for cross-cultural learning "is complicated, complex work that takes commitment over the long haul" (p. 79). By focusing on the life span I hope I contributed to imparting this lesson to participants and those who read and apply findings from this study in the future.

In keeping with Jones' (2008) observation, another strength of this study was the personal reflection that occurred for participants during the interviews. During our conversations, the White women in this study discussed the difficult emotions associated with acknowledging White privilege and racism. They explored views about affirmative action that they had not voiced to professors or peers because of the fear of appearing racist. Further, participants connected their past and present experiences with race to the future they imagined for themselves. In Zoey's words

when responding to the findings summary I sent to participants (see Appendix E), “thanks for being so willing to give me and the others in this study the space to talk about our experiences; it means a lot and will continue to spur my thinking about diversity and social justice.” The value of reflection for the White women in this study echoes Baxter Magolda and King’s (2007) poignant argument about the developmental benefits of interviews for self-authorship:

The nature of these interviews offers respondents an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in ways that are atypical in everyday life. Processing their experience and consciously reflecting on it can bring insights to light that students might not otherwise have discovered.... (p. 505)

Indeed, such insights emerged for participants during and after interview conversations, with several participants emailing me after interviews to share additional reflections. The interview setting facilitated this process of ongoing, conscious reflection and was thus a strength of this study.

In addition, this study attended to nested layers of social context (Renn, 2003) that emerged as influences on White identity but are not often acknowledged in the literature. The intentional emphasis on geographic diversity, in particular, was a strength that addressed a critique of Frankenberg’s (1993) foundational work on women and whiteness (Murrell, 1995). Other influential social contexts for participants included their male family members’ work experiences in construction, mining, and the restaurant industry, along with military service. As one example, the military has a complex history of reinforcing racism (Onkst, 1998; Painter, 2010). During Michelle’s first interview, she attributed the racist attitudes of some of the

men in her family to “the service,” in contrast to her own early adulthood experience of leaving home to attend college and now graduate school. Although struggling to unlearn racism and see how White privilege had shaped her life, Michelle was quick to credit her education with opening her mind to more accepting attitudes. By recognizing social influences on participants and the important individuals in their lives, I was able to incorporate an understanding of how participants both learned and unlearned racism. This contextual complexity was a strength of the study.

As noted previously, the emergent grounded theory reflects both developmental and performative aspects of racial consciousness and racial identity among White women in SA/HE graduate programs. This blended perspective helped to honor the complexity of race as both developmental and socially constructed (Willie, 2003). Illustrating the performative nature of White identity is particularly important because it suggests that race-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors can change. Indeed, such changes are essential to the development of racial consciousness (Rowe et al., 1994) and multicultural competence (Mueller & Pope, 2001; Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009) among SA/HE professionals. Thus, the attention to both development and performance of racial consciousness and identity was a strength of this study.

Finally, the decision to conduct initial interviews in person and second interviews on the phone was a strength of this study. Holding initial interview conversations in person facilitated rapport with participants and built a foundation for the deeper exploration of racial complexities that occurred in the second set of interviews. Conducting second interviews on the phone effectively managed research

costs and also allowed participants more flexibility in regard to where and when the interviews took place. Thus, the balance between in-person and phone interviews was a strength of this study.

Conclusion: “Changing Our Perspectives”

As I came to understand how racial identity unfolded for the White women in this study, I experienced several of my own shifts in perspective. Participants opened my eyes to the complexities of race and Whiteness, the lived experience of White women’s intersecting identities, the dissonance that occurs as a result of educational and professional experiences, and the fear of making mistakes or appearing racist despite one’s intentions to do “good” in the world as educators and helpers. I negotiated dissonance of my own as I struggled to represent the complexity of the findings in a manner that honored the integrity of individual experiences, respected participants’ generosity and vulnerability in disclosing their stories, and still unapologetically “called out” the often unacknowledged privilege and power in which participants’ experiences were embedded. This dissonance has not receded; rather, I embrace it as both a core process and key outcome of this study. Now equipped with a “conscious lens” of racial identity among White women and a vision for my life as a SA/HE graduate preparation faculty member, I hope that findings from this study will help others to change their perspectives in multiple ways that will benefit students and higher education.

To that end, Becky’s final thoughts about this study, shared at the end of her second interview conversation, are a fitting conclusion. Expressing immense

gratitude for the opportunity to participate, Becky poignantly summarized her hopes for this project:

I hope that it helps practitioners that create programs and run programs and teach in programs facilitate this type of identity development because it has been so important to me and I think it needs to happen. We need White women practitioners who understand their White privilege in order to help diverse students and even help White students.

Appendix A: Initial Interest Form

Initial Interest Form: Study of Racial Identity among White Women

Hello, and thank you very much for your interest in participating in this study!

About me and about this study

I am a doctoral candidate in College Student Personnel within the Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Special Education at the University of Maryland, College Park. The purpose of this study is to investigate racial identity among White women enrolled in student affairs and higher education master's degree programs. Through this study, I hope to understand how White women develop and construct racial identities. I am also interested in how educational and professional experiences, along with social contexts like power and privilege, influence racial identity among White women.

About this form

The purpose of this form is to gather some preliminary information about you. It should not take more than 10 minutes to complete this form. I will use the information you provide to select participants for the study. Because this is a qualitative study, it will have a small number of participants, so not everyone who completes this form will be selected to participate. However, just by completing the form, you will be entered in a drawing for a \$25 gift card from Biblio.com, an online bookseller (similar to Amazon.com) with a social responsibility mission.

If you are selected

You will be asked to participate in two 60- to 90-minute interviews in the fall of 2011 and/or winter and spring of 2012. Interviews will be conducted in person or via phone, depending on geographic location. I may ask some participants to complete a third interview.

Informed consent

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland, College Park (IRB Protocol: 11-0495). Completing this form and participating in this study are both voluntary. If you are selected to participate in this study, the information you provide on this form may be shared in the aggregate, or with a pseudonym that you select. This information will not be connected to your actual name or other identifying information about you. I will keep that information strictly confidential. To learn more about the rights of participants, please download the IRB-approved consent form here:

<https://sites.google.com/site/whitewomenracialidentity/home/consent-form>

More information will be provided if you are selected to participate.

Please answer the following questions. Again, this form should not take more than 10 minutes to complete.

*** Required**

Full name: *

Email address: *

Phone number:

Are you currently enrolled in a master's degree program with a focus on student affairs or higher education? *

If your answer is "no," I'm sorry, but you are not eligible to participate. Thank you for your interest!

Yes

No

What is the name of the university you currently attend? *

What is the name of the graduate program in which you are currently enrolled? *

Location of your graduate program (city and state): *

When did you begin this program? *

(Please use this format: MM/YYYY)

When do you expect to graduate from this program? *

(Please use this format: MM/YYYY)

Approximately how much of your master's degree program have you completed? *

- Less than half
- About half
- More than half

Will you be available in the fall of 2011 to participate in interviews? *

- Yes
- No

Will you be available in the winter and spring of 2012 to participate in interviews? *

- Yes
- No

Recognizing that you have many dimensions to your identity, do you consider yourself a White woman? *

Because I value inclusiveness, I hope that the participants in this study will be diverse in many ways, including monoracial vs. multiracial identity, ethnicity, gender expression, sexual orientation, social class, dis/ability, and religion. However, the primary purpose of the study is to explore racial identity among White women.

- Yes
- No

Where did you grow up? (city, state, and country [if outside USA]); please list all locations where you resided for one year or more before age 18) *

[Continue »](#)

Initial Interest Form: Study of Racial Identity among White Women

How would you describe yourself with regard to the following dimensions of social identity? You may skip any question you would rather not answer, but any information you choose to provide will help me build an inclusive sample.

Race

Ethnicity

Gender expression

Sexual orientation

Social class

Dis/ability

Religion

Anything else you would like to share about how you identify

Your responses to the following items will help me build a sample with diverse educational, professional, and life experiences. You may skip any question you would rather not answer.

For how many years have you worked FULL-TIME in student affairs or higher education?

Please list all of the colleges and/or universities you attended as an undergraduate.

From what college or university did you receive your bachelor's degree?

When did you earn your bachelor's degree?

(Please enter the year: YYYY)

How old will you be on October 1, 2011?

In the space below, please share anything you would like to about personal experiences and identities that are important to you.

(Some examples: identifying as a first-generation college student, being a veteran, being a parent, being an adoptee.)

Thank you!

Thank you for completing this form! I will be in touch with you soon. If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Gratefully,

Claire Kathleen Robbins
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[« Back](#)

[Submit](#)

Initial Interest Form: Study of Racial Identity among White Women

Thank you for completing this form! I will be in touch with you soon. If you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.
Gratefully, Claire Robbins

[Submit another response](#) | [Create your own form](#)

Google docs

Appendix B: Email for Faculty Members to Share with Prospective Participants

August 19, 2011

Dear faculty members:

I hope this message finds you well as the new semester approaches. I am writing to solicit participants for my dissertation research, and I would greatly appreciate your forwarding this message to your master's program student listservs and/or to individual students. As participants, I am seeking to interview White women who have given some thought to racial issues, and who are currently enrolled in a student affairs or higher education master's degree program. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Maryland, College Park (IRB Protocol: 11-0495). I welcome any questions from you or your students. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Warmly,
Claire K. Robbins

* * * *

To: Students in Student Affairs & Higher Education Master's Degree Programs
From: Claire Kathleen Robbins, Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland, College Park
Re: Recruiting White Women in Student Affairs & Higher Education Master's Degree Programs for a Dissertation Study

Hello! I am writing to solicit participants for my dissertation research. The purpose of my dissertation is to investigate racial identity among White women enrolled in student affairs and higher education master's degree programs. Through this study, I hope to understand how White women develop and construct racial identities. I am also interested in how educational and professional experiences, along with social contexts like power and privilege, influence racial identity among White women.

A bit about me and why I chose this topic: I am a White woman with ten years of experience in student affairs and higher education. As a new professional, I developed a passion for student affairs and the value our profession places on diversity, inclusion, and multicultural competence. Over the years, I have noticed that many other White women share this value, yet they (we) are not always sure where they fit in conversations about diversity, especially when it comes to race. As graduate students and new professionals, White women rarely have the opportunity to explore their racial identities, nor the connections between racial identity and gender. Wondering what White women new to student affairs and higher education think about their racial identities, I chose this topic for my dissertation research.

If you are a White woman who has given some thought to racial issues, and you are currently enrolled in a student affairs or higher education master's degree program, then I invite you to nominate yourself for this study by completing this initial interest form. I am interested in a sample that is diverse in terms of geography, educational and professional experiences, and social identities (e.g., ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, dis/ability, gender expression, and monoracial/multiracial identity). Thus, not everyone who completes this form will be selected to participate. However, just by completing the form, you will be entered in a drawing for a \$25 gift card from Biblio.com, an online bookseller (similar to Amazon.com) with a social responsibility mission.

If I select you, I will ask you to participate in two face-to-face or phone interviews, each 60-90 minutes in length, during the fall of 2011 and/or winter and spring of 2012. Some participants may have a third interview. Participation would be confidential, as all participants will select pseudonyms for the study. More information is provided on the initial interest form.

By nominating yourself, you have the potential to make an important contribution to practice and research in student affairs and higher education. [Click here to complete the online individual interest form.](#) If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Gratefully,

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Appendix C: Interview Protocol – First Interview

Possible Interview Questions and Topics

[Before interview, review human subjects and obtain documentation of informed consent; ask if they have any questions for me.]

- Warm-up/rapport-building topics/questions:
 - Thank you for the information you provided in your initial interest form!
 - How is your semester going so far?
 - [Low-risk customized question from initial interest form re: where they grew up, undergraduate institution, etc.]
- I know from experience how busy graduate school can be! I'm grateful that you are taking the time to participate in this interview. Can you tell me a little bit about what it was that interested you about participating in this study?
- Who were some of the most important people, and what were some of the most important places, in your life as a young person?
- As a child, what messages did you hear about race? Where or from whom did you get those messages?
- Tell me about some of your earliest memories having to do with race.
- What do you recall about your earliest interactions with people of different racial backgrounds from your own?
- Related to the last question, when did you first come to think of yourself as a White person?
- When you think about your middle and high school years, what stands out for you in terms of race and/or your identity as a White person?
- How do you think you were perceived by others during your middle and high school years? (probe for White peers, Peers of Color, female peers, male peers, family members, etc.)
- When you think about your identity as a White person during your early years, what difference did it make that you were a girl or young woman? [will use appropriate pronouns for transgender and genderqueer-identified participants]
- What do you wish you had known *then* [as a girl/young woman] that you know *now* about race and White identity? What difference might this knowledge/experience have made?
- Is there anything else you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions for me?

[Thank participant and discuss how best to get in touch with her to make plans for second interview.]

Appendix D: Interview Protocol – Second Interview

Possible Interview Questions and Topics

[Before interview, review informed consent; also ask if there's anything participant wants to discuss about previous interview, any loose ends, etc.]

1. Choose a pseudonym.
2. From our first interview, was there more you wanted to say about.... ?
3. Some of my initial findings: hunger for knowledge; desire for control; respect for family – desire to bring home what you've learned but in a respectful way; race wasn't talked about in early life. Your thoughts on any of these findings?
4. I intentionally am talking only to White women about this topic, and while gender identity and expression do come up, I'm having trouble pinpointing what difference being a woman makes in forming a White racial identity in our field. What insights do you have about this?
 - a. (Prompt: one participant said that White women are able to break down the walls of resistance, etc., and accept learning about White privilege because the finger isn't pointed at White women in the same way that it is at White men. What do you think about that?)
5. What led you to apply to graduate preparation programs in student affairs?
6. How did you choose this program? How has your graduate experience been similar to or different from what you thought it would be when you selected this program?
7. Where and from whom have you received praise? Where have you been challenged? What has been intellectually challenging and what has been emotionally challenging about your graduate experience?
8. In what settings and with what individuals have you talked about your White racial identity? What courses, assignments, and professional experiences have led you to reflect on your White racial identity?
9. Think of a time when you and your peers (classmates, coworkers, professors, mentors, supervisors, STUDENTS) had a conversation about race, Whiteness, power, or privilege. Set the stage for me...

- a. *(The following items are prompts)* Think about how you and your White peers (classmates, coworkers, professors, mentors, supervisors, STUDENTS) responded to or participated in this conversation. Describe the range of responses you saw. Which ones do you resonate with? Which ones make you cringe? Which ones do you seek to embody?
 - b. How did you participate? What do you think others thought about what you did and did not say?
 - c. What are the “unwritten rules” you follow when participating in a conversation about race, Whiteness, power, or privilege?
10. Thinking about your graduate school experiences, what has contributed to your thinking about your racial identity as a White person?
- a. Specific courses (or curriculum as a whole)?
 - b. Specific assignments?
 - c. Faculty members?
 - d. Assistantship/internship experiences?
 - e. Assistantship/internship supervisors?
11. Revisiting the gender question....in the experiences you’ve described what difference do you think being a woman has made....or, how might the conversation be different with a White man in your program?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?
13. Do you have any questions for me?

[Thank participant and discuss follow-up plans for member-checking: (1) review of second-person narrative of preliminary findings; (2) possible third interviews as needed for theoretical sampling; (3) as a token of appreciation, will send \$10 gift certificate to Biblio.com.]

Appendix E: Summary of Responses to Member Checking

Alexandria

I really enjoyed reading the summary and the short page about myself. :-) I found you had me described very well. I hope your research is going very well. Good luck on finishing your dissertation. I hope you have a wonderful day and I look forward to talking to you soon.

Lucy

I hope you are doing well. This seems like such an exciting process, and I definitely wish you the best of luck defending your dissertation. I reviewed the summary of findings and participant profile, and the only thing I would change in my profile is that I attended Catholic grade school until 8th grade and then went to a public high school. Perhaps that is what you meant in the way you wrote it and I am reading it differently, but I wanted to clarify anyway. Other than that, it looks great!

I would love to read your entire dissertation once you are finished editing and defending it, so if there is any way I could get it in a PDF or other electronic form, I would really appreciate it! Thanks again for the opportunity to participate! :-)

Michaela

THIS IS FANTASTIC! I don't see any changes that need to be made based on my information ☺ Seriously, this was a blast and I wish you all the best when you defend!

Michelle

This is pretty spot on. I am interested in seeing what else you found. Good luck with your dissertation defense! Please let me know if I can do anything else to help you as you are moving forward with your research.

Rachel

I briefly looked through everything and it seemed pretty accurate. I hope the end of the year is treating you well.

Sally

I'm excited for you to be able to share this work and defend your dissertation on May 21st!! Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this study. I am very honored to have been one of 11 out of nearly 150 who applied! I definitely see myself reflected

throughout the summary and what other participants shared with you as well. It feels good to not feel alone in that sense.

I'm excited to see how your research informs the field! I wish you the best through these last few weeks :)

Stephanie

I have read through everything that you sent to me and I feel that you were able to accurately portray my experiences, reflections, and learning. At this time, I don't have any changes. I am really glad that I had the opportunity to participate in this study and I am impressed by the amount of work that you completed to do this research.

Zoey

I took the time to read through your chapter and the participant profile. I enjoyed reading both, and I think you did a good job representing what I articulated in our interviews. Once you finish up your dissertation, I'd really like to read it if you're willing to share your findings with me. I should have some free time over the summer, and I think reading your findings might help me further understand my own thoughts and identity development.

Again, after reading about how many responses you received via your initial survey, I'm very honored that you chose to include me in this study. Thanks for being so willing to give me and the others in this study the space to talk about our experiences; it means a lot and will continue to spur my thinking about diversity and social justice.

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